



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF CHILDREN,
EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Strategy

Children Living in Poverty

The Government's Strategy (2015–2017)





LIST OF MEASURES INCLUDED IN THE STRATEGY

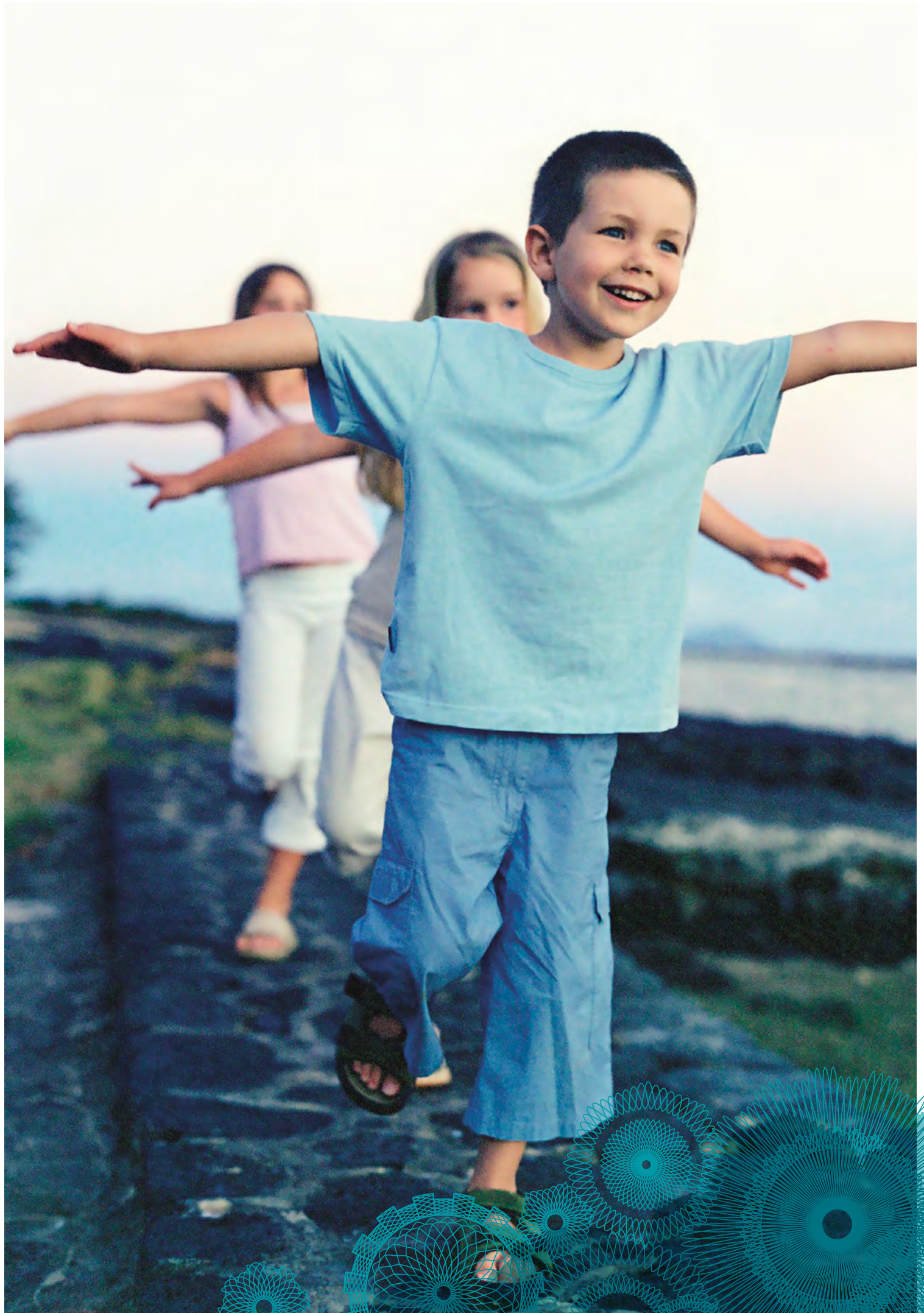
| No. | Measure | Ministry with primary responsibility |
|-----|---|---|
| 1 | Reinforcing the family welfare service's preventive work with vulnerable families | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 2 | Grants for municipalities to support parents | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 3 | Programme to follow up low-income families at NAV (Labour and Welfare Administration) offices | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| 4 | Providing help for first-time parents at risk – Nurse-Family Partnership | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 5 | Providing early help for children whose parents abuse alcohol or drugs and/or have mental illness (the Model Municipality project) | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 6 | Ring-fencing the income of children and young people when allocating financial assistance (social assistance benefit) | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| 7 | The child welfare services' support for vulnerable infants and young children and their parents | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 8 | Increasing the framework for grants for rental homes | Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation |
| 9 | Measures to help children who are victims of violence – coping and quality of life | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 10 | Government committee on providing support for families with children | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 11 | Increasing the one-off maternity/adoption payment | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 12 | Providing housing benefit for families with children and other large households | Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation |
| 13 | ØkonomilAppen | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 14 | Providing free core time in kindergartens A) Free core time introduced for all four- and five-year-olds in low-income families B) Trial of free core time as part of area initiatives in City of Oslo C) Development funding | A) Ministry of Education and Research B) Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion C) Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |

| No. | Measure | Ministry with primary responsibility |
|-----|---|---|
| 15 | National minimum requirement for reduced parental contributions for kindergarten | Ministry of Education and Research |
| 16 | Increasing the understanding of Norwegian among minority-language children in kindergarten | Ministry of Education and Research |
| 17 | Trial of free part-time places in SFO after-school programme | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 18 | Building a team around the pupil – more professions in school | Ministry of Education and Research |
| 19 | Teacher development – teamwork for the knowledge school | Ministry of Education and Research |
| 20 | Reinforcing multicultural expertise across the entire educational sector | Ministry of Education and Research |
| 21 | Supporting children within the child welfare services at school | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 22 | Work to combat bullying and to improve the learning environment in schools | Ministry of Education and Research |
| 23 | Providing swimming lessons for pupils with an immigrant background | Ministry of Education and Research |
| 24 | Programme for better completion of upper secondary education | Ministry of Education and Research in partnership with the relevant ministries |
| 25 | Coordinated, interdisciplinary help for vulnerable children and young people under the age of 24 (the 0–24 Partnership) | Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Ministry of Health and Care Services |
| 26 | Mentor functions for young people | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 27 | Increased scholarship share for pupils from low-income families | Ministry of Education and Research |
| 28 | National grant scheme to combat child poverty | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |

| No. | Measure | Ministry with primary responsibility |
|-----|---|---|
| 29 | Measures for children and young people in large cities | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 30 | Grant scheme to prevent and reduce poverty among children and families who are in contact with the social services at NAV (the Labour and Welfare Administration) | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| 31 | Measures to combat child poverty from the voluntary field | Ministry of Culture |
| 32 | Grants for local teams and associations | Ministry of Culture |
| 33 | Open-air measures for children and young people | Ministry of Culture |
| 34 | Inclusion in sports teams | Ministry of Culture |
| 35 | Grants to voluntary centres | Ministry of Culture |
| 36 | Public libraries | Ministry of Culture |
| 37 | Frifond support scheme for children and young people | Ministry of Culture |
| 38 | Voluntary work to prevent loneliness and promote social inclusion | Ministry of Health and Care Services |
| 39 | Leisure activities for everyone | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and Ministry of Culture |
| 40 | Reinforcing the health centre and school health service | Ministry of Health and Care Services |
| 41 | Mental health support for children in child welfare institutions | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |

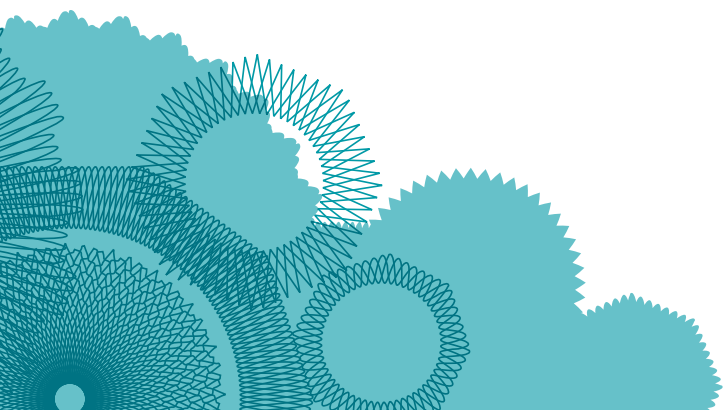
| No. | Measure | Ministry with primary responsibility |
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| 42 | Programme for public health in the municipalities, focusing on children and young people | Ministry of Health and Care Services |
| 43 | Strengthening municipal mental health services | Ministry of Health and Care Services |
| 44 | New escalation plan for alcohol and drug abuse support services | Ministry of Health and Care Services in partnership with the relevant ministries |
| 45 | Programme to combat social inequality in dental health | Ministry of Health and Care Services |
| 46 | Setting activity requirements for recipients of financial assistance (social assistance benefit) | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| 47 | The Job Opportunity – expansion | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 48 | Project for increased completion of upper secondary education | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and Ministry of Education and Research |
| 49 | Trial with NAV (Labour and Welfare Administration) guides in upper secondary school | Ministry of Education and Research and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| 50 | The qualification programme | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| 51 | The Introduction Act – qualification for work and training A) The Introduction Scheme B) Norwegian lessons and learning about Norwegian society | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 52 | Increasing knowledge about child poverty in the municipalities A) Indicators of child poverty B) Guide for cross-sectoral work to combat child poverty | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion in partnership with the relevant ministries |
| 53 | Defining knowledge gaps and measures that could cover priority areas A) Counteracting the reproduction of poverty B) Knowledge coordination | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion in partnership with the relevant ministries |

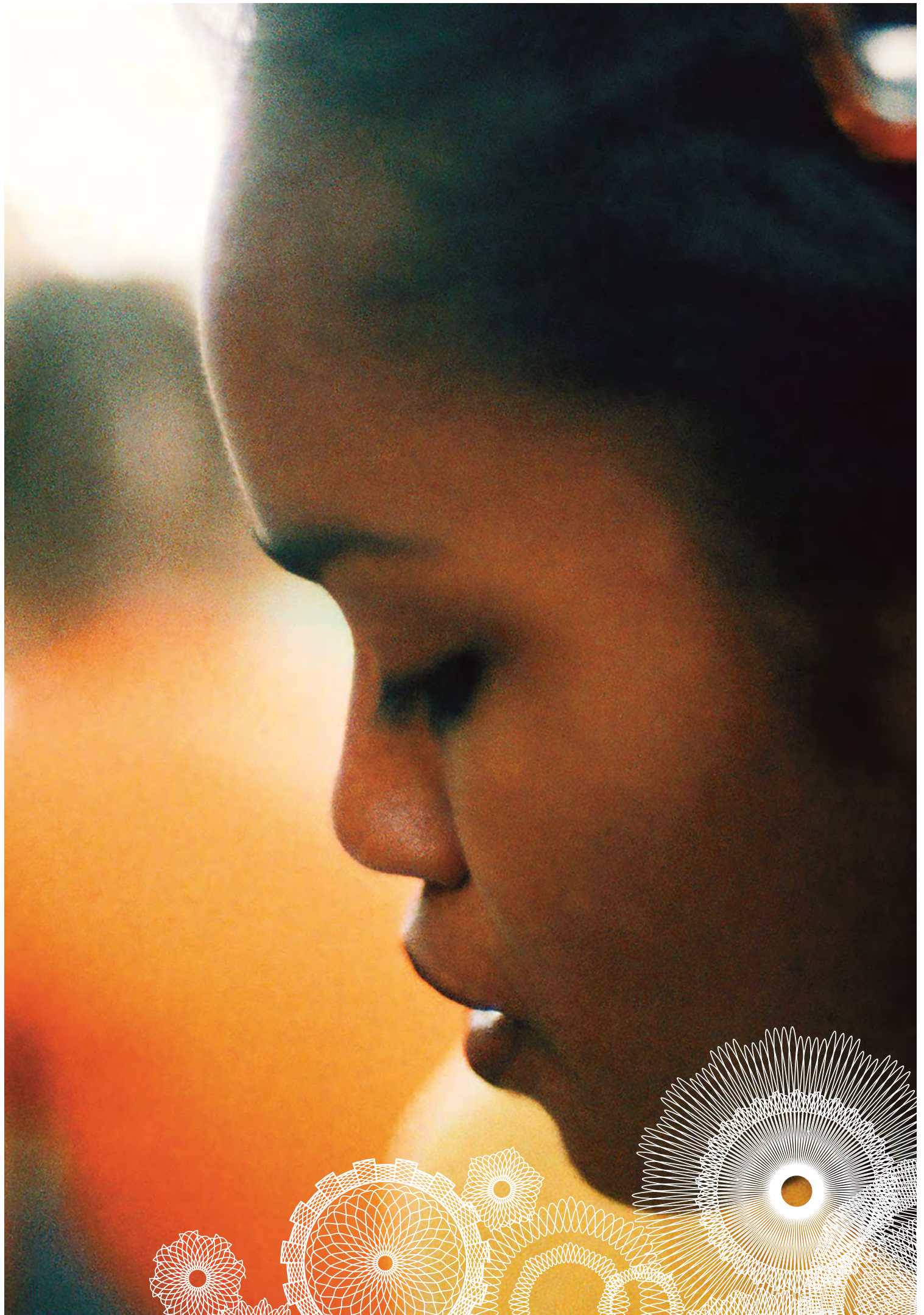
| No. | Measure | Ministry with primary responsibility |
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| 54 | Girls with a minority background and participation in sport | Ministry of Culture |
| 55 | Social reporting – finance and living conditions for various low-income groups | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| 56 | Coordinated databases from Statistics Norway | Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation |
| 57 | Knowledge about spending in families | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |
| 58 | Research on civil society and the voluntary sector | Ministry of Culture |
| 59 | Final evaluation of the Groruddal project | Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation |
| 60 | Coordinating government grant schemes A) Coordinating and simplifying the use of government grant schemes B) Stimulate coordinated initiatives that could be included in the municipal authorities' plans for work with children and young people | A) Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs B) Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| 61 | Stimulating the development of social entrepreneurship in the field of poverty | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in partnership with the relevant ministries |
| 62 | Preparing common guidelines for collaboration and distribution of responsibility between the child welfare services and NAV (the Labour and Welfare Administration) | Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| 63 | Simplifying grant schemes for voluntary organisations | Ministry of Culture |
| 64 | Grants for good environments for growing up and safe local communities | The Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion |



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FOREWORD

Most children in Norway grow up in secure families whose financial conditions are good. However, some families have difficulties due to poor living conditions, poor finances, or both, and naturally this affects the children.

The Government's objective is to create opportunities for all. The social safety net must be reinforced, so that more families are lifted up out of poverty and fewer are left in difficulty.

It is the experience of many children and young people that important events in their childhood and adolescence – such as birthdays and getting involved in sports – cost so much that they are effectively excluded. Some choose not to tell their parents because of loyalty or concerns about causing conflict about money. A stigma is still attached to poverty.

Children living in poverty worry about their future. Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child gives every child the right to a standard of living that is good enough in all areas. In addition to the parents' responsibility, the article also states that governments must support parents and guardians. Therefore, the Government is launching a strategy to combat child poverty, based on the partnership agreement with the Liberal Party and the Christian Democratic Party.

The most important instrument to combat poverty, both in the short and the long term, is to make sure that as many people as possible are employed. It should be financially worthwhile to be employed. The Government wishes to reinforce work-related measures and make it easier to more people to get into work. The strategy's focus areas all promote active participation in society.

The Government is following a policy that will prevent poverty and give more people a way out of poverty. The family should create a safe and secure environment for children to grow up in. In order to have good conditions to bring up their children, vulnerable parents need good follow-up and help to master their role as parents. Having a low income does not necessarily have to impact children's quality of life. However, having poor finances over a long period can be a strain. If other problems also arise, families become vulnerable. Therefore, this strategy provides

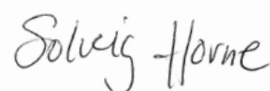
the basis for a broad commitment to families, including family counselling, housing benefit schemes and vocationally oriented measures to help especially vulnerable parents.

Differences in living conditions and income are also correlated with differences in physical and mental health. Children and young people who grow up in poor families have a greater risk of developing health problems, and in this strategy the Government wishes to arrange for better healthcare for all children and young people. One important goal is to prevent poor family finances leading to poor health. The Government also wants to ensure that more people receive better healthcare more quickly. The strategy especially prioritises families with alcohol and drug problems, problems with violence and mental health problems.

Education is the key to enabling people to escape poverty. The Government will continue to develop kindergartens and schools so that in practice all children will be given the same opportunities, both scholastically and socially. Reducing the cost of kindergarten for low-income families will give more children the opportunity to go to kindergarten. By means of early intervention throughout the course of education, the Government will create the conditions for broad participation, prevent dropout and qualify young people for adult life. The objective is to prevent poverty being passed on from generation to generation and to create opportunities for all.

Furthermore, children living in poverty should not miss out on the informal learning and the feeling of community to be found in organisations, in sport, and in the cultural and leisure arenas. The strategy will give children and young people who grow up in low-income families better opportunities to participate in normal social activities in the same way as others. With the help of public commitment from the state and municipal authorities, and contributions from sport and the rest of the voluntary sector, all children should be given the opportunity to participate in at least one leisure activity. This will prevent loneliness and give these children a greater hope for the future. Long-term loneliness, especially in childhood, is harmful to health, and the Government is promoting combating loneliness as a focus area.

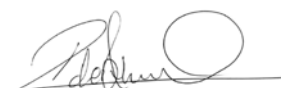
To help children living in poverty, it is vital that public bodies and the voluntary sector work together in a complementary fashion.



Solveig Horne
Minister of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion



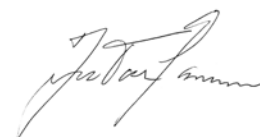
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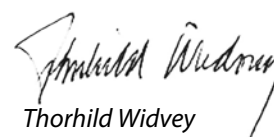
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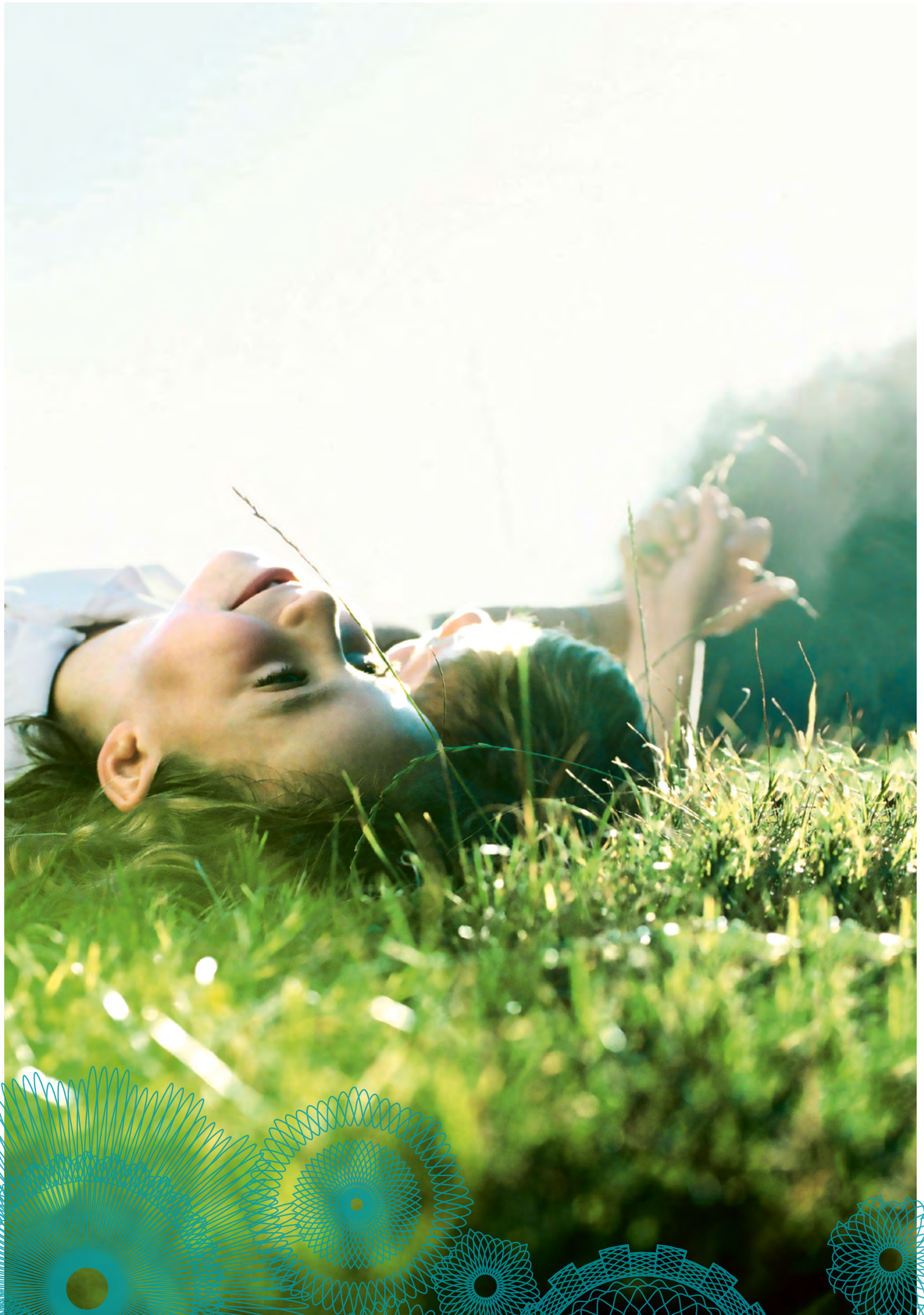
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INTRODUCTION

Growing up in poverty in Norway means having fewer options and often a lower standard of living than that of contemporaries. This can have many negative consequences, both in the short and the long term. The fact that some children live in poverty in a country where by far the majority have much, and more than they may need, can make poverty more visible and increase the stigma attached to it.

According to Statistics Norway, 8.6 per cent of all children in Norway under the age of 18 belonged to a household with a persistent low income during the three-year period from 2011 to 2013. This amounted to 84,300 children – 6,100 more than during the period from 2010 to 2012. Children with an immigrant background now make up over half of all children in financially vulnerable families.

During a period when poverty in general has remained relatively stable, poverty among families with children has increased. *Children Living in Poverty – The Government's Strategy* contains measures intended to prevent child poverty being passed on from generation to generation and lessen the negative consequences of growing up in families with a persistent low income. It is based on a relative definition of poverty. In this context, that definition is that some children and young people have access to fewer of the advantages and opportunities than their contemporaries have. The objective of the strategy is twofold. Firstly, it prioritises increased efforts to prevent poverty being passed on from generation to generation. Secondly, it includes a number of measures designed to lessen the negative consequences for children and young people growing up in poverty.

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, all children and young people must have the opportunity to play and take part in leisure activities, enjoy an adequate standard of living, and develop their talents and abilities. The Convention is an overarching guide for the strategy. Children also have the right to have a say in matters that relate to them.

Work on the strategy is coordinated by the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. Voluntary organisations and KS (the Association of Local and Regional Authorities) have provided important input during the process, as have children through special hearings arranged by Save the Children and children who have contacted the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children.

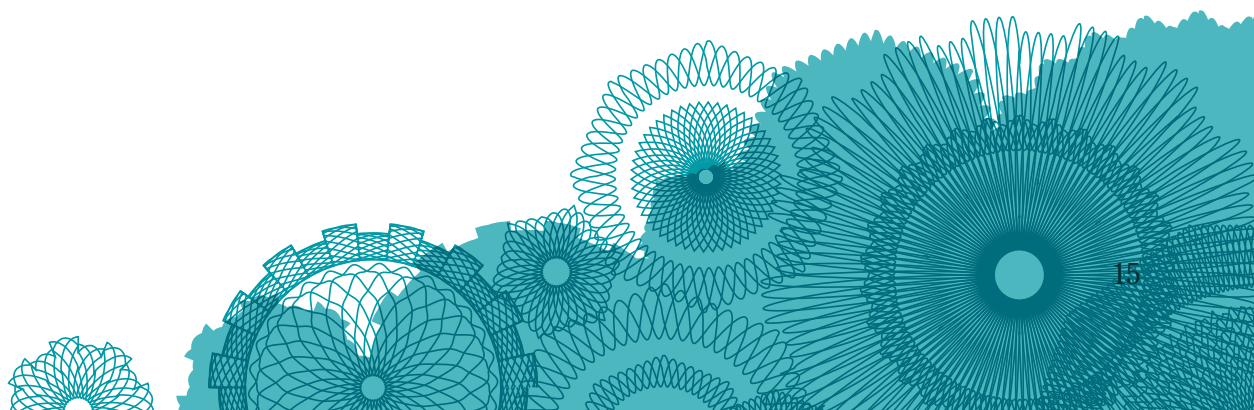
The strategy applies to the period from 2015 to 2017. The strategy will provide a framework for the work of following up the findings and recommendations of the Office of the Auditor General of Norway's survey of child poverty (Document 3:11, 2013–2014), which was discussed in the Storting in December 2014. It also follows up joint parliamentary motions from the partnership parties (Document 8:125S, 2012–2013).

The strategy's contents and objectives

The strategy is based on the fundamental premise that child poverty is a complex problem. It is important to point out that not all children in low-income families necessarily have poor living conditions, but over time the interplay between social, health-related and financial challenges often reinforce each other, leading to an increased risk of marginalisation and poverty. To combat child poverty, a broad and co-ordinated effort is therefore necessary, both in the short and the long term. This is reflected in the strategy's seven focus areas:

- Preventing poverty by supporting vulnerable families with children
- Completing the course of education – kindergarten and school
- Participation and inclusion – leisure, culture and sport
- Providing good health services to all children and young people
- Access to work for young people and parents
- Research and statistics
- Distribution of responsibility and sharing expertise – the state, the municipal authority and the voluntary sector

The strategy is built on, and is intended to contribute to further development of, existing knowledge and expertise in the field. On assignment from the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, the Fafo Research Foundation has utilised available research to prepare a knowledge basis. The knowledge basis sheds light on child poverty from various angles. This puts us in a position to understand the main challenges and then take action. In addition, the unique perspectives of children and young people are also included in the strategy's knowledge basis. This has given the strategy a more comprehensive foundation. Fafo's contributions also identify knowledge gaps – areas that will require increased attention in the years to come. For this reason, increased knowledge has been defined as a separate focus area within the strategy, including new research and the collation of existing knowledge.



Strengthening the social safety net and protecting the family as a safe environment for children and young people is a defined goal. Parents have an obligation to provide for their children. They must ensure that their children have food, clothing, housing, emotional support and everything required to enjoy a good life. The obligation to provide continues to apply until the child reaches the age of 18 or has completed upper secondary education. The strategy will support parents who struggle socially and financially, so that they are better able to manage their responsibilities of care and be good role models for their children. In this context, good living conditions, family counselling, active leisure time and prevention are all important factors in giving children and young people a good environment to grow up in.

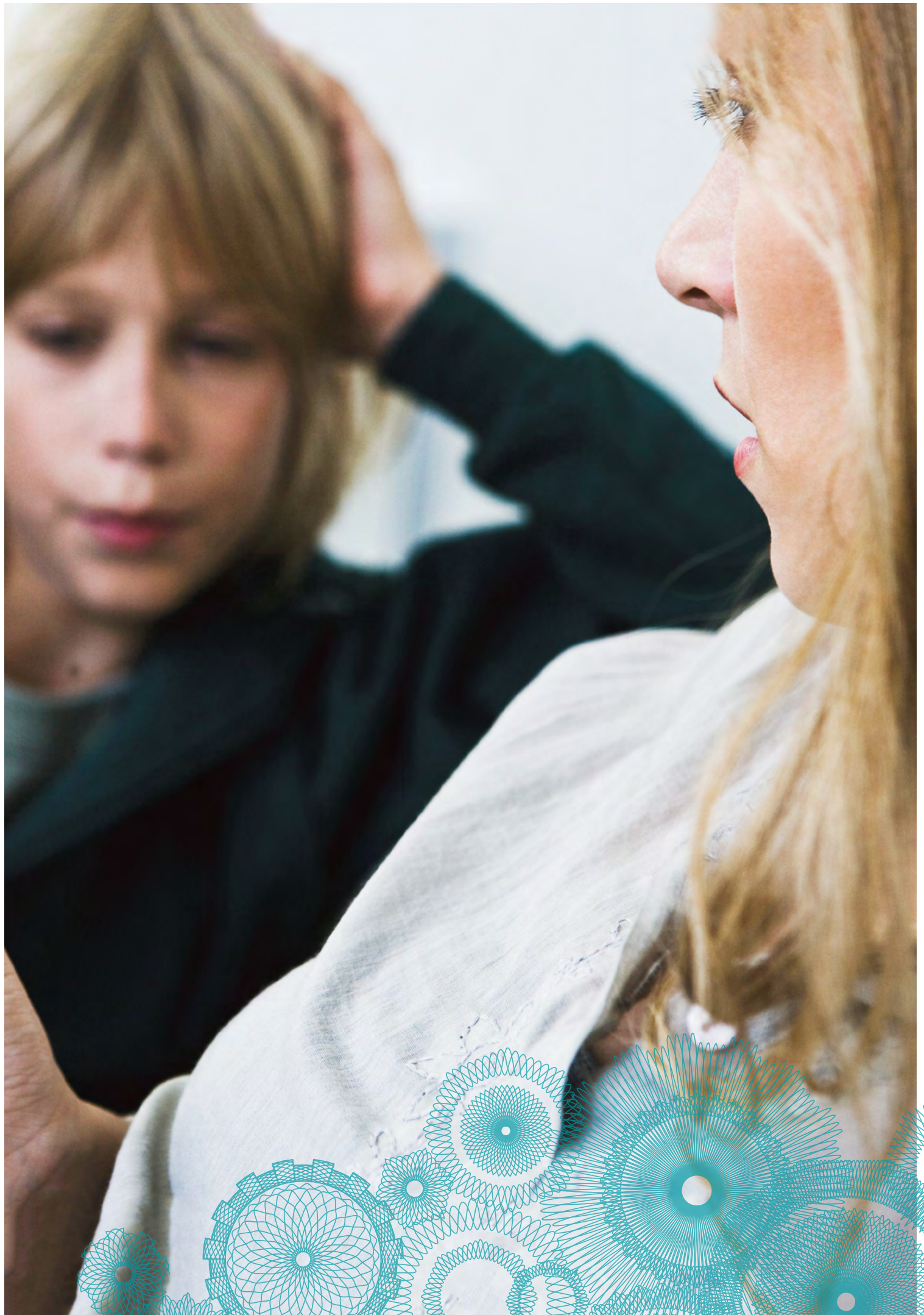
A further goal is to ensure that children and young people participate in community arenas: in kindergarten, in school and in leisure activities. In particular, sport has been identified as a costly activity for parents on a low income. The strategy includes various measures to enable children and young people from poor families to participate in activities in leisure time, together with contemporaries in their area. These measures are designed to allow children and young people to develop their abilities and have a feeling of achievement and inclusion. School is the most important single factor for social mobility. Interdisciplinary initiatives between various disciplines in kindergarten, school, health, child welfare and NAV (the Labour and Welfare Administration) play a vital role in preventing dropout, social exclusion and poverty being passed on from generation to generation.

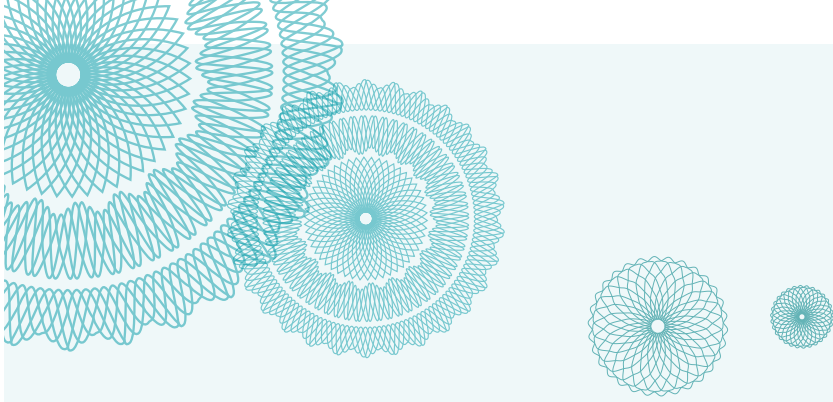
One key instrument in the strategy is creating effective cooperation between the public and voluntary sectors. The strategy creates conditions for voluntary initiatives to be adopted where possible. Furthermore, it helps to clarify the distribution of responsibility between the various levels of administration and to promote increased and coordinated commitment. The municipal authorities play a particularly important role in this context, and the strategy emphasises increased expertise and better coordination in the municipalities within all bodies in contact with children, young people and vulnerable families. This will make it easier for the municipal authorities to identify children and young people who face poverty-related challenges, and to implement effective measures.

The target group for the strategy is primarily children and young people under the age of 18 who are growing up in families affected by the problems of poverty. In addition, young people who drop out of work and education are entitled to follow-up until the age of 20. Measures to support vulnerable parents who are long-term unemployed are also included.

The most important instrument to combat poverty and counteract social exclusion is an efficiently functioning employment market that ensures low unemployment. This strategy does not describe the Government's broad initiatives within employment and welfare policy. The social safety net shall support those who are unable to live on their own income.



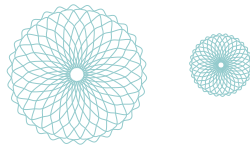
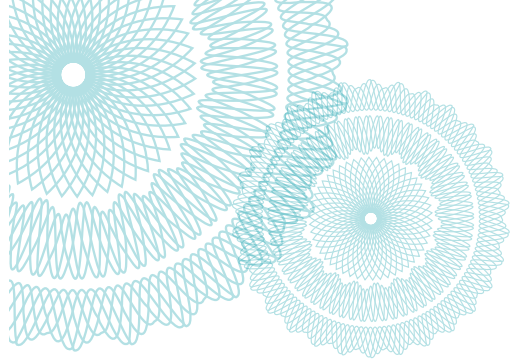




PART I

THE STRATEGY'S FOCUS AREAS





1

PREVENTING POVERTY BY SUPPORTING VULNERABLE FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

“There can be a lot of arguments at home because of a lack of money. So it’s important to be able to discuss things calmly instead of arguing. That’s much better.” Boy, 16.

“The family starts to worry about each other and think that perhaps it was wrong to have children because they don’t have a good life.” Girl, 14.

The Government wishes to strengthen the support apparatus around parents and the family. This will improve the living conditions of children who live in families suffering hardship, and will help to give them more opportunities while they are growing up and later in life. The most vulnerable children live in families with a single provider or with parents who do not have work and who live on benefits (Harsløf and Seim 2008). The combination of poor finances and other social or health problems is demanding, for both parents and children. It is clear from the children’s comments that they want their parents to receive help to resolve the conflicts and ease the worries that come with poverty. The worries of the family weigh heavily on the children.

In order to support parents’ responsibilities with regard to care, the Government is prioritising measures aimed at helping parents to see their children’s emotional, cognitive and physical needs. Such measures should give parents sound strategies for understanding what their children need so that they can promote their children’s development. While some measures that support parents are broad, and in theory can be directed towards all parents, other measures are aimed more directly at parents at risk – that is, where there is a high likelihood that the children will not receive the care they need.

It is important that vulnerable children, young people and families are identified as early as possible by bodies such as the health service, kindergarten and school, and that measures are implemented at the right time.

The family welfare service has a vital preventive function. The family counselling offices offer measures to support parents intended to help parents suffering hardship. The measures are designed to strengthen families in general, both in connection with separation and divorce and in the event of other family conflicts. Most families manage to adapt their finances after the breakdown of a relationship, but for some in the low-income group the long-term effect of a breakup is day-to-day financial problems. Seen from the children's point of view, poor family finances simply add to the burden caused by the parents' breakup.

The Nurse-Family Partnership focuses directly on first-time parents at risk, and its work begins during the pregnancy. The child welfare service's support for vulnerable infants and young children and their parents is also very important in this work, because the care that the child receives during this period is critical to his or her further development. The child welfare service must ensure that children and young people living under conditions that could damage their health and development receive the necessary help.

Most families with children in Norway, including low-income families, own their own home. There is a small group of families with children who rent, and of these a relatively small group again who rent from the municipal authority. Families with children who live in homes rented from the municipal authority tend to have a worse living standard than low-income families who live in homes that they themselves own. The municipal authorities' responsibility and role in the work to protect families suffering hardship is vital. A key goal in the work on housing is to help poor families with children into secure, stable living conditions in homes they themselves own.

Initiatives in this area will be particularly suitable to assist poor families, and will help to secure a good environment to live and grow up in for children and young people. In many municipalities, a lack of rental homes is a major challenge. There is a particular need for more inexpensive rental homes for families with children.

The Government wishes to avoid children being bounced between various public agencies. Each individual child's living conditions must be taken seriously. Some children and their families need support from various support services. The support apparatus must assist families and children quickly. In this work, the municipal authorities have a major responsibility to see the children – both to identify them and to offer support measures to the families who need them.

The Act relating to social services in the labour and welfare administration

The objective of the Act relating to social services in the labour and welfare administration is to improve the living standards of those suffering hardship. It shall contribute to social and financial security and to each individual having the opportunity to live independently; it shall promote the transition to work, social inclusion and active participation in society. Finally, the Act shall contribute to vulnerable children and young people and their families receiving unified and coordinated support services. The Act shall contribute to equality of human worth and social status, and prevent social problems.

The statutory objective of the Act emphasises consideration for children and young people. In the directive to the Act (Main No. 35) it is emphasised that particular consideration must be taken of children's needs in all assessments where the service user has children. Children and young people must be assured an environment where they can grow up safely and be able to participate in general school and leisure activities, irrespective of whether their parents are encountering financial difficulties.

The Board of Health Supervision's national survey in 2013 revealed deficiencies in identifying, and deficient individual assessments of, children and young people's needs at many NAV offices when their parents apply for financial support. A number of measures have been implemented to ensure that children's needs are better addressed. Guidance regarding the Act and nationwide training have been provided under the auspices of the county governors and the Labour and Welfare Directorate. NAV offices where non-conformances were identified by the inspection authorities are being monitored. The work to address children's needs when processing applications for financial support from individuals with a responsibility to provide for children shall continue to be reinforced in line with the declared purpose of the Act.

MEASURE 1

REINFORCING THE FAMILY COUNSELLING SERVICE'S PREVENTIVE WORK WITH VULNERABLE FAMILIES

The goal of preventive work is to improve the relationship and teamwork between parents and strengthen their skills in providing care. Families who live with violence are a particularly vulnerable group, and preventive measures for this group are a high priority. The survey of scope performed by NKVTS (the Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies) shows that there is a clearly increased incidence of violence among people who believed that they were financially worse off than the majority of the population (report 1/2014).

The Storting provided a further NOK 23.4 million for the Family Counselling Service in 2014. Funds for the Family Counselling Service's preventive work, work with high-conflict families, vulnerable children and young violent people were further reinforced in 2015. In addition, funds were given to establish additional counsellor positions at the family counselling offices to increase expertise and capacity to follow up parents following the takeover of care. In total, in 2014 and 2015 the work of the Family Counselling Service was supported to the tune of NOK 73.4 million.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

THE FAMILY COUNSELLING SERVICE

The Family Counselling Service works mainly with families, and relationship counselling is a specialist field of operation. The service forms the foundation of the support services for families in connection with relationship problems and conflicts in couples' relationships. The core responsibilities consist of care and counselling in the event of problems, conflicts or crises in the family, as well as mediation pursuant to Section 26 of the Act relating to marriage and Section 51 of the Children Act.

The service has an interdisciplinary staff, primarily psychologists and social workers with further training in family therapy. Most of the offices also have lawyers affiliated with the staff on a consultancy basis. The unique feature of the service is that it is a free-of-charge, generally low-threshold service, even though the offices are staffed by specialists in multiple disciplines. Being referred by a doctor is not necessary. This gives the service a unique opportunity to provide rapid, highly accessible and sound professional assistance to people who are struggling with various types of problems in relationships with their spouse or partner and family.

MEASURE 2

GRANTS FOR MUNICIPALITIES TO SUPPORT PARENTS

The objective of the grant scheme for municipalities to support parents is to stimulate more municipal authorities to give children early help at home. The municipal authorities can apply for funds to develop services in the form of parent guidance and other measures to support parents locally. This is an active commitment to preventive work, the objective of which is to avoid the child welfare service having to step in with assistance at a later date. The target group is parents facing special challenges. The measures to support parents and parent guidance in the municipalities follows up "*En god barndom varer livet ut* – tiltaksplan for å bekjempe vold og seksuelle overgrep mot barn og ungdom" ("A good childhood lasts a lifetime – Action plan to combat violence towards and sexual abuse of children and young people", 2014–2017).

Since the grant scheme was set up in 2014, there has been high demand from many municipal authorities. Some 16 municipal authorities were awarded a total of NOK 3.5 million in 2014

The Government proposes reinforcing the grant scheme from approximately NOK 6 million to NOK 17.8 million in connection with the revised national budget for 2015.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 3

PROGRAMME TO FOLLOW UP LOW-INCOME FAMILIES AT NAV (LABOUR AND WELFARE ADMINISTRATION) OFFICES

In 2015, the Labour and Welfare Directorate will develop and trial a unified monitoring programme for low-income families. The target group for the programme is families with children with persistent low incomes. Families with many children with an immigrant background, families where the parents are unemployed and lone carers will be prioritised. The objective is to improve the families' welfare and prevent poverty being passed on from generation to generation. Both the parents and the children will be monitored at the same time. Parents

will receive follow-up targeted towards work, training, finances, health and living conditions. Children will be followed up with regard to participation in social arenas such as kindergarten, SFO (after-school care scheme) and leisure activities, in addition to schoolwork.

The monitoring programme is embedded in the local NAV offices. A systematic collaboration with other service areas in the municipality and with voluntary organisations is required. The trial at three NAV offices in 2015 will form the basis for identification of a suitable uniform model for a possible further pilot project. The measure will be evaluated

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

NATIONAL STRATEGY "BOLIG FOR VELFERD" ("HOUSING FOR WELFARE", 2014–2020)

In 2014, five ministries proposed a joint national strategy on housing-related social work, Bolig for velferd ("Housing for welfare", 2014–2020). The objective of the strategy is to unify and target the public-sector initiative towards people facing problems in the housing market. Therefore, the Government will by means of the strategy work reinforce the initiative towards children and young people who have poor housing conditions. It is important to do this for the sake of today's children, and also to prevent the reproduction of social problems. In the strategy, therefore, specific result targets have been set for the work up to 2020.

The work is led by: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation.

MEASURE 4

PROVIDING HELP FOR FIRST-TIME PARENTS AT RISK – NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

For the first time in Norway, in 2014 funds were allocated for the start-up of the internationally recognised Nurse-Family Partnership programme. The target group is first-time parents who need extra support. This may include mothers with limited support networks or who have been victims of sexual abuse or violence, have mental health problems, problems with alcohol or drugs or persistently low incomes. The objective is to prevent failure of care and mental disorders, and to improve children's environment for growing up by means of early intervention.

Over a period of two years, the mothers/families will receive at least 64 home visits from specially trained health visitors, starting during pregnancy. Many countries have achieved some very positive, systematically documented, results. They show:

- Improvement in the health of mothers and children during pregnancy.
- Increased participation in work by the mothers, and fewer months on social support.
- Reduction in behavioural problems and criminality among the children.

The measure will start in 2015. During the strategy period, the Government will assess further reinforcing this work.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN STJØRDAL MUNICIPALITY

The target group is families with children who are in contact with the NAV office and who need assistance in connection with housing and/or finances. Most of the families have received financial assistance (social assistance benefit) for some time. The goal is for parents to have healthy and orderly finances so that the family can get established in permanent housing.

There are two parts to the project: procedures have been established for cooperation at system level as well as work with the families at an individual level. The families are followed up by means of conversations at the NAV office and home visits. The follow-up has consisted of charting family finances and providing advice and guidance about budgeting. A family plan, including a budget and subgoals, is prepared for each individual family.

The project involves collaboration with other services in the municipality, in particular housing services with a view to the families being able to buy their own home. The project workers use the standard instruments in the NAV office for follow-up targeted at employment, closely following both the user and the employer. They also collaborate with voluntary organisations, including the Red Cross, to enable some of the families to go on holiday. In some cases arrangements have been made for the children to take part in activities.

The project was set up in 2012 and can demonstrate concrete results in the form of improved living conditions for many of the families in respect of the transition to work and owning their own homes.

MEASURE 5

PROVIDING EARLY HELP FOR CHILDREN WHOSE PARENTS ABUSE ALCOHOL OR DRUGS AND/OR HAVE MENTAL DISORDERS (THE MODEL MUNICIPALITY PROJECT)

Parents who have mental problems or problems with alcohol or drugs often also have a low income and a lack of regular employment. This increases the risk of the parents being unable to secure the children good living conditions in which to grow up. The Model Municipality Project has helped to develop sound models for early intervention and unified, systematic follow-up of children of parents with mental disorders and children of parents who abuse alcohol or drugs. Monitoring starts in early pregnancy and continues until the child is of school age. A total of 26 model municipalities have been evaluated. The evaluation of the Model Municipality Project shows good results, and it is proposed that the scheme be continued during the strategy period.

The Government proposes to increase funds for the trial from NOK 11.1 million to NOK 20.1 million in connection with the revised national budget for 2015.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 6

RING-FENCING THE INCOME OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN ALLOCATING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFIT)

It is important for individuals to be active and strive to have more secure finances and better well-being, and this also applies to children and young people. Many children and young people spend some of their free time working, earning money for their own use, such as for leisure activities and equipment. The Government wishes to place children and young people who are in families dependent on financial assistance (social assistance benefit) for subsistence on an equal footing with children and young people in families with better finances. The Government wants children and young people to be able to keep their own income from work in free time and holidays, up to a certain level. The Government is aiming to present draft legislation in spring 2015.

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

MEASURE 7

THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICE'S SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE INFANTS AND YOUNG CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS

The Centre for Parents and Children is a voluntary service provided under the auspices of the child welfare service. In order to help to ensure that more vulnerable infants and young children are identified and receive early help, the Government will reinforce the service offering to vulnerable infants and young children and their parents.

In the state budget for 2015, an additional NOK 35 million has been allocated to purchase places from five "ideal centres" for parents and children.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 8

INCREASING THE FRAMEWORK FOR GRANTS FOR RENTAL HOMES

A lack of suitable rental homes is a major challenge for many municipal authorities, and there is a particular need for more rental homes for families with children. The homes must be of good quality and the residential environment must be safe for children and young people. Grants for rental homes give the municipal authorities the opportunity to procure rental homes of good quality and thereby reduce the strain that comes with poverty. For 2015 a framework commitment has been adopted for grants for rental homes of NOK 702.4 million. This means that a commitment can be made to provide grants for approximately 1,200 rental homes for families suffering hardship.

In the revised national budget for 2015, the Government proposes, for reasons including reducing child poverty, a long-term increase of the framework commitment for grants for rental homes of NOK 111.1 million, to NOK 813.5 million. This means that a commitment can be made to provide approximately 200 extra rental homes in 2015. An increased commitment to rental homes is a sound way to support families with children who need help to find a suitable place to live.

Responsible: The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation

PLAN FOR WORK AIMED AT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In autumn 2015, the Government will present a plan for work aimed at children and young people for the period from 2015 to 2020. This work will give a boost to the Government's commitments to children and young people in general, and in particular commitments directed towards vulnerable children and young people. It will provide a broad overview of initiatives and work aimed at children and young people aged between 0 and 24, with an emphasis on the 0–18 age group. Keywords include: children's rights, good local environment, good service offering, unity and coordination, prevention, early intervention, equality and non-discrimination, participation and influence, initiatives in various policy areas (health and social conditions, kindergartens, schools and education, culture and leisure). The plan will propose specific measures, both work that is already in progress and new initiatives, and will show how the Government will make further undertakings in the future in connection with children and young people.

The work is led by: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, and the plan will be prepared in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education and Research.

FINANCIAL ADVISORY SERVICES AND DEBT ADVISORY SERVICES

Together with the county governors, the Labour and Welfare Directorate is continuing the work to increase expertise, quality and availability of financial advisory services and debt advisory services in the municipalities. The national financial advice line 800GJELD is a low-threshold service aimed at making financial advisory services more easily available and helping people with payment problems to find a solution more quickly.

MEASURE 9

MEASURES TO HELP CHILDREN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE – COPING AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Children who are victims of violence and abuse are at risk of developing cognitive, social, mental and physical problems, both in the short and the long term. As a result, some children do not manage to complete their schooling, and later in life are unable to hold down a steady job. In 2015, the Government set up a new grant scheme amounting to NOK 11.5 million for measures for children who are the victims of violence. The objective of the grant scheme is to help children and young people who have been victims of violence or sexual abuse to gain an increased ability to cope and an improved quality of life. Voluntary organisations, general public charitable institutions and other organisations can apply for support. They can apply for grants for operations and activities. The Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs administers the grant scheme.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 10

GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE ON PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN

The Government will set up a committee on support for families with children. The committee will review the current public service offering and the benefits arrangements for families with children under the age of 18. Families with children have higher expenses than other families. It is in the interests of society to help to ease the situation for families with children, both through financial support and through a well-developed service offering. The finances of families with children can vary significantly, which naturally affects the children as they grow up. The committee will discuss to what degree allocation considerations should be emphasised when formulating support for families with children, including to reduce child poverty. The committee will particularly consider child benefit, and will evaluate various models for redistributing child benefit so that it is channelled more towards poor families.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 11

INCREASING THE ONE-OFF MATERNITY/ ADOPTION PAYMENT

The one-off support payments are important for poor families, if the mother has not earned entitlement to parental benefit through employment activity. Women who receive parental benefit receive a one-off support payment. It is a requirement that the woman is a member of the National Insurance scheme at the time of birth or adoption. The Storting sets the size of the one-off support payment, which is tax-free. In the event of multiple births or when adopting several children, the support payment is granted for each child.

As of 1 January 2014, the one-off maternity/ adoption payment was raised from NOK 35,263 to NOK 38,750. In the state budget for 2015, the one-off support payment was increased to NOK 44,190 from 1 January 2015. Hence, the one-off support payment has risen by 25 per cent between 2013 and 2015.

In the state budget for 2014, it was also decided to increase the cash benefit to NOK 6,000 per month for all children supported by cash benefit (aged 13 to 23 months) as of the kindergarten year 2014–2015. During the previous kindergarten year, the cash benefit was NOK 5,000 for the youngest children and NOK 3,303 for the oldest.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 12

PROVIDING HOUSING BENEFIT FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AND OTHER LARGE HOUSEHOLDS

Children in low-income families often live in poorer and more crowded conditions than do other children, and they are less likely to live in a home that the family itself owns (NOU 2011:15 *Rom for alle* (“Space for all”). Housing benefit helps people with low incomes and high living expenses to secure their own home. Housing benefit helps to boost housing security for about 28,000 households with children. Housing benefit was improved at the start of the year by increasing the limits for housing expenses. The Government will consider further strengthening housing benefit.

Responsible: The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation

MEASURE 13

ØKONOMILAPPEN

ØkonomilAppen.no is a digital knowledge test and Internet portal for young adults in the 16–25 age group. The app is intended to be a useful and practical financial assistant that young people can use to find information and sensible advice about saving, loans, day-to-day finances and consumer rights. ØkonomilAppen has been developed in partnership between Finance Norway and the Consumer Ombudsman, with financial support from the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion.

The Norwegian Consumer Council has also received funds from the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion to develop digital tools in the Finance portal that promote financial education.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

REPORT TO THE STORTING ON FAMILY POLICY

The Government will present a report to the Storting on family policy during 2016. The previous report on family policy was presented in 2003. The family is society's strongest social community and an important bearer of tradition and culture. Since 2003 there have been major changes in society, both in Norway and internationally. Families are now far more diverse, and this must be respected. Information technology is now increasingly interwoven into family life and the lives of children and young people. Many families live their lives in multiple countries. In Europe there have been demographic changes, with lower birth rates and more elderly people. Children now have a different, independent position in the family, which is consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child being given precedence in Norwegian human rights law. We now have more knowledge about the effects of violence and abuse on children, and many measures have been implemented. This all has significance for the formulation of a successful family policy.

The report to the Storting on family policy will describe the current diversity in family types, and will identify and discuss the challenges encountered by individual families. The report will point the way for an overall public policy on the most important areas affecting families. The Government will strengthen the safety net for when families fail, and will prioritise preventive work and early intervention to ensure good conditions for children to grow up in. Another goal is to help resolve conflicts when parents are struggling. The Government will also create the conditions for families to have the freedom to look after their core responsibilities in the best possible way. Strong, well-functioning families are the cornerstone of the country.





2

COMPLETING THE COURSE OF EDUCATION – KINDERGARTEN AND SCHOOL

*“You learn less because you have so many other things on your mind.”
Girl, 15.*

“It’s good if we can get help with our homework after school at secondary school as well. Most of us can’t get help at home because our parents have only recently arrived in Norway and don’t understand Norwegian so well. Instead of struggling at home, we can get help at school.” Boy, 14.

Norway has developed into a knowledge society, where completing at least upper secondary education has become a prerequisite for getting a good job. Strengthening children’s attendance and completion of the 13-year basic education is therefore vital in order to counteract future marginalisation and poverty. A good education gives as many people as possible the chance to get a job. Education also contributes to social mobility by giving children the opportunity to get out of a negative poverty spiral so that poverty is not passed on from one generation to the next. Dropout from upper secondary education has over time been relatively high, and still is. The Government will work to ensure that more people manage to complete upper secondary school. Early intervention means both that teaching should start early in life and that help should be given quickly when problems arise. Research indicates that early intervention is beneficial for both the individual and society.

An educational system that emphasises early intervention is one of the most important tools to increase completion of education. Social conditions, such as the parents’ level of education and living conditions, should not determine whether pupils are successful at school. The Government has therefore set in motion a range of major measures to further develop the quality of basic education. Through early

intervention and close follow-up, high-quality teaching and a good learning environment, social inequality can be counteracted so that all are given the same opportunities. The measures that are promoted in this strategy are those that the Government considers to be particularly relevant to counteracting child poverty. High-quality schools are important for the physical and mental development of children and young people. A good learning environment provides an experience of fellowship and achievement. There is a correlation between well-being and the development of robust mental health and coping with problems later in life. In this way, school is an arena for building good mental health. This shows that education and health must be seen in the context of preventing child poverty.

It is important to provide individual and flexible follow-up for young people who have dropped out, or are in danger of dropping out, of upper secondary education. Pupils with particular challenges must be given unified and coordinated support that strengthens their involvement in school. Among others, this applies to many children and young people who need help from the child welfare service. Approximately 10 per cent of all children and young people in Norway will have contact with the child welfare service at some time during their childhood or adolescence. Of these, about four in ten complete upper secondary school, compared with eight in ten of other young people of the same age. Children in the child welfare service relocate frequently and change school more often than other children, which is challenging both for their education and socially. During the strategy period measures will be implemented to improve the school and educational situation for children in the child welfare service.

Early prevention and attendance

It is naturally regrettable if children cannot attend kindergarten due to their parents' finances. Kindergarten gives children a good start in life, irrespective of their background. The high level of kindergarten attendance in Norway makes kindergarten one of the most important arenas for care, play, learning and development. Kindergarten coverage in 2013 was 90 per cent for children between 1 and 5 years old, and almost 98 per cent of all children attend kindergarten before starting school. Nevertheless, we know that low-income families and families with an immigrant background make less use of kindergarten than other families: 86 per cent of three-year-olds, 94 per cent of four-year-olds and 95 per cent of five-year-olds with a minority-language background went to kindergarten in 2013. Nationally, this amounted to approximately 2,450 children.

A good kindergarten system has lasting positive effects for further learning in school, especially in connection with language development and social skills. Kindergarten staff are the most important factor for ensuring an education service of high quality.

Measures to improve price-reduction schemes and free core time for four- and five-year-olds from low-income families will contribute to higher kindergarten attendance. In addition, we know that increased efforts to convey information about various services, practical assistance to apply for places, conversations about the significance of kindergarten to children's language learning and development and so on have been shown to have an effect in the municipalities where this is done at present. To further increase kindergarten attendance for children from low-income families, either in "open kindergarten" (where the child is accompanied by a parent or guardian) or ordinary kindergarten, the Government will consider new measures to help those families whose children are not in kindergarten.

If minority-language children and young people are to have better opportunities to complete their basic education and take further education, it is vital to create conditions for learning Norwegian as early as kindergarten.

Fafo and Statistics Norway's evaluation of trials offering free core time in kindergarten shows that 85 per cent of kindergarten heads believe that the most important reason why minority-language children have poor Norwegian-language skills when they start school is that they have gone to kindergarten for too short a time. Children with an immigrant background score higher in survey tests in reading and arithmetic in years 1 and 2 in city districts that offer free core time, compared with children with an immigrant background in city districts that do not offer free core time. Language is a vital key to integration. Evaluation of the trial also shows that the parents have gained increased trust in the kindergartens and appreciate the importance of learning Norwegian at an early stage. Since August 2014, trial projects have been run offering free core time in kindergarten to families with a low income in the city districts of Gamle Oslo, Bergen and Drammen. At the same time, a requirement has been introduced that parents of children in the trial participate in activity. Free core time in kindergarten has been strengthened to the tune of NOK 51 million in 2015, and in total the scheme has funding of NOK 140.9 million. Free core time in kindergarten is being changed into a national scheme, with free core time for four- and five-year-olds from low-income families. A proposal for a new scheme has been under consultation, and the Ministry of Education and Research is arranging to introduce the scheme from 1 August this year.

For some families, using ordinary kindergartens is not a viable option. At present, the municipal authorities are not required to offer language stimulation to children outside kindergarten. Well-formulated information about the importance of children learning Norwegian parallel with their mother tongue should be given to minority-language parents as early as possible, ideally through the health centre (cf. the Regulation on the municipalities' health-promoting and preventive work in the health centre and school health service). Services financed by the municipal authorities, such as "open kindergarten" or dedicated language groups for minority-language children who do not go to kindergarten, are measures currently offered by some municipal authorities.

The Government wishes to provide a wide variety of kindergartens with flexible opening hours, so that the service is adapted to the needs of each individual family. Providing good kindergartens and SFO after-school programmes will make it easier for more parents to participate in work or in training and integration schemes. The price of SFO is a municipal responsibility, and the municipal authorities can choose to make arrangements for graded prices based on parents' income (see fact box). Statistics Norway's 2010 child supervision survey revealed a strong correlation between social background and participation in SFO. Measures that help low-income families to participate in kindergarten and SFO programmes can therefore promote better inclusion, an improved level of employment and improved protection against poverty.

MEASURE 14

PROVIDING FREE CORE TIME IN KINDERGARTENS

a) Free core time introduced for all four- and five-year-olds in low-income families

In 2015, the Storting introduced a new national scheme for free core time in kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds from low-income families. Once the change comes into force, children will be offered free kindergarten. This measure is likely to help the families for whom finances are a decisive factor in choosing not to use kindergarten. All four- and five-year-olds in families with an income below NOK 405,000 will be entitled to free core time following the introduction of the scheme on 1 August 2015. The new free core time scheme must be seen in the context of the new national minimum requirement for reducing parental contributions for low-income families.

Previous experience has shown that even if free core time in kindergarten is offered, some families do not take up the offer. This may be due to practical problems relating to taking children to and from kindergarten because of long distances, care for younger children, and a lack of knowledge about how to apply for a kindergarten place. The municipal authority should be aware that some families may face such challenges, and perhaps consider measures that would ensure that children do not miss out on the offer of free core time.

The Ministry of Education and Research has found that in some cases children have lost their place at kindergarten due to non-payment by parents. Providing free core time in kindergarten for low-income families will largely overcome this problem.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research

b) Trial of free core time as part of area initiatives in the City of Oslo

Evaluation of trials of free core time shows that the measure has resulted in more children with an immigrant background going to kindergarten, that parents have gained increased trust of the kindergartens, and that they have seen the importance of learning Norwegian early. The trial has been an important instrument in the area initiatives designed to stimulate increased kindergarten attendance in areas with many minority-language children.

The main objective is to prepare children to start school by promoting socialisation and by improving the Norwegian-language skills of children with a minority-language background. The trial of free core time for all four- and five-year-olds will be continued beyond the period of the area initiatives in Groruddalen and Oslo South in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

c) Development funding

Funds have been allocated for development projects that encourage parents to participate in society and recruitment of children under the age of four or five to kindergarten.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 15

NATIONAL MINIMUM REQUIREMENT FOR REDUCED PARENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR KINDERGARTEN

In the state budget for 2015, the Government has paved the way for a better social profiling of parental contributions for kindergarten by granting NOK 235 million to introduce a national minimum requirement for reduced parental contributions for low-income families. From 1 May 2015 annual parental contributions for a full-time place for one child in kindergarten will be limited to a maximum of 6 per cent of the family's personal and capital income or the maximum price, whichever is the lower. As of 1 May 2015, the maximum price has been set at NOK 2,580 per month. All households with an income below NOK 473,000 will be entitled to a reduction in the parental contributions; on average, the monthly reduction compared to the previous payments will be approximately NOK 650. The price reduction for families with two or more children in kindergarten will be continued as previously, and the parental contributions for the second, third or additional child will be 70 per cent and 50 per cent of what is paid for the first child, respectively.

Most municipalities operate some form of price reduction scheme, although 15 per cent lack any such arrangement. Some municipal author-

ities run price reduction schemes that actually surpass the minimum requirements proposed by the Government. The Government is basing its proposal on the premise that the new funds in 2015 will be used in addition to the funds that the municipal authorities already use for price reduction and exemption schemes. This means that everyone with a low income will receive at least as high a reduction in the parental contributions as at present. From 2016 the annual effect of the measure will amount to NOK 390.5 million.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research

MEASURE 16

INCREASING THE UNDERSTANDING OF NORWEGIAN AMONG MINORITY-LANGUAGE CHILDREN IN KINDERGARTEN

The Directorate for Education and Training administers an earmarked state grant to the municipalities for measures to improve the understanding of Norwegian among minority-language children of kindergarten age. In 2015, this grant amounted to NOK 130 million. The grant is allocated to the municipalities based on the number of minority-language children in kindergarten, and should both help to improve the understanding of Norwegian among minority-language children and stimulate the municipal authorities to work to increase the number of children from a minority-language background attending kindergarten.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research

MEASURE 17

TRIAL OF FREE PART-TIME PLACES IN SFO AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMME

In autumn 2013, a trial began of free part-time places in the SFO activity programme. The objective of the trial is to establish whether free activity school (AKS) can help pupils to succeed at school, and whether that can make the school district more attractive. The trial was introduced for pupils in years 1 to 4 at Mortensrud School in Oslo. Parallel with this, the municipal authority has worked on employee skills development at AKS Mortensrud and has introduced a range of learning-promoting activities. The municipal authority's objective is for the trial to help pupils to succeed at school, and to ensure that the

teaching, homework help and activity school together provide better learning outcomes. Attendance at AKS Mortensrud has increased from 30 per cent (66 pupils) during the 2012–13 school year to 85 per cent (182 pupils) during the 2013–14 school year. The average for Oslo during the last school year is 75 per cent. The trial of free part-time places in activity school, as part of the Oslo South Action Programme, will be continued with a grant of a total of NOK 4.2 million during 2015 from the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion's budgets. The trial is under evaluation.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

GRADED PARENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOR SFO AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMME

In accordance with the Education Act, the municipalities should offer SFO programmes both before and after school hours for years 1 to 4, and for children with special needs in years 1 to 7. SFO should create conditions for play and cultural and leisure activities based on age, functional ability and interests. SFO should give the children care and supervision. Disabled children should be given a good environment in which to develop. The municipal authorities are responsible for formulating the SFO programme.

SFO pricing is also the responsibility of the municipal authorities. In accordance with the Education Act, the municipal authorities can require that the costs of providing SFO programmes be covered through parental contributions. This means that parental contributions for SFO can cover, but not exceed, the costs, i.e. the municipal authorities' actual expenses for SFO. Within this limit, it is up to the municipal authorities themselves to set the parental contributions, including whether they wish to grade the prices based on income.

During the 2013–14 school year, 54 municipalities offered income-graded places in SFO, 144 municipalities offered free places and 320 municipalities offered price reductions for additional children (GSI figures). The level to which these arrangements are offered differs between the municipalities.

MEASURE 18

BUILDING A TEAM AROUND THE PUPIL – MORE PROFESSIONS IN SCHOOL

The Ministry of Education and Research has initiated the project “Building a team around the pupil”, which is intended to contribute towards better follow-up of vulnerable children and young people in their day-to-day schooling. The objectives are that:

- pupils should have a better learning environment that prevents bullying and mental health problems
- pupils should have a greater opportunity to come into contact with adults who can help them with various psychosocial and health-related challenges
- vulnerable children and young people should be identified and followed up, including children within the child welfare service

In 2014, a knowledge overview was prepared, and during summer 2015 various collaboration models will be developed and tested. Proposals will be formulated for various models for the utilisation of multidisciplinary expertise in school and appropriate research design that can make it possible to document the effects of systematic initiatives for multidisciplinary expertise in school. The project will run on a trial basis until summer 2015. Continuation of the project will be considered.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research

MEASURE 19

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT – TEAMWORK FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SCHOOL

The Government’s goal for the initiative “Teacher development – teamwork for the knowledge school” is to create a school where the pupils learn more. The school should provide everyone with a good start in life, contribute to social equalisation and secure Norwegian working life and welfare. It should equip both the community and each individual child for the future as well as possible. Teachers who are both motivated and strong in their subject make the most important contribution

to good development and teaching for all children and young people, including vulnerable children who have difficulties at home. However, having good individual teachers is not enough to create a good school. The Government wishes to help all schools to be learning organisations where colleagues work together to overcome challenges presented by day-to-day work at the school, evaluate their practices and continue to develop their teaching. The most far-reaching measures involve changing teacher training and a commitment to further training for school managers and teachers.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research

HOMEWORK HELP

In autumn 2010, an obligation was introduced for school owners to offer eight hours a week of free homework help for all pupils in years 1 to 4. This scheme was extended in autumn 2014 to cover both primary and lower secondary schools, not just years 1 to 4. The change was made because there is often a greater need for homework help at secondary school level.

At present school owners are free to allocate the hours of homework help to the various age groups as they see fit. The objective of the homework help scheme is to give the pupils support in learning, an experience of achievement and a good framework for independent work. The homework help should also contribute to reducing social inequality in education. The homework help should give the pupils help with school work.

MEASURE 20

REINFORCING MULTICULTURAL EXPERTISE ACROSS THE ENTIRE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

Expertise for diversity is a five-year initiative (2013–17) to reinforce expertise in the multicultural area throughout the course of education. The central topics of the initiative are multicultural pedagogics, multilingualism, multilanguage pedagogics and adult pedagogics. The intention is to put kindergartens and schools in a better position to provide effective, tailored tuition to children, young people and adults with a minority-language background, while also helping the kindergartens and schools to address and utilise diversity in the classroom. The initiative is intended to improve learning outcomes and the learning environment, both of which are important for preventing dropout in upper secondary education. Completing basic education increases the chances of getting a job.

The initiative encompasses employees, managers and owners of kindergartens and schools, including employees in adult-education institutions, as well as teacher-training institutions. The measures cover areas such as skills development in teacher training, kindergarten- and school-based supplementary training and offering further education for kindergarten employees and those who teach adults with a minority-language background. The initiative will be evaluated.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research

MEASURE 21

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITHIN THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES AT SCHOOL

In both 2014 and 2015, the Storting granted NOK 10 million for a measure to improve schooling and educational conditions for children in the child welfare service. The initiative emphasises the importance of influencing the attitudes of employees in the child welfare and school sectors, and on strengthening cooperation between the two sectors. The measures include the introduction of school officers

at all government child welfare institutions, dialogue conferences, surveying attitudes, preparing a professional guide, and compulsory school courses for employees and managers at government institutions and at foster home organisations.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 22

WORK TO COMBAT BULLYING AND TO IMPROVE THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT IN SCHOOLS

The Government believes that a successful initiative to ensure a good learning environment can help to reduce the vulnerability of pupils who live in financially difficult circumstances. A close partnership between the school and the home and good relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils are important in the work on the learning environment. In this way the work on the learning environment also makes a positive contribution to the work to counteract the harmful effects of child poverty.

Combating bullying is closely connected to the wider work to secure a good learning environment. Schools with a good, safe learning environment also have very little bullying. A close and productive school–home partnership is an important part of this learning environment initiative. The Djupedal committee, which delivered its report on 18 March (NOU 2015:2 *Å høre til. Virkemidler for et trygt psykososialt skolemiljø* (Belonging – Instruments for a safe psychosocial school environment)), had a mandate to assess the various instruments for creating a good psychosocial school environment and combating and handling bullying and other undesirable incidents in school.

The Government is now continuing work on the report, and will use it as an important basis when new policy for a good learning environment and combating bullying is to be developed.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research

MEASURE 23

PROVIDING SWIMMING LESSONS FOR PUPILS WITH AN IMMIGRANT BACKGROUND

a) Swimming lessons as part of basic education. Many newly arrived pupils with an immigrant background have not learned to swim in their home country and have parents who cannot swim either. In 2015, NOK 7 million has been granted for swimming lessons for newly arrived children, young people and adults as part of basic education. Families with an immigrant background are over-represented among low-income families, and therefore have fewer opportunities to pay for swimming lessons themselves. If the municipal authorities can see that there are other pupils who cannot swim, they have the opportunity to also offer swimming lessons to them. The objective of the initiative is to reduce the risk of accidents in water. The grant is administered by the Directorate for Education and Training.

b) Establishment of a grant scheme for swimming lessons in kindergartens

The Storting has agreed to create a new grant scheme for swimming lessons in kindergartens, and has for the current year granted NOK 10 million for swimming lessons, to be provided by the municipalities or voluntary organisations. The Directorate for Education and Training has been given the assignment of setting up the grant scheme and preparing proposed guidelines by 1 June 2015.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research

MEASURE 24

PROGRAMME FOR BETTER COMPLETION OF UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

The objective of the *Programme for better completion of upper secondary education* is to develop and communicate knowledge-based measures to prevent dropout from school and recover young people outside education and work. The programme provides a national network that will contribute towards the development of the knowledge basis and ensure that the measures are communicated at a local level. Included in the programme are measures that in various ways combine working practice and education for young people who have a very low likelihood

of completing and passing upper secondary school with ordinary study or working skills. Systematic work is ongoing to prepare a knowledge basis that is both experience-based and research-based, to be made the basis of further work towards better completion of upper secondary school.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research, in partnership with the relevant ministries

MEASURE 25

COORDINATED, MULTIDISCIPLINARY HELP FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE UNDER THE AGE OF 24 (THE 0–24 PARTNERSHIP)

The objective of the 0–24 Partnership is to ensure that more children and young people grow up healthy, complete basic education and are given the necessary basis for regular employment. In order to achieve such an objective, it is vital that vulnerable children and young people are identified and helped as early as possible. In addition to early intervention, it is important that the various municipal services, such as health centres, kindergartens, child welfare, schools and NAV, collaborate more effectively and offer better multidisciplinary services.

The Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Health and Care Services work together closely with their specialist directorates to arrange and adapt the various sectors' instruments. The objective is to make it easier for the municipal authorities to work together across disciplinary boundaries and regulations that could at present be perceived as a hindrance to multidisciplinary measures for vulnerable children and young people. In this connection, the ministries have given a shared and identical official task to all of Norway's county governors to support the municipalities' multidisciplinary work with vulnerable children and young people.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Health and Care Services

MEASURE 26

MENTOR FUNCTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Government proposes strengthening the grant scheme *Support for follow-up and mentor functions* for young people to the tune of NOK 10 million in 2015. The target group is young people between the ages of 14 and 23 who have dropped out of, or who are in danger of dropping out of, school and work. The initiative is directed towards young people where high absence from school or a lack of involvement in school are related to challenges such as a lack of support from parents, a lack of social network or health problems.

The objective is to strengthen the young people's involvement in school, well-being and feeling of achievement, and thereby contribute to better school performance and increase the likelihood of their completing upper secondary education.

To achieve this, municipal authorities can apply for funds for the implementation of follow-up and mentor functions for young people. This means that the municipal authorities can receive support to employ individuals (mentors) who will be responsible for giving the young people follow-up, helping them to make contact with the necessary support services and helping to ensure that the assistance provided by the school or by other organisations is arranged. Evaluation of the mentor function for young people shows that in the short term 70 per cent of young people gain an improved involvement in school and an increased level of employment.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 27

INCREASED SCHOLARSHIP SHARE FOR PUPILS FROM LOW-INCOME FAMILIES

The objective of the basic scholarship is to ensure that young people from families with particularly poor finances are given the same chances as others to complete upper secondary education. From autumn 2015, the basic scholarship will be changed so that it will be allocated more to pupils from families with particularly poor finances. The scholarship is being targeted and the scholarship payments increased in order to reinforce the scholarship as an instrument to help those pupils who are defined as having a need for the scholarship. The payments are being increased by approximately 50 per cent. This will mean an extra NOK 10,000 per year for pupils who need such a scholarship.

Responsible: The Ministry of Education and Research





3

PARTICIPATION AND INCLUSION – LEISURE, CULTURE AND SPORT

“When my handball team goes on trips, we all have to pay for ourselves. We went to a tournament at the weekend, and there were some of us who couldn’t go because it was expensive, so they got left behind.” Girl, 13.

“When everyone’s been away on holiday except you, it’s difficult to say what you’ve done on your holidays. You have to have something to tell everyone.” Girl, 12.

Voluntary organisations working in the fields of sport, the arts and culture are important for children and young people. Participation in voluntary organisations provides access to experiences, friends and a feeling of achievement and belonging. Creating the conditions for participation in various leisure arenas in the local community is of great importance for a good childhood and adolescence. However, due to poor finances and a lack of inclusion, some children are prevented from participating. The Government is therefore prioritising measures that make it possible for more children to participate in holiday and leisure activities.

Patterns of participation

Participation in leisure arenas is absolutely key to the development of social skills in children, and contributes to lasting feelings of belonging and fellowship. This learning is important for preparing for participation in society in formal arenas later in life. Despite the existence of many and varied voluntary organisations, participation in cultural, holiday and leisure activities is becoming increasingly costly, with participation fees, equipment and trips to pay for. Research shows that children and young people from low-income families participate to

a lower degree in leisure activities and spend somewhat less of their leisure time with friends than other children do (Fløtten and Kavli 2009; Ungdata 2010–12).

Participation in voluntary organisations is unevenly distributed among the population. In addition to a high level of education and regular employment, research shows that good finances increase the likelihood of participation. This applies both to membership, active participation and voluntary work.

For Norwegian six- to 12-year-olds, organised sport is a very important arena for physical activity in leisure time. Approximately 85 per cent of all Norwegian children have been a member of a sports team or club during primary school. From the ages of 12 or 13, there is a gradual fall in participation in organised sport during the teenage years. Nevertheless, sports teams and clubs remain the dominant arena for involvement in exercise and physical activity during leisure time, including for 13- to 19-year-olds. Of all organisations, sporting organisations recruit the fewest children from low-income families.

As a group, children and young people with an immigrant background generally participate much less in traditional Norwegian leisure activities. This particularly applies to certain groups of girls with an immigrant background, although there are also variations relating to country of background. A dedicated research project has therefore been set up to illustrate participation in sport by girls with an immigrant background (measure 54 in the strategy). Children and young people with disabilities also participate less in social activities than their contemporaries. Parents often do all that they can to protect their children from the consequences of growing up with poor finances, but it is difficult to prevent the children from being affected (Sandbæk (ed.) 2008).

In this strategy, the Government prioritises measures that create conditions for all children and young people to be able to participate in leisure activities together with their contemporaries where they live. If open meeting places are supported, children, young people and their parents will be included in the local environment.

TABLE 2: APERCENTAGE WHO PARTICIPATE IN VARIOUS ACTIVITIES IN LEISURE TIME, BY AGE AND SEX IN 2010. The various percentages can add up to over 100 due to participation in multiple activities.

| | Aged 9–12 | | | Aged 13–15 | | |
|--|-----------|------|-------|------------|------|-------|
| | All | Boys | Girls | All | Boys | Girls |
| Sport | 77 | 82 | 72 | 67 | 70 | 64 |
| Scouts or 4H | 11 | 14 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7 |
| Choir, theatre, dance, etc. | 30 | 22 | 38 | 27 | 14 | 41 |
| Activities linked to leisure or youth club | - | - | - | 30 | 30 | 36 |
| Other leisure activities or hobbies | 47 | 42 | 42 | 39 | 44 | 34 |

Source: Statistics Norway. Time use survey 2010 (Vaage, 2012).

Instruments

In its audit of work to combat child poverty (2013–2014), the Office of the Auditor General of Norway pointed out that many municipal authorities do too little to enable poor children and young people to participate socially. In work on the strategy, input has been obtained from both voluntary organisations and KS (the Association of Local and Regional Authorities). That input indicated that there is a need for a connecting link between voluntary initiatives – for example within sports clubs – and the work that is done in the municipal authorities. At present many municipal authorities do not have a full overview of the services and instruments on offer, whether provided by public or voluntary organisations, to prevent and alleviate child poverty. There is a need for a central hub in the municipalities that links the work together. The initiatives must be unbureaucratic and flexible, and active outreach

work must be performed to reach the most vulnerable families. This is followed up in the strategy, including by continuing to develop the national grant scheme to combat child poverty.

The Government is keen for the municipal authorities to facilitate good cooperation with the voluntary sector in order to include children affected by the problems of poverty. The state support schemes create the conditions for such work. It is also important to establish sound procedures for exchange of experience, so that examples of good, inclusive initiatives are shared between municipal authorities and voluntary organisations.

MEASURE 28

NATIONAL GRANT SCHEME TO COMBAT CHILD POVERTY

a) In 2014, a new national grant scheme to combat child poverty was established. This commitment against child poverty has been reinforced in the current accounting period by almost NOK 100 million, and NOK 137 million has been allocated in 2015.

In connection with the revised national budget for 2015, the Government proposes reinforcing the scheme with a further NOK 10 million.

The objective of the scheme is to combat and lessen the problems of poverty among children and young people by creating conditions that allow more young people to participate in leisure activities. With the help of these funds, the municipal authorities have developed equipment resource pools and holiday clubs, and can offer a range of leisure activities that cost little or nothing to participate in. The leisure measures are often developed to be attractive to children and young people from all social groups. The arenas help to erase the divisions between those who can pay and those who cannot pay to participate. Children and young people with an immigrant background are a particularly important target group for the scheme, and there are targeted measures to include girls and children of alcohol and drug abusers. Earmarked grants are given to the measures *Ferie for alle* ("Holidays for All" – Red Cross), FRI (The Church City Mission) and *Barnas Stasjon* ("The Children's Station" – Blue Cross).

In 2016, a research evaluation of the grant scheme will be commenced, whose objective includes investigating how well the measures in the scheme reach the target group and assessing what the municipal authorities who are successful in their work against child poverty actually do.

b) From 2016, municipal authorities that receive funds through the grant scheme must ensure that they have a central hub function. This function will prioritise outreach work aimed at families who could otherwise be difficult to reach. Furthermore, it will ensure that the municipal authorities have a good overview of all relevant measures provided by both the municipality and voluntary organisations. In this way a connecting link will be established between the families

who need help and the measures offered by the municipalities. The objective of the central hub function is to generate synergies between public and private initiatives, as well as to collate knowledge and expertise about how to work in a targeted and preventive manner to combat the consequences of growing up in poverty.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

LEISURE GUIDES IN SOLA MUNICIPALITY

Sola municipality has received support from the National grant scheme to combat child poverty for the measure "*Jeg kan delta*" ("I can take part"). The municipal authority's leisure guides are pivotal links in this measure. They have an outreach function towards parents and children to ensure broad participation in leisure activities. The leisure guides are knowledgeable about local activities on offer, provide advice and follow up children who want to start up their own activities. The leisure guides also have the task of arranging holiday measures for children and young people during school holidays.

NYSIRKUS, BJERKE DISTRICT IN OSLO

The main objective of Nysirkus ("New Circus") is the socialisation of marginalised children and young people who are affected by the problems of poverty in order to help prevent further problems. Recruitment of children and young people is carried out in close partnership with schools, the police and other municipal services.

Nysirkus Bjerke includes many population groups and is a unique arena offering activities adapted to children and young people with various needs. This promotes participation and a feeling of achievement. The circus includes activities involving movement and exercise, circus games, sound and lighting design, aerial acrobatics, special acrobatics, BackstageStudio (masks, scenography, special effects and make-up) and juggling. It also covers dance (ballet, hip-hop, "Riverdance", international folk dance), music and theatre. All of these elements are linked together in innovative productions, exhibitions, workshops and courses.

MEASURE 29

MEASURES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN LARGE CITIES

Large cities face special challenges relating to the accumulation of social problems and particular challenges in regard to living conditions. The objective of the large city scheme is to help to improve living conditions for children and young people in large cities by means of the cities in the scheme establishing and developing open meeting places for groups of vulnerable children and young people between the ages of 10 and 20. The large cities can apply for grants for projects that develop or establish open and inclusive meeting places, for collaborative measures between the municipal authority and voluntary organisations, and for investments in premises and equipment. The large cities that have received grant funds have used the funding for measures such as developing leisure clubs, youth cafés and youth “houses” where it costs very little to participate. The meeting places are staffed by skilled youth workers who maintain close contact with a range of preventive and follow-up services.

The Government proposes to increase the funding of the grant scheme *Measures for children and young people in large cities* by a further NOK 5 million in the revised national budget for 2015, bringing the scheme up to a total of NOK 33 million.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 30

GRANT SCHEME TO PREVENT AND REDUCE POVERTY AMONG CHILDREN AND FAMILIES WHO ARE IN CONTACT WITH THE SOCIAL SERVICES AT NAV

The Labour and Welfare Directorate administers a grant scheme to prevent and reduce poverty among children, young people and families with children who are in contact with the social services at NAV (the Labour and Welfare Administration). The objective of the scheme is to reinforce the social and preventive work in the municipalities, develop new measures aimed at this target group, strengthen unified follow-up and guidance work, and improve the coordination of measures and collaboration with other

services. Many municipal authorities/NAV offices have received funds to follow up low-income families, with a view to getting the parents into work while providing the necessary follow-up to the children. The measure also includes following up young people who have dropped out of, or are at risk of dropping out of, upper secondary school.

The grant scheme was reinforced in 2014 with the objective of strengthening measures that contribute to activity and participation among vulnerable children and young people, including individual activity grants and the establishment of equipment banks. Funding for the scheme was NOK 45 million in 2014.

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

MEASURE 31

MEASURES TO COMBAT CHILD POVERTY FROM THE VOLUNTARY FIELD

Within voluntary organisations, children and young people have the opportunity to make new friends and enjoy positive experiences and the feeling of achievement and belonging.

Many of the largest voluntary organisations have joined together in NDFU (the Norwegian Voluntary Association to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion among Children and Young People), where they cooperate to include children and young people who are not involved in organised voluntary organisations. Using course tools, the association aims to increase awareness so that the voluntary sector and organisations in general are better able to include individuals and groups who at present do not participate.

The Ministry of Culture will support the organisations' own solutions and find pilot projects and measures that are unbureaucratic and that create positive solutions, enabling more children and young people from poor families to have the opportunity to participate in organised voluntary organisations outside sport.

The Government is proposing to grant NOK 5 million for this work in connection with the revised national budget for 2015.

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

FRIGO – OUTDOOR CENTRE IN GAMLE OSLO DISTRICT

FRIGO is a municipally run outdoor centre that is part of the city district of Gamle Oslo. It was started as a club for outdoors activities in Tøyen in 1995. It has an equipment store offering outdoors equipment for free loan, and there is a city-wide arrangement whereby schools are offered trips and activities during school hours. FRIGO also offers activities during the school holidays.

FRIGO also operates the measure *Ta plasser tilbake* ("Reclaim the Square") in connection with Rudolf Nilsens plass, a square located in an area where there are major challenges relating to living conditions. In partnership with other organisations in the district, FRIGO operates an open skate store, with skates and ice hockey equipment available for free loan to children and young people. It is a welcoming, low-threshold service and a meeting place for the local population. FRIGO runs an equipment store next to the football pitch/ice rink every day after school and at the weekends. Staff organise activities including football matches, basketball matches, exercise, games, table tennis, etc. They create a good atmosphere in the park by organising activities such as campfires and barbecues, handing out fruit and juice and playing music by the pitch. FRIGO has a positive relationship with the police, outreach workers, etc.

MEASURE 32

GRANTS FOR LOCAL TEAMS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Grants made through this scheme go directly to activity-targeted measures in the local sports clubs around Norway. When distributing the gaming funds, the sports councils in each municipality must broadly speaking ensure equal opportunities, including consideration for participants with special needs as well as the inclusion of children and young people who do not tend to participate in organised sport. For 2014 a total of NOK 209 million was allocated, i.e. 11.25 per cent of the gaming funding made available for sporting causes that year.

The scheme is being reinforced to the tune of NOK 85 million, and in 2015 will receive 13 per

cent of the lottery funding allocated to sporting causes. The total amount of the grant in 2015 is NOK 294 million. This will help to improve the framework conditions for voluntary, membership-based activities for children and young people. The increase will make it easier to identify effective, unbureaucratic local solutions that can lower the threshold, enabling more children and young people from families with financial challenges to participate.

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

MEASURE 33

OPEN-AIR MEASURES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Ministry of Culture's grant scheme for open-air measures for children and young people was established in 1993. The objective of the scheme is to stimulate children and young people between the ages of 6 and 19 to participate in physical activity in the open air. The target group is children and young people, in leisure time or during school hours/SFO after-school schemes, either alone or with their families. The activities on offer are primarily low-threshold activities for which participation involves little or no cost. For 2014 allocation to this scheme was NOK 15.9 million.

The Ministry of Culture has allocated NOK 20 million to the scheme in 2015, an increase of over 25 per cent. This will help to ensure that even more children and young people can participate in outdoor activities during the Year of Outdoor Life.

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

SPORTS BROCHURE IN NINE LANGUAGES

NIF (the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports) recently launched a sports brochure in nine languages, providing information about Norwegian sport, using gaming funds from the Ministry of Culture. The brochure describes Norwegian sport in an easily understood manner, including how a sports club is operated, voluntary work, how to become a member and why physical activity is important.

STRATEGY COMMITTEE FOR SPORT

The Government recently appointed a strategy committee for sport. The committee will make contributions to the state sports policy. Its mandate is to identify challenges and prepare proposals for strategies that can help to resolve such challenges in the field of sport. The committee will identify, assess and describe strategies that can help to secure:

- Inclusion of groups who have traditionally not shown a great interest in participating in sport
- Good framework conditions for voluntary work in sport
- An attractive and varied range of sports on offer to young people

Participation in organised sport by children and young people from low-income families and girls with a minority background is a topic that it will be natural for the committee to consider.

OPEN HALL

The purpose of Open Hall is to provide activities for children and young people who are not members of sports clubs, so that they can get involved in activities in a safe environment and in due course participate in the club's regular activities. The target group is children and young people with an immigrant background, and children from families with poor finances. The measure works well and is also available to any other children or young people who want to take part.

Open Hall is an measure where sports clubs invite children and young people to general physical activity in a sports hall, irrespective of whether they are members of the club. It is normally offered free of charge, or for a very small fee. Often it is held at the weekends, although sometimes also on weekday evenings. In some cases there are specific activities for girls.

MEASURE 34

INCLUSION IN SPORTS TEAMS

The primary objective of the grant scheme is to include new groups in sports clubs' ordinary activities by breaking down the financial and cultural barriers that can prevent participation.

The grant is to be used for measures directed towards children (ages 6–12) and young people (ages 13–19) with an immigrant background, with a particular emphasis on girls as well as children and young people from families with poor finances. At present the scheme covers 11 of Norway's largest cities, where a relatively high proportion of the population has an immigrant background. Sports clubs who have received funds have developed low-threshold activities such as Open Hall. The scheme encourages sports councils and clubs to increase their focus on – and be better equipped to be successful in – work to include children and young people with an immigrant background in the sporting community. The grant scheme promotes the sports clubs' role as an arena for inclusion, and the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) has a responsibility to disseminate information about inclusion measures that have proved successful in its own organisation. The grant scheme was reinforced to the tune of NOK 1 million in 2015, and the Government is considering providing further additional funds during the strategy period. This allows four additional cities to be included in the scheme.

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

MEASURE 35

GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY CENTRES

The voluntary centres are local meeting places that use a wide range of activities to reach out to the community to make it possible for as many people as possible to participate in voluntary activities. Many centres offer activities aimed at children and young people, such as homework help, holiday measures and equipment loans. The voluntary centres are run by voluntary organisations, associations, cooperative societies and municipal authorities. In 2014 the Ministry of Culture distributed grants to 400 voluntary centres in 328 municipalities. The maximum state operating grant for voluntary centres is NOK 310,000, and requirements are set regarding local financing.

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

MEASURE 36

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Norway's public libraries are important local meeting places. These libraries are open learning and cultural arenas, fulfilling an important democratic function as they convey information, culture and knowledge to all. The public libraries work closely with organisations, the voluntary sector and local enthusiasts to provide a range of services that is relevant and tailored to the local community. Example areas for collaboration with the voluntary sector include promoting reading, homework help and integration. Many libraries work together with voluntary centres and the Red Cross. Libraries take the initiative to organise a range of activities, such as reading circles, writing courses and youth workshops. Over the last two years, the Government has increased the National Library's funding for development and projects by NOK 32.1 million, an increase of 187 per cent between 2013 and 2015. These funds are used in such areas as development of meeting places, teaching, public liaison and diversity.

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

MEASURE 37

FRIFOND SUPPORT SCHEME FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The objective of Frifond is to encourage children and young people's activity and participation locally, and to improve the framework conditions for voluntary organisations' and groups' membership-based activities locally. Grants are distributed by the umbrella organisations LNU (The Norwegian Children and Youth Council) and NMR (The Norwegian Music Council), both through the central body of national organisations and directly to local groups without an affiliation to a central body. Frifond is intended to be a low-threshold scheme, under which it is easy to apply for and report on activity funds. The scheme amounts to approximately NOK 200 million.

A special initiative will be introduced to increase participation from children and young people in poor families by means of the project *Frifond for all*. Active outreach work and guidance will be prioritised in order to enable more children and young people from poor families to participate in activities that receive support from Frifond. Funds will also be allocated for the organisations' work to combat poverty and social exclusion among children and young people.

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

MEASURE 38

VOLUNTARY WORK TO PREVENT LONELINESS AND PROMOTE SOCIAL INCLUSION

The Government will take the initiative for an information programme together with voluntary organisations, mobilising cooperation to prevent loneliness. Voluntary organisations play an important role in initiatives to prevent loneliness by creating positive local environments, facilitating meeting places and establishing services for groups and individuals who need extra follow-up. The municipal authorities are important partners for identifying individuals who would benefit from participating in voluntary activities.

Responsible: The Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Culture

MEASURE 39

LEISURE ACTIVITIES FOR EVERYONE

The Government's goal is to ensure that all children, irrespective of their parents' finances, have the opportunity to participate regularly in at least one organised leisure activity together with others. Therefore, the Government will invite KS (the Association of Local and Regional Authorities), the Association of NGOs in Norway and NIF (the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports) to set up common goals. The methods of reaching children will vary from municipality to municipality, and voluntary organisations and sporting organisations that already receive state support are expected to contribute to these various methods.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Culture

RED CROSS: HOLIDAYS FOR ALL AND THE MARTE NETWORK CENTRE

The Red Cross has been arranging holidays for children and adults for over 30 years. The Holidays for All scheme was created in 2001, at the time as a children's camp in the Østland area (Eastern Norway). Holidays for All is a scheme to ensure that children from families with poor finances have the opportunity to go on a holiday with their parents, just like their contemporaries. It is free for the families. Holidays for All recruits families in close partnership with the municipal authorities (school health service, child welfare service and NAV) and other Red Cross activities. To take part, families must have a minimum of one child of school age and not be benefiting from any other similar scheme. In 2014, there were 2,683 participants, around two-thirds of whom were children and young people. In 2015, there has been a historic commitment to Holidays for All: the Red Cross is receiving NOK 11 million via the national grant scheme to combat child poverty, an increase of NOK 3.5 million compared with 2014.

The MARTE Network Centre is a service for all lone providers and their children in Oslo. The objective is to contribute to positive experiences, new friendships and greater security in day-to-day life. Socialising and network building are central to all of its activities. The centre offers a range of activities, including Norwegian lessons, a women's café, themed evenings, holiday activities and special events in connection with public holidays, but one thing that is common to all of the activities is that they are for both children and adults together. In 2014, a total of 1,250 adults and 1,150 children took part in their activities.





4 PROVIDING GOOD HEALTH SERVICES TO ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

“Children shouldn’t have to worry about the future.” Girl, 14.

“Some kids just give up because they think there’s no point.” Girl, 15.

The Government wishes to promote good health, quality of life and well-being for children and young people. A good childhood lays the foundation for good health later in life.

There is a clear relationship between living in poverty and poor health. The Ungdata (“Youth data”) survey shows a clear correlation between the quality of life of young people and the family’s financial resources. Young people in families with poor finances come out worse on almost all of the health indicators covered by the Ungdata survey. There is also a correlation between the family’s financial situation and young people’s mental health: the proportion with depressive symptoms is clearly greatest in families with poor finances (Ungdata 2013).

The mental health of children and young people is a result of a complex interplay between social, environmental, psychological, biological and genetic factors. The foundation for good health and healthy habits is laid early in life, and remains significant throughout one’s life course. Mental-health problems often arise during childhood or adolescence. Early intervention and an emphasis on preventive measures are therefore vital for promoting the health of children and young people.

Having poor finances over a long period is a strain for families, which over time can affect the relationship between parents and children. This can impact the amount of time and energy that parents have for the children and increase the risk of conflicts between the adults in the family. In turn, such conditions can be

of significance for the health and development opportunities of children and young people, both cognitively and emotionally. Initiatives in this area must therefore be seen in the context of the strategy's focus on giving support to particularly vulnerable families with children, as described in the first chapter.

By means of this strategy, the Government will help to reduce the differences in health caused by social inequality, in part by continuing a commitment to health centres and the school health service. The state is responsible for ensuring that everyone, including children and young people, has access to good health and care services. Children are vulnerable and have a special need for protection and care. The Government will help to establish a closer partnership between the child welfare service, health centres and the school health service, kindergarten, school, the police and NAV (the Labour and Welfare Administration), to prevent children being bounced between public bodies. A survey carried out by RKBU Central Norway (the Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and child welfare) and NTNU (the Norwegian University of Science and Technology) shows that as many as 76 per cent of children and young people in child welfare institutions suffer from one or more mental illnesses. The Government therefore wishes to contribute to an improved and more binding partnership between the child welfare service and psychiatry for children and young people.

Health and social inclusion

The Government wishes to promote good health by placing more emphasis on environmental conditions that contribute to coping, belonging and an experience of meaning for children and young people. Good social support and integration into society are linked to good health, whereas experiencing discrimination has a negative effect on health. Children and young people who grow up in poverty more often express a feeling of loneliness, worry more about their own future and downgrade their own wishes for the future. Research shows that people without strong social bonds and with weak social networks have a greater likelihood of developing poor physical and mental health. In fact, loneliness can be at least as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Preventive measures should therefore be directed towards helping children and young people to develop good, lasting social relationships while growing up, both within the family and among their friends.

The municipal authorities can utilise various instruments that can help to create a stimulating environment for children and young people to grow up in. These instruments include good kindergartens, a school environment that promotes development, good low-threshold health services, meaningful leisure activities and an inclusive local community. In addition, preventive measures and early intervention aimed at especially vulnerable groups are involved.

MEASURE 40

REINFORCING THE HEALTH CENTRE AND SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICE

In 2014 and 2015, the health centre and school health service has been strengthened through an increase in the municipal authorities' free revenue in the amount of NOK 455 million. This reinforcement will allow for additional staffing equivalent to approximately 400–450 annual full-time staff, and will provide a substantial boost for the municipal authorities' work relating to families, children and young people and in following up pregnant women. In addition, the Government has further reinforced the services by earmarking:

- NOK 27.6 million in grants for the development of the school health service in upper secondary schools with major living-conditions challenges.
- NOK 4.1 million for the area initiative in Oslo Inner East to reinforce the health centre and school health service. Work on this area initiative is led by the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation. A number of other ministries are participating in the collaboration.

Responsible: The Ministry of Health and Care Services

MEASURE 41

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN CHILD WELFARE INSTITUTIONS

We know that a high proportion of children and young people who are exposed to a lack of care and/or victims of abuse have mental health problems. In particular, young people in child welfare institutions have complex needs that require collaboration and coordinated effort. A range of initiatives have been introduced to strengthen the service for children and young people in the child welfare service who also need help from the health service due to mental health problems. Employees in child welfare institutions will receive training on mental health. In addition, the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs and the Directorate of Health have been mandated to survey the experiences of children and young people in child welfare institutions, including regarding mental health care and treatment for alcohol and drug abuse. The directorates have also been asked to report on the best way to secure the necessary and appropriate health services for children. In addition, the regional health authorities and the Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs' regional divisions have been asked to establish structures and procedures that ensure that children in child welfare institutions receive the necessary investigation and treatment for mental health problems and alcohol and drug dependency.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 42

PROGRAMME FOR PUBLIC HEALTH IN THE MUNICIPALITIES, FOCUSING ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In collaboration with the municipal sector, the Ministry of Health and Care Services will initiate a development programme with a view to establishing a programme for local public health work. Children and young people are a priority target group, and the objective of the programme is to contribute to long-term reinforcement of the municipalities' work to improve the health of the population. The programme shall be directed towards mental health and preventing the abuse of alcohol and drugs.

The programme shall help to reinforce cross-sectoral work, encourage local involvement and facilitate local activities. The programme will include measures to combat social exclusion and strengthen children and young people's own resources, participation and activity in the local community. Relevant measures could include creating social meeting places, arranging "*rusfrie tilbud*" (opportunities for socialising without the presence of alcohol or drugs), offering "open kindergarten", measures to strengthen parenting skills, health-promoting schools and leisure activities linked to school and SFO schemes.

Responsible: The Ministry of Health and Care Services

MEASURE 43

STRENGTHENING MUNICIPAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

In 2014, the grant scheme for recruiting psychologists in municipalities was strengthened by NOK 40 million to NOK 100 million, and the scheme is being continued at the same level in 2015. This will allow the recruitment of at least 40 psychologists during the current year. The municipal authorities are being encouraged to view the grant in the context of the increase in 2015 of NOK 100 million through the municipal authorities' free revenue to strengthen mental health work in the municipalities.

It is a goal that psychologists in the municipalities work in an outward, preventive and health-promoting manner, strengthening general municipal

expertise in mental health by guiding and assisting other professions, both within and outside the health service. The municipal authorities are also being encouraged to consider using psychologist resources to support the Government's *Programme for better completion*, the main objective of which is to encourage more young people to complete and pass upper secondary education.

Responsible: The Ministry of Health and Care Services

THE YOUTH HEALTH STRATEGY

The Government has given notice that a youth health strategy is to be prepared. This strategy shall cover young people between the ages of 13 and 25, and it is planned to be presented in 2016.

The overall goal is that young people should have the best conditions to live good lives and have positive experiences physically, mentally and socially. These conditions are influenced and formed primarily by arenas other than the health service: school and education, secure home life, healthy leisure interests and a secure working life.

The work on this strategy will take in how the conditions can be created for good mental, physical and social health. It will also include assessing how availability, capacity and multidisciplinary can be assured in the health services for children and young people, including quality-assured e-health services.

Furthermore, it will consider how the health services can secure the provision of good health services for groups of young people that may be facing special health challenges and problems relating to dental health, sexual health, mental health (including loneliness, bullying, suicide, self-harm, dropout issues, alcohol and drug abuse, violence and sexual abuse) as well as pressure from society and social exclusion.

The work is led by: The Ministry of Health and Care Services in partnership with the relevant ministries

MEASURE 44

NEW ESCALATION PLAN FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE SUPPORT SERVICES

The Government will propose a new escalation plan for alcohol and drug abuse support services in 2015. In the first instance the need for escalation in this field concerns the initiative relating to early intervention and help for people with alcohol and drug abuse problems. There will be an overlap between target groups, especially in relation to the work on early intervention. The work may touch on multiple points concerning child poverty and work with vulnerable children and young people. Initiatives in recent years in the field of alcohol and drug abuse have helped to boost understanding of alcohol and drug abuse problems and have increased capacity in treatment and follow-up services. However, we still lack good policy indicators and knowledge about the effect of the services on people with alcohol and drug abuse problems and resource utilisation. One important goal of the plan is to gain a better overview of, and reinforce, the fields of alcohol and drug abuse and mental health.

Responsible: The Ministry of Health and Care Services in partnership with the relevant ministries

MEASURE 45

PROGRAMME TO COMBAT SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN DENTAL HEALTH

In its allocation letter for 2014, the Directorate of Health was mandated to prepare and initiate a multi-year programme to combat social inequality in dental health, including assessing in the first instance social inequality in dental health among children and young people. New data from the Nord-Trøndelag Health Survey indicates that social inequality in dental health is increasing. Within the programme to combat social inequality in dental health, the Directorate of Health will initially prioritise identifying children and young people with the worst dental health and those falling outside the service offering, and to establish measures directed towards these. Research shows that children who have tooth decay by the age of three will very often have tooth decay throughout their lives. Tooth decay in young children is also often an indicator for other illnesses or social problems. This measure can help to identify children and young people with challenges other than dental health problems. The dental health service

has an important role to play in uncovering sexual abuse and lack of care. The programme requires close collaboration with other health services, in particular the health centres.

Responsible: The Ministry of Health and Care Services

REPORT TO THE STORTING NO. 19 (2014–2015) THE PUBLIC HEALTH REPORT – COPING AND OPPORTUNITIES

On 27 March 2015, the Government presented Report to the Storting no. 19 (2014–2015), the Public Health Report – *Mestring og muligheter* (Coping and opportunities). It is a goal of the Government to create a society that promotes health throughout the population. The foundation for good health is laid early in life, and remains significant throughout one's life course. All children and young people must be given opportunities to achieve and develop. This includes good living conditions, conditions to grow up in that promote mental health, opportunities for a healthy diet and physical activity in kindergartens and schools and tobacco-free surroundings. Mental health shall be equally important as physical health in public health work. Together with voluntary organisations, the Government will mobilise to prevent loneliness. Measures to combat poverty are a prioritised task that will also help to reduce social inequalities in health.

Voluntary organisations play an important role in initiatives to prevent loneliness by creating positive local environments, facilitating meeting places and establishing services for groups and individuals who need extra follow-up. Government authorities can contribute through their voluntary work policies and schemes to prevent social exclusion due to health problems, poverty and poor finances. The Government will take the initiative for an information programme together with voluntary organisations, mobilising cooperation to prevent loneliness. The Government will contribute to the development of good local environments and will create conditions for all to be able to participate in social activities. All children and young people should have the opportunity to participate in at least one leisure activity. Healthy and secure local environments are particularly important for the well-being of children and young people.

The work is led by: The Ministry of Health and Care Services

REINFORCED SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICE AT BJØRNHOLT SCHOOL IN OSLO

The school health service at Bjørnholt School has been reinforced, with two school nurses and a clinical pedagogue who work together as a team.

The school health service is staffed every day by at least two members of staff. This means that the school's employees will almost always have someone to contact when they need the school health service's expertise. The school health service is prominent in the school environment and is part of the school's environmental team. The environmental team also includes advisers, minority advisers, environmental workers and team leaders, who are spokespeople in dealings with the school's management.

When the school health service is part of the environmental team, the job of network building is made much easier. Each autumn the school health service, as a part of the environmental team at the school, is introduced to all of the school's staff. The school also schedules development time each week for all teachers. Several times a year the environmental team takes responsibility for the development time. In this connection the school health service has been able to provide training for all of the school's teachers on such issues as mental health. Many teachers also make direct contact with the school health service when they have concerns about pupils.

UNGDATA, NATIONAL RESULTS 2013

Mental health problems

Adolescence is a vulnerable time involving significant physical and mental changes. Young people need to find out who they are and what they believe in. They also meet new demands and expectations. For most, symptoms of mental illness are temporary, but for some they are long-lasting. Studies show an increase in depressive symptoms among young people. Moreover, there has been a clear increase in anxiety and depression as a cause of young people being signed off on disability benefit. Generally, depression and anxiety are the most common illnesses among young people. Girls are more likely to suffer such conditions, and they seek help more often than boys. Conflict-ridden conditions at home and a low level of social support increase the risk of such illnesses. Many surveys also show a clear correlation between bullying and poor mental health.

Friendship

The Ungdata surveys show that being part of a larger network or group of young people is by far the most common way for young people to spend time together. For most, friends are a source of play, happiness, support, solidarity and recognition. In the longer term, interaction with contemporaries is of significance for the development of self-image and social skills.

Almost one in ten of the young people surveyed lack close friends or have no one they would call friends.

Most are satisfied with their own health

Overall, 42 per cent of the young people surveyed in Ungdata are "very satisfied" with their own health, and 31 per cent are "fairly satisfied". Some feel their health could be better: 8 per cent are "somewhat dissatisfied", while 6 per cent are "very dissatisfied". Girls experience various health-related problems to a greater degree than boys, and as ages increase there are fewer who are satisfied with their health.

Nova report 10/2014







5

ACCESS TO WORK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND PARENTS

“There’s a good chance of becoming what you want to become when you’re motivated by teachers, friends and parents. That’s important.” Boy, 18.

“It’s a problem when your parents don’t have a job.” Girl, 12.

The Government’s goal is for more people to have the opportunity to get into work. A lack of regular employment is the most important cause of poverty. Work gives a feeling of belonging, a network, and an opportunity to support oneself financially. For many people, getting into work is an important step on the way out of poverty and social exclusion. For this reason, the Government is putting in place measures to help people with various challenges to get into ordinary work.

The Norwegian Government wishes to facilitate a society in which everyone can exploit their ability to work. The welfare society relies on our common work effort. The social security benefit schemes are designed to help secure good living conditions in the event of loss of income. The goal is for each individual to be able to provide for him- or herself. The Government will both set requirements and create conditions for work and activity.

Young people who do not complete their education are more likely to be excluded from the employment market and receive benefits than those who do. The way back to activity becomes more difficult the longer young people remain outside work or school. The strategy includes a range of measures to increase involvement in school and make the transition from school to work easier. The measures in this area of the strategy shall help young people to find a way into the employment market and get help to acquire more formal or practical expertise as needed.

Socio-economic analyses show that it is beneficial for society to reduce the number of young people who do not complete their course of education and are not in work or activity (Rasmussen, Dyb, Herdal and Strøm, 2010). Involvement in activity is beneficial for young people and their families.

The reasons why young people drop out of school or do not get into gainful employment are complex. Family background and living conditions are important factors, and often various composite measures are required because they have to be tailored to each individual young person's challenges and needs.

The strategy prioritises targeted measures to include parents who are entirely outside the employment market. It is of great significance for young people that their parents fulfil a support function in the course of their education and transition to work. When parents have difficulties getting into the employment market, this has consequences for the children of the family. Measures that can help parents get into work help to reinforce their roles as both providers and role models.

A sound integration policy

A sound integration policy is naturally part of this focus area. The main objective of the integration policy is to allow immigrants and their children to use their resources and contribute to society. Although employment rates are lower among immigrants, and especially among women with an immigrant background, than in the population as a whole, immigrants make an important contribution to Norwegian working life. There are large variations in the level of employment between various groups of immigrants. These variations are linked to length of residence in Norway and, in particular, reasons for immigration. Country of origin and educational background are also important factors for employment levels. Participation in working life and good Norwegian language skills are the key to integration into Norwegian society.

An analysis carried out by Proba Samfunnsanalyse shows that it is beneficial from a socio-economic point of view to increase employment among immigrants through schemes such as *Ny sjanse* ("New Chance") and *Jobbsjansen* ("The Job Opportunity"). A 2012 report (Proba report 7/2012) concluded that *Ny sjanse* is beneficial from a socio-economic point of view, even though it is only possible to quantify increased employment for participants. This conclusion is based on the calculated costs of running the projects and the benefit in the form of increased employment activity among participants. Proba believes that *Ny sjanse* also has beneficial effects in other areas: increased participation in education, increased achievement in other arenas and increased participation in employment and better integration in general for participants' children.

MEASURE 46

SETTING ACTIVITY REQUIREMENTS FOR RECIPIENTS OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (SOCIAL ASSISTANCE BENEFIT)

In December 2014, the Government presented a proposition (Proposition to the Storting 39 L (2014–2015)) that requires municipal authorities to set requirements for activity for recipients of financial assistance. The proposal entails closer follow-up of benefit recipients. The objective of the change to the law is wherever possible to encourage benefit recipients to participate in activities that improve their opportunities to gain employment or enter education.

Benefit recipients that are not in a position to participate in an arranged activity, or who have serious reasons for not participating, will be excepted. It is particularly important for the NAV offices to be able to offer young benefit recipients activities to promote transition to work. Both low-threshold measures and work-targeted measures should be offered. Under current legislation, the municipal authorities can set requirements for activity, but the level to which this is utilised varies. Following discussion by the Storting, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will consider possible additional costs for the municipal sector as a result of the change to the law. KS (the Association of Local and Regional Authorities) will be consulted in connection with this. It is intended that the law will come into force on 1 January 2016.

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

MEASURE 47

THE JOB OPPORTUNITY – EXPANSION

The Government wishes to strengthen language learning and other targeted measures to enable more women with an immigrant background to participate in working life. The objective of The Job Opportunity scheme is to increase employment among immigrants who are entirely outside the employment market and who are not covered by other schemes.

a) Following the model of the introduction scheme, The Job Opportunity will utilise individ-

ually tailored programmes to provide improved qualifications to participate in working life, improved Norwegian language skills and a better understanding of Norwegian society. The priority target group is women who stay at home. As is the case with the introduction scheme, young people aged 18 and over are also included in the scheme. Participants receive financial benefit of a minimum 1 G per year. (G is the Norwegian National Insurance scheme's "basic amount", as determined by parliament; as of 1 May 2015, the basic amount is NOK 90,068 per year.) The Job Opportunity was introduced as a permanent scheme in summer 2013. The programme can last for up to two years, with an option for an extension of up to one year. For individuals who lack fundamental reading and writing skills in their mother tongue, the programme period can be extended by a further year, i.e. up to a total of four years.

b) In 2015, the Government will trial an extension of The Job Opportunity in selected municipalities. The trial will involve basic qualification for parents in low-income families, within the same bounds as the introduction programme. Family members who have been reunited with Nordic citizens will be prioritised. The objective of the trial is to promote increased participation in working life, especially for women.

In connection with the revised national budget for 2015, the Government will propose increasing grants for the trial by NOK 5 million. The trial will be continued during the strategy period providing there is budgetary coverage.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 48

PROJECT FOR INCREASED COMPLETION OF UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

Nord-Trøndelag county authority is trialling a model under which its follow-up service purchases services from rehabilitation companies or other parties with equivalent expertise. The objective of the trial project is to help more young people outside education and work back into education. The target group is young people between the ages of 15 and 21 who are entitled to upper secondary education but who do not

apply for a school place, decline a school place or drop out of upper secondary education.

The project is limited to young people at greatest risk, i.e. young people with social or health problems. These will be offered tailored education and/or work in a rehabilitation company or with another service provider. The objective is to get the young people back into upper secondary education the following school year in order to gain study skills, vocational skills or basic skills during the period of entitlement to upper secondary education. The project is financed from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs' budget for 2015. NOK 5 million per year has been allocated for a three-year period to Nord-Trøndelag county authority to trial this model.

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research

MEASURE 49

TRIAL WITH NAV GUIDES IN UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL

The trial with NAV guides in upper secondary school (2012–2016) involves testing models for coordinating services and measures between the follow-up service, upper secondary schools, vocational training office and NAV (the Labour and Welfare Administration). The objective is to identify methods for following up young people in a unified manner and preventing dropout from upper secondary education. The primary target group consists of young people between the ages of 16 and 21, who are offered individually tailored education. The secondary target group is young people who are at risk of dropping out of upper secondary education and who need social services and close follow-up. The NAV guides will work with the upper secondary schools for four days a week, and for one day a week they will work at the NAV office where they are employed.

The NAV guides' work will be an integral part of the schools' follow-up of pupils. Meanwhile, the guides will administer all of NAV's measures and instruments. During the period from 2012 to 2014, eight pilot schemes were set up in seven

counties. It is planned to set up pilot schemes in all counties during the project period. The trial is under evaluation.

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Research

ASSISTANCE FROM NAV

NAV (the Labour and Welfare Administration) can assist young people in the transition between education and work. Many young people who come into contact with the NAV office have not completed upper secondary education. These individuals are often followed up in partnership with the county authority's follow-up service. A number of NAV offices have established various types of collaboration agreement with employers regarding measure places and recruitment. Young people are often a key target group for such collaborations. One example is the collaboration between NAV in Drammen and the KIWI School, which focuses on offering a service to young people who have not completed upper secondary education.

The "youth guarantee" shall ensure that employment-related measures are offered to young people under the age of 20 who are out of school or work. Unemployed young people between the ages of 20 and 24 who have received a follow-up decision regarding the need for assistance to get into work will be provided with an activity plan in partnership with the NAV office within one month. The activity plan is tailored to the individual, and can include measures and instruments from NAV as well as services relating to school, alcohol and drug problems and health services.

REPORT TO THE STORTING ON LIFELONG LEARNING AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

In autumn 2015, the Ministry of Education and Research, in collaboration with the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, will present a report to the Storting on lifelong learning and social exclusion. One of the report's target groups is young adults who are not attending school and are out of work. A number of studies show a positive relationship between the completion of upper secondary education and regular employment. The report will consider measures that can help more adults to complete upper secondary education.

MEASURE 50

THE QUALIFICATION PROGRAMME

The qualification programme and the accompanying qualification benefit were introduced on 1 November 2007, and the programme became a legal entitlement in all municipalities as of 1 January 2010. The objective is to improve the follow-up of individuals who are, or are at risk of becoming, long-term recipients of financial assistance for subsistence, and to help these people to gain regular employment. The qualification benefit, which is granted as a standardised benefit, gives the household a more predictable income. By the end of 2013, approximately 24,900 people had been participants in the programme since 2008. As of 31 December 2014, the programme had 5,700 participants. In the first quarter of 2014, young people between the ages of 18 and 24 made up 17 per cent of participants.

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

MEASURE 51

THE INTRODUCTION ACT – QUALIFICATION FOR WORK AND TRAINING

a) The Introduction Scheme

The objective of the introduction scheme is to improve newly arrived immigrants' opportunities for participation in work and society and to contribute towards their financial independence. The fact that participation in the introduction scheme is both a right and an obligation for each individual, and that the financial benefit is paid to individuals irrespective of their family situation, encourages both marital or cohabiting partners to participate in qualification.

The introduction programme normally offers up to two years of full-time education for qualification. The qualification includes Norwegian lessons and learning about Norwegian society, as well as measures that prepare individuals for work or training. The introduction scheme applies to immigrants and their family members. Only people between the ages of 18 and 55 who need basic qualification have the right and obligation to participate in the programme. Participants receive an introduction benefit for their participation in the programme.

b) Norwegian lessons and learning about Norwegian society

The right and/or obligation to Norwegian lessons and learning about Norwegian society applies to people who have been given a residence permit that provides the basis for permanent residence since 1 September 2005. Only people between the ages of 16 and 55 have the right and/or obligation to the education. The obligation involves 600 hours for those who were covered by the right and obligation to education after 1 January 2012 (550 hours of Norwegian lessons and 50 hours of lessons on Norwegian society in a language the individual understands). Up to an additional 2,400 hours of Norwegian lessons can be provided as required. Migrant workers from outside the EEA/EFTA area have an obligation to participate in 300 hours of Norwegian lessons and lessons about Norwegian society.

The schemes are to be evaluated. The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion assesses measures on an ongoing basis in order to improve the scheme, including in connection with the report on lifelong learning and social exclusion presented in autumn 2015.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

JOBBUSET ("THE JOB HOUSE") IN AURSKOG-HØLAND

In 2014, a youth team was established at the Aurskog-Høland NAV office, including guides who work at Jobbhuset. Jobbhuset is located outside the NAV office and is a service for young people who are not in school or work. Young people who receive financial assistance (social assistance benefit) can be required to attend Jobbhuset. The methodical approach consists of both individual surveying and close follow-up of individual young people as well as group activities.

The target group is young job seekers from low-income families where unemployment or a lack of regular employment is a problem, or young people with complex problems relating to mental health, alcohol or drug abuse, etc. The follow-up is directed towards school, work and the general living situation. The young people receive follow-up with regard to school attendance, job applications (interviews and CVs), guidance on housing and looking after oneself, social problems, finance, health, leisure, diet, managing sleep patterns and hygiene.





6

RESEARCH AND STATISTICS

As mentioned in the introduction, the proportion of families with children living with persistent low income has increased. It is therefore vital to understand the causes of this trend. To this end, we need up-to-date knowledge.

There is broad cross-party agreement in Norway regarding preventing and combating poverty that affects children and young people. In this work, it has always been a challenge that there are various ways to understand how poverty affects children and young people, and this challenge will no doubt remain. The choice of the instruments to be used is therefore dependent on how the phenomenon of child poverty is interpreted and measured. On the other hand, there is relatively broad agreement that certain groups, irrespective of how poverty is defined, are at particular risk of becoming affected.

We are dependent on up-to-date knowledge about what measures best help to improve children's situation. First and foremost, we need increased insight into what preventive measures counteract poverty being passed on from generation to generation, and how in this context we can best balance universal and targeted initiatives. In this respect, one good example is the trial of free core time in kindergarten (as discussed in chapter 2). This trial is limited to areas that face particular challenges regarding living conditions. Nevertheless, it has been designed to be universal, in that all families within the limited area are included in the scheme. This type of design is well suited to highlighting the key factors behind attendance or non-attendance at kindergarten.

The knowledge basis in the strategy shows that we do not have enough knowledge about how growing up in poverty affects the everyday life of children and young people. How does it affect the children's self-esteem, their relationship with and confidence in society, and their ambitions for the future? For this reason, the strategy aims to obtain more knowledge about this, as well as about

which targeted measures, from both the public and the private sector, are most effective in ensuring participation, inclusion and coping among groups who become excluded.

There is already much data on poverty and living conditions among children and young people, especially information about income, housing, kindergarten attendance, SFO schemes, school and working life. This information is often also linked to relevant background variables such as age, sex, place of residence and country of origin. However, as child poverty is a complex problem, there is a great need to collate existing knowledge. This requires viewing statistical material in context and supplementing it with qualitative studies that systematise the experiences of children and young people.

Measures that provide us with new knowledge and measures that enable us to combine existing knowledge are therefore both absolutely vital for achieving the objectives of the strategy. Additionally, as we will return to in the next chapter, new knowledge and expertise must be spread to all parts of the administrative apparatus and form a basis for initiatives aimed at children, young people and families. This will also enable us to follow up the strategy and targeted measures.

MEASURE 52

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CHILD POVERTY IN THE MUNICIPALITIES

The municipal support apparatus bears much of the responsibility for helping children, young people and families who are affected by poverty. Some municipal authorities work in a targeted manner and have good knowledge about vulnerable groups of children, young people and families. These working methods are of great value for transfer to other municipal authorities who have not been so successful in their work to combat child poverty. The two parts of this measure are intended to both increase knowledge about child poverty in the municipalities and ensure that the knowledge that already exists is made known.

a) Indicators of child poverty

The Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs has been given the assignment of preparing and implementing indicators of child poverty in the municipalities. These indicators shall help the municipal authorities to identify children affected by the problems of poverty and to develop more effective measures.

b) Guide for cross-sectoral work to combat child poverty

The Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs will, in collaboration with relevant directorates, prepare a guide and educational tools that the municipal authorities can use in their work to combat child poverty. The county governors can play an important role as facilitators of knowledge dissemination. This will contribute to all municipal authorities receiving up-to-date knowledge about how work to combat child poverty can be organised.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion in partnership with the relevant ministries

MEASURE 53

DEFINING KNOWLEDGE GAPS AND MEASURES THAT COULD COVER PRIORITY AREAS

a) Counteracting the reproduction of poverty

An important objective of the strategy to combat child poverty is to prevent children and young people who grow up in poverty from themselves becoming poor as adults. Existing knowledge shows that universal public services within education and health, the families' general resources and employment-related measures are the areas that are most relevant to preventing poverty from being passed on from generation to generation. These are broad areas, and there is a need for more specific knowledge about the types of initiatives – including targeted measures – that counteract the reproduction of poverty.

b) Knowledge coordination

Statistics Norway, the Ungdata survey, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health and others have an extensive body of data and knowledge that describes the living conditions of children, young people and families. It is necessary to view these data in context and find ways that they can illuminate the challenges related to child poverty. Such a measure requires the ministries and directorates involved to coordinate their knowledge-gathering and to develop analytical tools that make it possible to understand the complex aspects of child poverty. This work will be led by the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, in collaboration with other directorates.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion in partnership with the relevant ministries

MEASURE 54

GIRLS WITH A MINORITY BACKGROUND AND PARTICIPATION IN SPORT

Girls with a minority background participate in sport less than other girls of the same age. A research project on this topic has been recently initiated, divided into two phases:

- 1) Acquisition of up-to-date knowledge about girls with an immigrant background and their patterns of participation to facilitate closer analysis of the reasons behind their underrepresentation in sport.
- 2) The absence of girls with an immigrant background will be investigated in the light of cultural, religious and/or organisational barriers in local associations and the significance of network resources in the family and the girls' own network.

The project will be completed in 2016 and will be carried out by the Institute for Social Research and the Centre for Research on Civil Society and Voluntary Sector in partnership with NOVA and the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

MEASURE 55

SOCIAL REPORTING – FINANCE AND LIVING CONDITIONS FOR VARIOUS LOW-INCOME GROUPS

Every year, Statistics Norway prepares statistics on various low-income groups. The purpose of this monitoring is to look more closely at the finances and living conditions of groups who find themselves on the lower levels of income distribution. The statistics cover individuals and households with persistent and/or annual low income, as well as some vulnerable groups in society such as recipients of financial assistance (social assistance benefit), families with children, immigrant groups, etc. While the statistics focus primarily on income indicators, they also create indicators with regards to work, education, housing and housing finances, health, financial and ma-

terial conditions (Statistics Norway, reports 2013/32). The statistics are published together with Statistics Norway's Households' Income and Wealth Statistics, and the living conditions statistics are specifically reported to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. A number of articles are published each year on the Statistics Norway website, ssb.no, in connection with this reporting of the statistics.

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

NAV'S ROLE AS A KNOWLEDGE AGENCY IN THE MUNICIPALITIES

In each municipality, the NAV (Labour and Welfare Administration) office is the most important welfare agency. The Act relating to social services in NAV instructs municipal authorities to make themselves familiar with the living conditions of the local population and to be attentive to factors that can create or perpetuate social problems. In order to prevent social problems, it is necessary for the local NAV office to keep politicians and other key parties informed about local challenges. The knowledge thus provided can act as an important basis for municipal planning and budgetary processes, and can contribute towards better coordination of the wide range of state and municipal instruments.

As specialist directorate for the social services, the Directorate for Labour and Welfare is responsible for paying attention to issues that can affect the living conditions of vulnerable groups and how the social services develop. The directorate prepares an annual report on conditions and trends in poverty and challenges for NAV (NAV report 2014:3). The objective is to describe the reasons for the trends in living conditions and form the basis for assessing the service offering for vulnerable groups.

The work is led by: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

MEASURE 56

COORDINATED DATABASES FROM STATISTICS NORWAY

Statistics Norway is working to establish a coordinated database that as of 2015 will form the basis for annual, register-based living conditions statistics that link together information on individuals/households and their homes. The new statistics will provide more information and a better overview of the living conditions of families with children and low-income households.

The figures will be updated annually in order to provide a picture of longer-term trends, and will thus prove a useful aid in targeting the instruments towards people facing problems in the housing market in general and families with children in particular.

Responsible: The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation

MEASURE 57

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT SPENDING IN FAMILIES

SIFO (the National Institute for Consumer Research) prepares an annual reference budget showing the general expenses for various types of household. The reference budget shows how much it costs a household to live at a reasonable level of consumption, where the latter is defined as a level of consumption that most people would accept, fulfilling the requirements for normal standards of health and nutrition and making it possible for the members of the household to participate fully in the most common leisure activities.

During the strategy period, the Government will consider giving SIFO the assignment of developing a cost-based target for poverty. This would help to provide an expanded understanding of who are poor and how this affects families with children. Such a target would also make it easier to implement measures. This budget will be a valuable supplement to Statistics Norway's annual low-income target.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

MEASURE 58

RESEARCH ON CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The Centre for Research on Civil Society and Voluntary Sector performs research on assignment from the Ministry of Culture in partnership with the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Health and Care Services, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The primary objective of the research is:

- to obtain more knowledge about the significance of civil society and the voluntary sector for society
- to help develop government policy on the voluntary sector
- to reinforce civil society and the voluntary sector

The main areas for research are participation, change within the voluntary sector and framework conditions. Knowledge about involvement in the voluntary sector and organisational activity among young people is a central topic for the centre's research. *Ungdoms deltakelse i politikk- og samfunnsliv: Kontinuitet eller endring?* (Young people's participation in politics and society: Continuity or change?) is the title of a new research project with four main areas:

- 1) Changes in young people's patterns of participation
- 2) Non-participating young people: individual and contextual absence mechanisms
- 3) Involvement in associations and in politics
- 4) New social media – a new collective participation arena

For more information about the centre's research projects, please visit www.sivilsamfunn.no

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

MEASURE 59

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE GRORUDDAL PROJECT

Certain city districts and areas in large cities face particular challenges relating to poor living conditions, and therefore a number of geographically limited measures have been implemented. The year 2016 is the last year of the joint ten-year area initiative by the state and the City of Oslo in the valley of Groruddalen. The initiative will be evaluated at its conclusion to establish results and goal achievement. The evaluation will be carried out as a joint project between the state and the City of Oslo. The evaluation project will be led by the Planning Office for the Groruddal initiative in the City of Oslo, and will be completed during 2016. The evaluation will provide valuable information concerning area initiatives in general, and in particular how such initiatives affect groups of vulnerable children and young people.

Responsible: The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation

SURVEYING THE HOMELESS

In 2016, a sixth national survey will be carried out of homelessness in Norway. People who do not own or rent their own home and who have to rely on one-off or temporary offers of housing are deemed to be homeless. The survey of homelessness is a national study that records the number of homeless people living in Norway and the characteristics of their living conditions. The project client is the Norwegian State Housing Bank.

The work is led by: The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation


SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND HOUSING FROM A LIFETIME PERSPECTIVE: GOOD CHOICES OR HAPPY ACCIDENTS?

This research project illustrates the role of housing in the creation and reproduction of social inequality at individual and society levels. The researchers are endeavouring to gain an insight into how living conditions and the housing market affect children and adults' future life prospects. One of the areas under study is the long-term effect on children of growing up in private or municipal rental housing, in particular the effect on the number who complete upper secondary education. The project runs from 2014 until 2017 and has been allocated NOK 10.5 million from the Research Council of Norway's VAM (welfare, employment and migration) programme.

The work is led by: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs finances 63 per cent of the VAM programme, with the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation and the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries also contributing.







7 SHARING RESPONSIBILITY AND EXPERTISE – THE STATE, THE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY AND THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

In order to reinforce the work to combat child poverty, there is a clear need for collaboration between all sectors that are in contact with children and young people. This particularly applies to the voluntary sector and municipal authorities. In its administration audit of work to combat child poverty, the Office of the Auditor General of Norway indicated that more collaboration at state level is needed and that it is necessary for knowledge about good solutions and methods in the work to combat poverty to be implemented throughout the administrative system. The Office of the Auditor General also determined that many municipal authorities do not do enough to ensure that poor children and young people can get involved in social activities.

Close collaboration is easier to achieve when all parties are aware of their area of responsibility and know how other sectors can contribute. An important goal of the strategy, is to clarify the distribution of responsibility and achieve better coordination between the ministries and directorates. This is a precondition for achieving better coordination between various municipal bodies and sectors concerning the instruments that can help to improve the situation for children in poor families.

It is vital to have cross-sectoral commitment in municipalities in order to prevent children, young people and families experiencing poverty-related challenges being bounced between various support agencies. In order to achieve this, the municipal authorities must possess sufficient expertise to work in a holistic and targeted manner. In this context, it is important that the authorities have access to up-to-date knowledge and statistics about groups of vulnerable children and young people in their local community and that this knowledge is formulated in such a manner that the municipal authorities can make use of it. The ministries and directorates play an important coordinating and liaison role in this work, and have a clear responsibility to ensure that the municipal authorities can operate under the best conditions possible to be successful. Good communication with KS (the Association of Local and Regional Authorities) is also important, enabling the state and the municipal authorities to pull in the same direction.

Collaboration between the voluntary and municipal sectors

Municipal authorities and voluntary organisations need to establish good collaborative relationships. Voluntary organisations link the local communities together, contribute to local involvement and help to create good meeting places. The voluntary sector is important for work to combat child poverty, as it can help to counteract loneliness and social exclusion. In this context, the voluntary sector includes traditional organisations and clubs in the areas of culture, sport and social/humanitarian endeavours as well as less formal groupings such as youth groups and project/festival organisations. The Office of the Auditor General's survey of child poverty indicates that many municipal authorities are lagging behind when it comes to utilising the opportunities provided by collaboration with voluntary organisations. It is important that the municipal authorities create the conditions for voluntary organisations and clubs to be able to collaborate with institutions such as kindergartens, SFO schemes and various care institutions. Closer collaboration between the municipal authorities and voluntary organisations will also facilitate better exchange of experience.

Systematic and coordinated commitment

Sharing knowledge and expertise must be systematised. Many of the initiatives in the strategy represent measures that mutually reinforce each other and that must be viewed in that context.

In order to strengthen knowledge, awareness and expertise on child poverty in the municipalities, the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs has been mandated to develop a set of indicators to make it easier for the munic-

ipal authorities to identify which children and young people are affected by poverty. In collaboration with the relevant directorates, the Directorate will also develop a guide and educational tools for the municipal authorities. These will contain examples of how the municipal authorities can work in a targeted manner to counteract the negative consequences of child poverty. The guide will also discuss how it is possible to work to combat child poverty in areas where there are special challenges in living conditions.

The national grant scheme to combat child poverty will also continue to be developed: municipal authorities who receive funds must ensure that a municipal coordination function is established. This function will act as a connecting link between vulnerable families in the municipalities and the various leisure activities available locally, both those provided by the authorities and those arranged by voluntary organisations. Having such a function to act as a central hub will ensure that leisure activities on offer and other measures that can cause long-term change actually reach the children, young people and families who are affected by poverty. Such a link will also make the commitment to vulnerable children and young people more coordinated and unified and will promote long-term participation.

Although the strategy emphasises the need for more systematic commitment, there is also room for innovation. The strategy will create the conditions to trial innovative measures and social entrepreneurship. We must dare to think outside the box and take steps to ensure that everyone who works to improve conditions for children and young people finds out about the solutions available, both existing solutions and new ones.

MEASURE 60

COORDINATING GOVERNMENT GRANT SCHEMES

a) Coordinating and simplifying the use of government grant schemes

The Office of the Auditor General of Norway has pointed out a need for coordinating and simplifying the use of government grant schemes whose objective is to help the municipal authorities establish measures to counteract the consequences of poverty among children and young people. The Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs and the Directorate of Labour and Welfare will consider how to coordinate and simplify the national grant scheme to combat child poverty and the grant scheme for measures to prevent and reduce poverty among children and families with children who are in contact with the social services at NAV. Approximately half of all children in low-income families have an immigrant background, and the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion will also consider how the expertise of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity can be better utilised in this work.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

b) Stimulating a coordinated commitment that can be included in the municipal authorities' plans for work with children and young people

In recent years, a number of grant schemes aimed at municipalities have been set up, as a link in the commitment to combat poverty and social exclusion. These grants are administered by the Directorate of Labour and Welfare. Work has begun on assessing how to stimulate local planning work and unified effort to combat poverty by using government grant funds aimed at municipalities.

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

THE GOVERNMENT'S DECLARATION ON THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

The Government's declaration on the voluntary sector shall create conditions for dialogue and cooperation between the voluntary sector and the Government. By means of this declaration, the Government wishes to achieve predictable and constructive cooperation with the voluntary sector, with binding frameworks for dialogue and interaction irrespective of which ministry, directorate or agency is involved. The content of the declaration on the voluntary sector will be followed up by:

- Achieving broad consensus within the government on the declaration
- An annual status meeting between the voluntary sector and the Government, the topic being the declaration
- Establishing national meeting places for the voluntary sector, the municipal authority and the state

The work is led by: The Ministry of Culture

COLLABORATION ON INNOVATIVE VOLUNTARY MEASURES – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The project *Innovative frivillighetstiltak* (Innovative voluntary measures) had as its goal to strengthen and develop interaction between the municipal authorities and voluntary organisations. The project was based on existing local projects, and was primarily aimed at children and young people. Ten municipal authorities participated, and KS (the Association of Local and Regional Authorities) was responsible for the project in consultation with the Association of NGOs in Norway.

For more information, please visit www.ks.no

MEASURE 61

STIMULATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE FIELD OF POVERTY

The Directorate of Labour and Welfare administers a grant scheme to stimulate the development of social entrepreneurship that directs its activities towards combating poverty and social exclusion. Grants for social entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurs were increased by NOK 5 million to approximately NOK 7.8 million in 2014, and increased by a further NOK 1 million in 2015. In 2014, a total of ten ordinary grants for social entrepreneurship and seven development grants were awarded. Many of the recipients have young people as their target group.

In autumn 2013, a Nordic working group was appointed to chart this initiative. The working group's report was published in February 2015. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will review the working group's suggestions together with other ministries affected.

Responsible: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and others

MEASURE 62

PREPARING COMMON GUIDELINES FOR COLLABORATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITY BETWEEN THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES AND NAV

The Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) is responsible for introducing measures to reduce the burdens felt by children and families as a result of challenges with living conditions and poverty. The child welfare service introduces measures when the strain in the family has consequences for the care of a child, either because the child is being exposed to failure of care or because there is an increased risk of failure of care. An investigation by the Office of the Auditor General of Norway showed that there is a grey area between providing financial support for leisure activities for children and young people under the care of the child welfare service and families who receive support from NAV. Having shared guidelines for both services would help to improve the coordination of services towards children, young people and families who need assistance from both services. In Proposition to the Storting 106 L (2012–2013)

Changes to the Act relating to child welfare services, chapter 5.3.2 states that the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will ensure that shared guidelines are prepared. The work will be carried out by the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs and the Directorate for Labour and Welfare.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

PLATFORM FOR TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE VOLUNTARY AND MUNICIPAL SECTORS 2015–2016

The Association of NGOs in Norway is a collaborative political body for voluntary organisations.

In January 2015, KS (the Association of Local and Regional Authorities) and the Association of NGOs in Norway renewed a platform for teamwork and collaboration under which the municipal authorities are encouraged to draw up a local policy on voluntary work. The objective of the platform is to reinforce collaboration between the voluntary sector and the municipalities and to establish certain important foundations on which such collaboration should be based.

CONTACT COMMITTEE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND REPRESENTATIVES FOR THOSE SUFFERING SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

The contact committee between the Government and representatives for those suffering social and financial hardship provides an arena for dialogue between user organisations/marginalised groups and the Government. The contact committee gives those suffering social and financial hardship with the opportunity to participate and exert an influence in the socio-political area. Dialogue in the contact committee gives the authorities valuable input from groups affected by poverty and social exclusion.

The work is led by: The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

MEASURE 63

SIMPLIFYING GRANT SCHEMES FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

Work is being done to simplify grant schemes for voluntary organisations. A combined overview of government grant schemes for voluntary organisations can be found at www.regjeringen.no/frivilligtilskudd.

Responsible: The Ministry of Culture

MEASURE 64

GRANTS FOR GOOD ENVIRONMENTS FOR GROWING UP AND SAFE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

The Government wishes to ensure that committed individuals in local Norwegian communities can make a greater contribution to collaboration with the authorities and other bodies. Children who grow up in low-income families are more vulnerable to becoming marginalised and face greater health challenges. Therefore, it is important to support organisations that work to prevent marginalisation and to create good environments for growing up and safe local communities. There are many voluntary organisations that carry out excellent preventive work with vulnerable children and young people. In order to reinforce these organisations' ability to carry out outreach work aimed at the target group, a grant scheme will be set up, to be administered by the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs. NOK 5 million has been allocated for this purpose in 2015.

Responsible: The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP: ABILDSØ FARM IN OSLO

Social entrepreneurship can be understood as activity that:

- Provides innovative solutions to a social problem
- Is driven by the social results as well as by a business model that can make the business viable and sustainable.

Abildsø Farm

Abildsø Farm combines active use of a farm in the city with educational and vocational activities, close follow-up of participants/pupils and a strong connection between theoretical learning and actual practice. The target group is children and young people who are at risk of dropping out of school and/or work. The objective is to prevent dropout from school and/or work, based on social entrepreneurship.

Abildsø Farm offers:

Skolegård (School Farm) – an alternative school day for years 5 to 10, throughout the school year.

School farm building and construction training, as a gap year activity before upper secondary school for pupils who have experienced difficulties with secondary school.

The pupils help to operate the farm and participate in production, maintenance and construction work, among other tasks. The products and services are paid for by schools, NAV, private companies and private customers. Provisional evaluations have revealed that participation in the project increases many children and young people's motivation to learn and interest in school. Furthermore, involvement changes behaviour and stimulates vocational and social development.

BODØ FOYER

– UNIFIED FOLLOW-UP OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Bodø has a long-term, systematic commitment to children and young people. In 2012, representatives from Bodø municipality went on a study trip with the Norwegian State Housing Bank to Aberdeen Foyer in Scotland. While there they learned about a method for unified work with young people who have dropped out of school, work or other activity, by means of coordinated measures in multiple fields: support toward independent living, coping with everyday life, education and training for work.

In 2013, the Bodø Foyer residential and local environment measure was allocated NOK 550,000 from the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion's grant scheme *Measures for children and young people in large cities to combat poverty*. Funds were applied for to set up ten residential units with individual follow-up of each young person, following the same methodology as the child welfare service's DUE project. The Bodø Foyer pilot project will run for three years, offering housing to young people between the ages of 16 and 25. The objective of the measure is to ensure that within three years participants will have gained sufficient skills and experience to live in their own home and be in employment or have an apprentice contract or be in education. Other resource units, including NAV, are brought in as needed.

The family centres, the DUE project, outreach workers and Ny Giv (New Possibilities) are all important tools. Bodø Foyer is Bodø's contribution to the partnership agreement with the Norwegian State Housing Bank and the multi-municipality project *"På leit – utsatt ungdom og bolig"* ("On the lookout – vulnerable young people and housing"). The measure is a collaboration with the county governor of Nordland.

AREA INITIATIVES

Certain city districts or areas in larger cities face particular challenges concerning living conditions. The objective of area initiatives is to help improve living conditions by viewing multiple instruments in context and generating synergies by using government and municipal funds. The initiatives include measures to improve the local environment, contribute to improved living conditions and sustainable social development, and reduce social differences in quality of health and life.

Attractive places to live and local environments with good access to green/recreational zones, quiet areas and fresh air are unevenly distributed in cities and densely populated areas. Often, the most disadvantaged people live in less attractive neighbourhoods. People with an immigrant background and low-income families are often overrepresented in these areas. It is therefore important to initiate infrastructure measures that can help to reduce noise and pollution and create meeting places and protect green "lungs", paths and access to recreational areas and nearby areas for walking. It is particularly important for children and young people to have good, safe local environments.

Norwegian examples include the initiatives in Groruddalen, Oslo South, Oslo Inner East and Fjell in Drammen. The initiatives are co-financed between various ministries and the respective municipalities. In 2015, the Government is continuing area initiatives in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Drammen.

VOLUNTARY WORK IN THE HEALTH FIELD

In order to help meet future challenges in the health and care field and utilise the potential of voluntary work, a strategy for voluntary work will be prepared. This strategy will build on the experiences available in the field and on the platform that has been prepared for cooperation between the municipal authorities and the Association of NGOs in Norway. The Ministry of Health and Care Services is working together with the Association of NGOs in Norway and KS (the Association of Local and Regional Authorities) to prepare the strategy. The objective of the strategy is to reduce loneliness, support existing volunteers and recruit additional volunteers for the health and care field, and reinforce a systematic collaboration between voluntary organisations and the public services.

The Association of NGOs in Norway and the Ministry of Health and Care Services have joined forces to create a new national meeting place for public health. The meeting place will help to reinforce the collaboration between the authorities and voluntary organisations and between the voluntary organisations. Participation in all types of voluntary organisations helps to improve public health. Singing in a choir or playing chess is not only educational and fun but also good for the health. In 2014, the topic was loneliness. The meeting place for public health came up with many ideas for win-win collaboration for public health and to combat loneliness.

Voluntary organisations provide valuable support in the work to prevent alcohol and drug abuse. The Directorate of Health administers grant schemes that fund organisations working on alcohol and drug abuse policy as well as projects and activities that work to prevent alcohol and drug abuse. One of the objectives of the grants is to help strengthen voluntary organisations' work to provide information and guidance and offer activities. One of many measures that received support in 2014 was the Blue Cross project "*Jeg ser*" ("I See"). All

children have a fundamental need to be seen, and this is particularly important for vulnerable children. The objective of the project is to mobilise adults in our local environment to be aware of the vulnerable children around them and take action if they are concerned.

FOLLOWING UP THE STRATEGY

The Government's strategy to combat child poverty applies to the period 2015–2017. The Ministry for Children, Equality and Social Inclusion will have primary responsibility for coordinating follow-up of the strategy, in collaboration with the other ministries involved. The specific measures included in the strategy will be followed up by the ministry responsible, in collaboration with the respective directorates. A collaborative group will be set up at directorate level to secure a coordinated and unified follow-up of the strategy. The group will be led by the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs.

The directorates will together create a status report to explain the development of work to combat child poverty. The directorate group will also evaluate whether the strategy's focus areas reach the target group. Arrangements will be made for such a report to be prepared every two years, to continue after the strategy period. The first evaluation will be completed in spring 2017.

Voluntary organisations who are affected by the topic, especially organisations working with children and young people, will be brought into the follow-up work and involved in the reporting, as will KS (the Association of Local and Regional Authorities). There must be a commitment within

the municipal authorities to combat child poverty, and the strategy includes a number of measures that will give the municipal authorities more expertise and better tools in their work to make everyday life easier for children in poor families. It is important that the municipal authorities utilise these instruments together with their own in order to implement targeted measures that reach the relevant groups in their municipalities.

The strategy's measures may be further developed and supplemented during the plan period, for instance in the light of relevant evaluations and research. Any follow-up of measures that require increased grant funding will be considered in the annual budgets.

The strategy to combat child poverty must be viewed in the context of the Government's work to create a stronger social safety net for the entire population.

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PART II

KNOWLEDGE BASIS



EXPERIENCES AND ADVICE FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Consultations sessions held by Save the Children

Save the Children has arranged consultations sessions to gather the experiences and thoughts of children regarding what it is like to grow up in poverty in Norway. The children have also suggested a number of important measures that they believe could help to improve the children's situation. The sessions with the children were carried out following suggestions by voluntary organisations.

ARTICLE 12 OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD • RESPECT FOR THE VIEWS OF THE CHILD

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously.

Save the Children spoke to 68 children between the ages of 12 and 18 in Oslo and Trondheim. Some of the children have personal experience of growing up in a family with poor finances, while others have not, but naturally all of them know what it is like to be a young person in Norway in 2015. The consultations sessions were carried out in small groups of three to six or in classes of 15 to 25 people. In the small groups, the children worked together in pairs, followed by an open discussion about the topic. In the classes, they worked in groups. Each group was allocated a topic to discuss and asked to highlight relevant challenges and possible solutions, which they presented to the rest of the class.

The report starts with the children's general perceptions of what it is like to grow up in a poor family in Norway. Following that, there are chapters on the family, education and leisure/

sport. The chapters describe challenges and the children's suggested measures concerning the topics on which they focused most. All of the sessions were concluded by asking the children about their thoughts about the future, and their answers are collected in the last chapter.

The Government wishes to thank all those children who shared their thoughts and experiences and who suggested measures that could alleviate some of the problems facing children growing up in poor families in Norway. Many thanks also go to Save the Children, who carried out the sessions, and to the adults at the schools and leisure clubs who helped with recruitment and who made their premises available for the conversations with the children.

Save the Children will issue an independent report based on the consultations sessions with the children.

WHAT IS IT LIKE GROWING UP IN A POOR FAMILY IN NORWAY?

Save the Children started each session by asking the children their experiences of growing up in poverty in Norway: What is it like for the children? What are the biggest challenges and difficulties?

First the children spoke about lacking the necessities: food, housing and clothing. The conversation then quickly turned to the biggest problem in Norway, namely standing out from children growing up in wealthier families. The theme of being outsiders and not fitting in was common to all of the sessions. The children emphasised that when you are poor, you stand out as different from others around you. Some of them talked about schools where you couldn't talk to children who had the "right" branding on their clothing if you didn't have it yourself. Feelings of exclusion can have major consequences for children, including affecting their results at school.

- *"They can't afford good clothes. In Norway, the winters are cold, and they don't have enough money for warm clothes."* Boy, 14.
- *"They don't have enough food for the family."* Girl, 14.

- *"You can't use electricity and have to save money all the time."* Girl, 15.
- *"When you think about poverty, you think about poor children in Africa. It's easy to forget that it happens here as well. After all, most of us have clothing, food and housing. That's obviously a good thing, but it's no guarantee that everything will work out for you."* Girl, 15.
- *"You can't join in fun things and often get depressed. It can affect your school and behaviour."* Girl, 15.
- *"Not everyone can afford a phone and be on Facebook etc. – many are really left out."* Girl, 12.
- *"You see that you are 'less' than others because you don't have the money for everything."* Boy, 18.
- *"They have problems being accepted by the various groups at school, mainly because of the pressure to wear the 'right' things."* Girl, 15.
- *"They are looked down on, especially during the teens."* Girl, 14.
- *"You don't end up getting the job you want because you don't have the education and can't afford it."* Boy, 14.

WHAT IS IT LIKE FOR POOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN?

The children were asked about what it can be like for a poor family with children: What is family life like? What is the atmosphere in the family? What are the problems, and what can be done to resolve them?

Many of the children said that there was no opportunity to go on holiday or to take part in social activities such as going to the cinema or going out for a meal together. They emphasised that not having much money leads to worries and arguments, and that it can make it difficult for the parents to give the children the support they need. The children are also acutely aware that their parents do not have a job or enough education, or that they haven't learned Norwegian well enough. They see this as the reason why most of the families are poor.

- *"It's not so easy for the parents. They think a lot about their children not having what they need."* Girl, 14.
- *"The family starts to worry about each other and think that perhaps it was wrong to have children because they don't have a good life."* Girl, 14.
- *"All parents want the best for their children."* Girl, 15.
- *"The families need to care more about the children, instead of thinking about everything they don't have. Love and care are important."* Boy, 15.
- *"There can be arguments about not being able to join in with many things as other people."* Girl, 15.
- *"There can be a lot of arguments at home because of a lack of money. So it's important to be able to discuss things calmly instead of arguing. That's much better."* Boy, 16.
- *"It's a problem when your parents don't have a job."* Girl, 12.
- *"Adult education would be good, so the parents could get a job."* Boy, 14.
- *"NAV should hold language courses where they have to speak Norwegian. My dad has gone to school for ages, but they don't learn any Norwegian there and he hasn't got a job."* Girl, 14.
- *"When everyone's been away on holiday except you, it's difficult to say what you've done on*

your holidays. You have to have something to tell everyone." Girl, 12.

- *"It would be good if there was more opportunity for holiday trips for everyone – cheap trips, activities and experiences."* Girl, 16.

PROBLEM: The parents are absent and spend a lot of time thinking about how difficult things are.

SOLUTION: There were many suggestions here to help families who are struggling. Love and care were seen as two important factors for being content as a family, and of course both are free. Organisations can hold courses and lectures for parents about the importance of taking care of children. They must teach the adults to be present, to listen and to provide advice to and support for their children. The children believed this applied to both parents and teachers.

PROBLEM: Poor families are unable to do activities together or go on holiday.

SOLUTION: The children suggested that people who have holiday homes or cabins could lend them to poor families when they are not in use. Cheap or free activities should also be found for poor families. Information about the activities, holiday homes and cabins should be brought together on a website that is easy to understand. The children said that it is difficult to find information and to know who to ask, both about helping and getting help.

PROBLEM: The parents don't have a job.

SOLUTION: Education and a compulsory language course for adults. The children identified parents' inadequate knowledge of Norwegian, which often made it hard to get a job, as a major problem for families with a minority background. They felt that more practical – and stricter – language courses provided by NAV, in addition to the opportunity for education, would help. A number of children stressed that the adults must be compelled to speak Norwegian on the language course. They said that there are often many people from the same country on the courses, and that they speak to each other in their own language. That also applied to the teachers, and then it is difficult to learn Norwegian well enough. The children also said that more effort needed to be made to get everyone into work.

CHALLENGES DURING EDUCATION

The children were asked what challenges arise at school in connection with finances. Almost all of them mentioned that there was a lot of pressure to wear the right things. It is difficult to think about schoolwork and what the teacher is saying when you feel different, excluded and looked down on because you've got the "wrong" clothes. The children also said that there were lots of things that cost money at school, and that equipment for schoolwork and trips should be provided free of charge. Many of the children struggled with homework, and wanted more homework help.

- *"You learn less because you have so many other things on your mind."* Girl, 15.
- *"You can't always afford all of the equipment you need. It would've been great to have starter packs."* Boy, 16.
- *"School trips are difficult, because you don't have the money."* Girl, 14.
- *"School should loan out skis and equipment free of charge. And slalom equipment as well, so you can join in skiing days at school."* Girl, 15.
- *"It's difficult to concentrate on school lessons when you know you haven't got the right clothes. You just think about that all the time, and it's difficult to learn."* Boy, 18.
- *"If you haven't got cool branded clothing, you can't hang out with people who have. They blank you and talk about you. The school won't get to know anything about it."* Boy, 18.
- *"If you had to wear a uniform at school, that would be much better. Then it wouldn't be all about the clothes – we'd all be the same."* Girl, 14.
- *"It affects your education when you are bullied at school because of your clothes. You think more about yourself than about your education. Then you end up at a bad upper secondary school and get a rubbish job."* Girl, 14.
- *"With a school uniform, you have the opportunity to forge real bonds at school. You are seen for what you are and not as different. When you're outside school, you're still friends even though you might have slightly*

cheaper clothes – you can't dump someone just because they are less well off than you." Girl, 15.

- *"Homework help is brilliant, because often your parents don't understand what you're doing. My mother doesn't have a clue about my homework."* Boy, 14.
- *"It's good if we can get help with our homework after school at secondary school as well. Most of us can't get help at home because our parents have only recently arrived in Norway and don't understand Norwegian so well. Instead of struggling at home, we can get help at school."* Boy, 14.
- *"The food at school should be free, so all children get the food they need."* Girl, 15.
- *"If we had food served at school, the pupils would be keener to go to school."* Boy, 18.
- *"It's the pupils themselves who have to change when it comes to pressure at school. But I don't think that'll work. You automatically talk about others. The teachers, and the parents, should talk to the children."* Girl, 14.
- *"I don't think we can prevent people who want to buy expensive jackets, bags and shoes from buying what they want. But they don't have to boast about it and get all arrogant. The teachers should be quicker to point out that not everyone has that much money. That is something you should start to learn in kindergarten."* Girl, 15.

PROBLEM: Bullying and social exclusion at school because of clothing.

SOLUTION: The subject of school uniform was raised by all the children who took part in the consultations sessions. Many saw it as a good solution to bullying and social exclusion. Inequality was widely seen as a big problem, with the imposition of school uniforms put forward as a good way to remove differences. According to the children, the uniforms would have to be free or very inexpensive. Naturally, if the uniforms are expensive it will still be a problem for families who do not have much money, because they will not be able to afford the uniform.

PROBLEM: Bad food at home and possibly not even a packed lunch.

SOLUTION: Free school dinners. It was agreed that poorer families do not have the opportunity to give their children the best food. They get food, but not healthy and nutritious food, because that costs more. All those who took part said that having free school dinners would help.

PROBLEM: Inability to afford school equipment: pencil case, pencils, schoolbag, compass, etc.

SOLUTION: Provision of a starter pack for school. Many raised the problem of not all being able to afford the equipment they needed for homework and lessons at school. For many, something as simple as pencils and erasers was a problem. Many groups suggested that schools should hand out starter packs containing the things children need when they start school, and that the children should be able to get more equipment when they need it. The children saw this as something that could be sponsored by organisations and companies.

PROBLEM: No help at home with homework.

SOLUTION: Provision of homework help at school, and not just at primary school; to be provided by schools, leisure clubs or organisations. Many of the children expressed a strong desire for homework help at secondary and upper secondary school. Parents often lack the language skills or knowledge about the subjects to help their children with homework, and the children end up lagging behind. They believed this applied to both poor families and rich families, but more to those with poor finances, as the parents often lack education themselves. The children also made it clear that information needed to be provided about any such provision of homework help. For example, many were not aware that the Red Cross offers homework help.

PROBLEM: Not being able to participate in activity days at school.

SOLUTION: The school should have equipment that can be borrowed, and families with good finances could donate used equipment instead of throwing it away when they want to replace it. All of the children felt strongly that this was an excellent suggestion, and a great opportunity for everybody to be able to participate in activity days at school.

OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN SPORT AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES?

The children were asked about how things are after school. How important is money to be able to do what you want? The children said that it is expensive to take part in school activities, and many would rather simply say that they are not interested rather than that they can't afford it. They wanted the costs of participating in sport to be lower, as well as the option of having sponsored or borrowed equipment. Many said that birthdays were difficult, and they wished that parents would make sure that presents and birthdays didn't need to be so expensive. The children wanted help to be able to earn their own money.

- "When you can't go to a friend's birthday party because you can't afford it, eventually they stop inviting you to come. And you lose the friend." Boy, 18.
- "Often you have to find an excuse to not go to

a birthday party instead of saying that you can't afford it." Girl, 12.

- "It's difficult to take part in sport because you have to pay so much. So you stay home instead." Girl, 14.
- "When my handball team goes on trips, we all have to pay for ourselves. We went to a tournament at the weekend, and there were some of us who couldn't go because it was expensive, so they got left behind." Girl, 13.
- "Sport should be a bit cheaper." Boy, 15.
- "Often you end up staying at home instead of being with friends. It's no fun being out with others who are shopping and stuff and you can't do what they are doing." Girl, 15.
- "NAV doesn't give you enough money to buy footballs, shoes, etc." Boy, 18.

- *“It’s a bit difficult to join in leisure activities when you’re poor. It would be great if there was a place where you could do karate, football and stuff free.” Girl, 15.*
- *“The leisure club is great. It gives you an opportunity to try out things that you would never do otherwise.” Girl, 15.*
- *“It would be good if the government could help young people find a job. When I don’t have a job and I need money, I have to start dealing and stuff.” Boy, 18.*
- *“Some young people can feel excluded because they can’t join in with everything that’s going on. It’s important for other pupils not to make such a distinction between rich and poor.” Girl, 15.*

PROBLEM: It is expensive to participate in sport.

SOLUTION: Here all the children were in agreement: sport is expensive! You have to have the “right” equipment, and then there are the fees to participate and insurance to pay for. Suggested solutions included support from the state/NAV. Sporting equipment can be covered by NAV: a certain amount of the costs can be refunded. Other suggestions included clubs/parents organising voluntary events, or earning money by doing stocktakes for companies. Then the clubs themselves can work to have everyone included and cover expenses

for cups, training, etc. Sports clubs should also have equipment stores, with equipment that can be loaned out for training sessions and matches/competitions.

PROBLEM: It is difficult for young people to find jobs.

SOLUTION: They would like to work part-time after school and at the weekends, but it is difficult to find such jobs. They want to work, both to support the family and to have their own money. An employment agency for young people was suggested, e.g. something like “finn.no” where young people could look for available jobs. A dedicated youth NAV was also suggested to help with applications and CVs. Some also suggested that leisure clubs and schools should help with this.

PROBLEM: Not being able to participate in birthday parties, activities with friends, school proms, etc.

SOLUTION: Clubbing together for more group gifts and the option of going to a birthday party without a gift. Here the children felt that it was up to parents to get involved in organising and to take the initiative. Furthermore, the children wanted parents to receive financial support from the state for the children’s leisure activities, birthdays, etc. They also said that the children themselves needed to understand that there is nothing wrong with people being different.

THOUGHTS ABOUT THE FUTURE

We asked the children about how they imagined the future would be for children from poor families: Do they have the same opportunities as others, and what can be done to resolve the challenges? In general, the children felt that the future would still be good for children even if they come from a poor family. They felt that if you live in Norway you basically have the opportunity to be what you want to be. But you have to be motivated to do it. They identified bullying, poor food and a lack of help from parents as some of the reasons for having a negative view of the future.

- *“Children shouldn’t have to worry about the future.” Girl, 14.*
- *“Some kids just give up because they think there’s no point.” Girl, 15.*
- *“It is easy to lose your confidence.” Boy, 14.*
- *“There’s a good chance of becoming what you want to become when you’re motivated by teachers, friends and parents. That’s important.” Boy, 18.*
- *“Many young people are afraid that they will*

manage money badly like their parents. It would be great to have school lessons where you can learn more about money – things like doing your tax return and spending money properly.” Boy, 15.

- *“Not everyone likes what is popular. There shouldn’t be pressure to buy that stuff. It’s stupid to spend loads of money on something you don’t even like. I think we should be better at accepting others for who they are.” Girl, 15.*
- *“If we stop bullying people from poorer families, then that would influence others to do the same. We can tell them that it will be all right.” Girl, 14.*
- *“It’s the pupils themselves who have to change when it comes to pressure at school. But I don’t think that’ll work. You automatically talk about others. The teachers, and the parents, should talk to the children.” Girl, 14.*
- *“The teachers should be quicker to point out that not everyone has that much money. That is something you should start to learn in kindergarten.” Girl, 15.*
- *“What often happens is that those who can afford it go on activities, but everyone else gets left behind and left out.” Girl, 14.*

PROBLEM: Lack of confidence and negative thoughts.

SOLUTION: Support and encouragement from parents, teachers and other adults. Children from poor families have the same opportunities as other children, but they need extra motivation from adults around them. If they get extra support, the children will work harder and will succeed. It is also important for friends to be there for them when they are having hard times.

PROBLEM: Bullying and social exclusion.

SOLUTION: Change of attitude. We must learn that it is OK that we are all different. The children said that there is a lot of pressure to have the “right” clothes and other things, and many often choose not to participate because

they don’t have enough money and it is embarrassing to have the wrong equipment. The children want adults to talk to children about bullying and social exclusion right from kindergarten age. It should be included in the teaching at school, and it must be the adults’ responsibility. None of the children want it to be like it is at the moment. They feel powerless, and they do not know where to start to resolve the problem. There must be a change in attitude, and here the adults must take the lead. They must be proactive and speak with the children, starting when they are very young. Children must be taught and understand that there is no problem with people being different, as long as everyone is equal.



CHILD POVERTY – A KNOWLEDGE SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

Seen from an international perspective, the attention paid to child poverty in Norway could be perceived as excessive. Norway is a very wealthy country that scores highly on international rankings of income and living conditions. The Norwegian welfare state protects the population in most situations of risk, and while in many countries people have to pay in order to receive both health services and education, in Norway all children have free access to these and a number of other welfare services. In other words, there is no doubt that Norwegian children, on average, live in better conditions than children in most other countries.

Nevertheless, over the last 10–15 years there has been a considerable increase in the proportion of children who live in families with low incomes. In some contexts this is referred to as child poverty, and in others these are described as children in low-income families. Whatever we choose to call the phenomenon, it is a fact that while formerly in Norway and the other Nordic countries the proportion of children growing up in families with a low income was much lower than the proportion of adults with a low income (Corak 2005: 28), the latest summaries from Statistics Norway show that the low-income percentages for children and for the population in general are now exactly the same (Epland

and Kirkeberg 2015: figure 1). Of course, the increase in the proportion of children living in families suffering financial hardship is cause for concern, and the last four governments have all set the goal of combating poverty in families with children.

This memorandum summarises existing knowledge about children growing up in low-income families in Norway. It has been prepared on assignment from the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, and is a background memorandum for the work to prepare a strategy against child poverty. In this memorandum, the terms “poverty” and “low income” are used interchangeably. First, we discuss various definitions and measures of poverty. In the second section, we present a comparison of the proportion of children who are at risk of being poor in various countries in Europe, followed by a description of trends in child poverty in Norway. The third section of the memorandum summarises existing knowledge about the consequences of growing up in poverty, while the fourth section comments on measures that can help to reduce the incidence of poverty and/or lessen the consequences of poverty in the short or long term. In conclusion, we identify some areas where there is a need for more knowledge in order to have a better understanding of child poverty in Norway¹.

A NORWEGIAN CONCEPT OF POVERTY

Until the start of the new millennium, the concept of poverty was absent from Norwegian socio-political debate. Steady improvements in prosperity and living conditions, combined with a comprehensive distribution policy, have helped to equalise the differences among the population. As a result, the problem of poverty is widely seen as having been solved. Moreover, in contrast with former times, poverty in Norway has manifested itself in a way that is different from most people’s perception of pov-

erty. The concept is often associated with great and visible material need, but since the middle of the last century the economic scarcity experienced by people in Norway has been more or less invisible. Most people have housing, clothing and the most necessary consumer goods, and it could therefore seem illogical to call anyone living in Norway “poor”. In addition, the fact that there is no official definition or simple measure of poverty can make it difficult to interpret and apply the concept.

DEFINITIONS OF POVERTY

In the earliest days of research into poverty, in the 19th century, it was easy to see the need and want. Poverty was the biggest social problem of the time, and to overcome the problem it was necessary to have an overview of it. In the mid to late 19th century, surveys were carried out of conditions in the poorest section of society, both in Norway and in other countries. The Norwegian sociologist Eilert Sundt charted the living conditions of Gypsies and of

the population of the neighbourhood of Piperivika in Christiania (now Oslo), while Benjamin S. Rowntree and Charles Booth investigated the situation of the poor in the United Kingdom (Fløtten et al. 2011: 12).

The first studies of poverty were based on an *absolute* understanding of poverty. Being poor meant lacking absolutely essential consumer goods, and the poverty threshold was set at

¹ As the memorandum is intended to provide merely a brief overview of many aspects of poverty in a small amount of space, the various topics are discussed somewhat superficially. For more detailed information about poverty, please see the references indicated during the memorandum.

the income that was needed in order to obtain these necessary goods. Poverty was thereby defined on the basis of a limited set of needs, and the poverty threshold was unambiguous.

However, it was not long before researchers such as B.S. Rowntree himself began to question their own definitions of “necessaries” (Veit-Wilson 2009). Was it simply a question of food and clothing? What if, for example, someone could not afford to purchase a newspaper in order to keep informed about what was going on in the community?

In the second half of the 20th century, interest in research into poverty blossomed, and the British sociologist Peter Townsend played a key role in the redefinition of the concept of poverty. He noted that living conditions in the United Kingdom had greatly improved over recent decades, and that the pronounced need and want observed by Rowntree had more or less disappeared. Nevertheless, there was no doubt that a not inconsiderable proportion of the population had living conditions that were much worse than was normal, and that these were excluded from many social contexts. On the basis of this observation, Townsend argued that poverty could not be limited to a lack of the goods needed to survive physically, but that it must also be related to the opportunities to live a full social life. Poverty could not be understood as an absolute phenomenon, independent of time and place; rather, it would

have to be seen in the context of the population as a whole, i.e. the general level of prosperity in society.

“Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong” (Townsend 1979:31).

Townsend’s understanding of poverty as a *relative* phenomenon has given rise to a school of modern, western poverty research. This relative definition has indeed been frequently discussed and criticised (Sen 1979 and 1983b, Nolan and Whelan 1996, Svendsen in Aftenposten of 10 July 2008, Huitfeldt in Aftenposten of 13 October 2013 and Røe Isaksen in VG of 14 October 2013), partly because a relative understanding of poverty implies that poor people in very wealthy countries may have somewhat better living conditions than poor people in other countries. Although most researchers and politicians in the western world today do use such a relative understanding of poverty, it is important to emphasise that living in relative poverty in Norway is not necessarily synonymous with great material need (Fløtten et al. 2011: 13).

MEASURING POVERTY

Although there is a great deal of agreement that it is appropriate to understand poverty as a relative phenomenon in countries such as Norway, agreeing a measure or an indicator of poverty is not straightforward. The concept of poverty itself involves a clear imperative to act. Being poor causes shame, and it is indefensible for anyone to live in poverty. For this reason, it is important to define a measure of poverty and a poverty threshold that clearly delimit those who cannot manage on their own and whom we believe that society has an obligation to help. The type of indicator we choose to identify poverty depends on which deficiencies we see it most important to compensate

for. How generously, or how narrowly, we define poverty – i.e. where we set the poverty threshold – depends on our interpretation of “manage”.

Poverty as actual poor living conditions

Poverty can be determined using direct indicators, such as actual living conditions or actual consumption. In such cases we must decide which consumer goods or what type of consumption is “necessary” (i.e. which deficiencies are good indicators of poverty), and then decide how many consumer goods or how high consumption a person must have to not be poor (i.e. set a poverty threshold). Alterna-

tively, we can ask the population directly as to whether they regard themselves as poor.

One obvious benefit of direct measures of poverty is that they provide a clear picture of how people are actually living, but there are a number of problems with such measures. For example, how should we determine which consumer goods should be included in a measure of poverty, and how should we weigh up various consumer goods against each other? What if a person lacks the five consumer goods included in a measure of poverty, but does so because they do not want them? Or what if a person lacks these five, but otherwise has a very good standard of living? Indexes of living conditions are subject to criticism because they are largely a matter of taste rather than objective descriptions of the consumer goods people need to have in order not to be poor (Piachaud 1987). Asking people directly whether they perceive themselves as poor is not without its problems either, although it is the most democratic of all measures of poverty. Subjective assessments can, for example, be influenced by perceptions of the type of standard of living a person should have, or by general satisfaction with life.

Poverty as low income

As an alternative to the direct indicators, poverty can be measured using indirect indicators, the most usual of which is income. This measure of poverty is the basis for the annual reports on trends in low income from Statistics Norway and is used in international comparisons of low income from the OECD and the EU. A person's level of income is considered to be a good indicator of the type of living conditions that the person is able to procure, and the poverty threshold is set at the level of income believed to be the minimum required to maintain an acceptable standard of living in a society. Setting the poverty threshold at this level does not mean that all those with a lower income are necessarily struggling to maintain an acceptable standard of living – factors such as the additional resources to which a person

has access or how high their income was before it fell below the poverty threshold can come into play – rather, it means that *it cannot be considered likely* that people with such a low income can manage on it.

Poverty thresholds

The poverty threshold is, as a rule, set at 50 or 60 per cent of the median income² (after tax), and economies of scale are taken into account if the household contains more people. In addition, a threshold is set for how long the income must have been at that low level before that person or household is defined as poor.

The two most common measures of poverty in a Norwegian context are annual income below 60 per cent of the median income and income below 60 per cent of a three-year average of the median. Both of these measures are statistical measures that are used to look at the trends in low income, and they have no status as official measures of poverty. The specific low-income threshold varies with the size of the household (table 1).

Setting the low-income threshold at 60 per cent of the median income is equivalent to the measure most often used in the EU's tables of trends in low income. In EU publications, the term "at risk of poverty" is used to describe the groups whose income is below this threshold. Statistics Norway does not use the term "poverty" when reporting on these measures, but instead uses the designations "*lavinntekt*" ("low income") or "*vedvarende lavinntekt*" ("persistent low income").

The low-income thresholds in table 1 are exclusively based on income after tax. However, there may be other factors that are of significance to the type of living conditions that a person has after the income has been earned and tax paid. The value of public services is such a factor. Especially when comparing rates of poverty between different countries, it can be of great significance that households in one country may have access to many welfare

² The median income is the middle income in the distribution. To find the median income, we rank all incomes in ascending order, and the median income is the one that divides the distribution into two equal parts so that half of the population have incomes above the median income and half below.

TABEL 1: Low-income thresholds for various types of household. 60 per cent of median income after tax. Income has been equivalised using the EU equivalisation scale³. 2013.

| Household type | Income (NOK) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Single person | 200 800 |
| Single provider with one child | 261 000 |
| Single provider with two children | 321 300 |
| Single provider with three children | 381 500 |
| Couple without children | 301 200 |
| Couple with one child | 361 400 |
| Couple with two children | 421 600 |
| Couple with three children | 481 900 |
| Couple with four children | 542 100 |

Source: Statistics Norway's statistics databank, table 09593, read 1 April 2015

services that are provided free of charge, whereas households in a different country do not. Analyses from Statistics Norway have shown that the value of such services is considerable for Norwegian households (Nørgaard 2001) and that the public services help to equalise differences in income (Aaberge et al. 2010). Nevertheless, the groups at particularly high risk of poverty are the same as when we take the conventional concept of income as a basis (Bhuller and Aaberge 2010), and the rates of poverty are not significantly lower (Fløtten et al. 2011: 20).

Another matter that can be of great significance to actual living conditions is housing wealth. When poverty is exclusively calculated based on income after tax, households with large, valuable houses can be assessed as poor. It is particularly the rates of poverty among the elderly that are believed to be affected in this way, as the likelihood of having paid off the mortgage and having positive housing wealth increases with age. There is one Norwegian study that has tried to adjust

for housing wealth (Pedersen and Hellevik 2010). The conclusion from this study was that poverty among the elderly was somewhat lower if the value of property was added to income.

Regional measures of poverty can also be created, and the value of the individual's own work (housework, care work, etc.) can also be taken into account. Analyses of such alternative measures of poverty help to add nuance to the picture of poverty, but the main impression of which groups are at particularly high risk of poverty changes little (Fløtten et al. 2011: 20).

Measures of poverty in other countries

Norway is not the only country in the western world where there is no official poverty threshold.⁴

³ Equivalising the household income means that the size of the family has been taken into consideration when calculating the percentage of poverty. The equivalisation scale used by Eurostat allocates the first adult over the age of 18 in the household a weighting of 1, other adults a weighting of 0.5, and children under the age of 18 a weighting of 0.3.

⁴ The poverty rate (OECD definition) has, however, been used as an indicator in the revenue system for municipal authorities and county authorities since 2011 (Proposition to the Storting 124S (2009–2010); "Grønt hefte" ("Green booklet") 2011). Some are of the opinion that this is the official poverty threshold.

Until recently, the USA was the only western country that had an official definition of poverty, and this was based on “The Orshansky Poverty Threshold” (Orshansky 1969). However, in 2013 the Danish government decided to follow advice from a public committee regarding what could be a relevant poverty threshold, and so now in Denmark the following criteria must be fulfilled for a person to be defined as poor: A person must have an income that is below 50 per cent of the median income of the three preceding years; the net wealth per adult in the family must be below DKK 100,000; and no one in the family over the age of 17 may be a school pupil/student (Expert committee on poverty 2013). Most other countries either use the EU’s measure of risk of poverty (60 per cent of median income) or the OECD’s measure of poverty (50 per cent of median income) in official statistics about low income.

Poverty or poor finances?

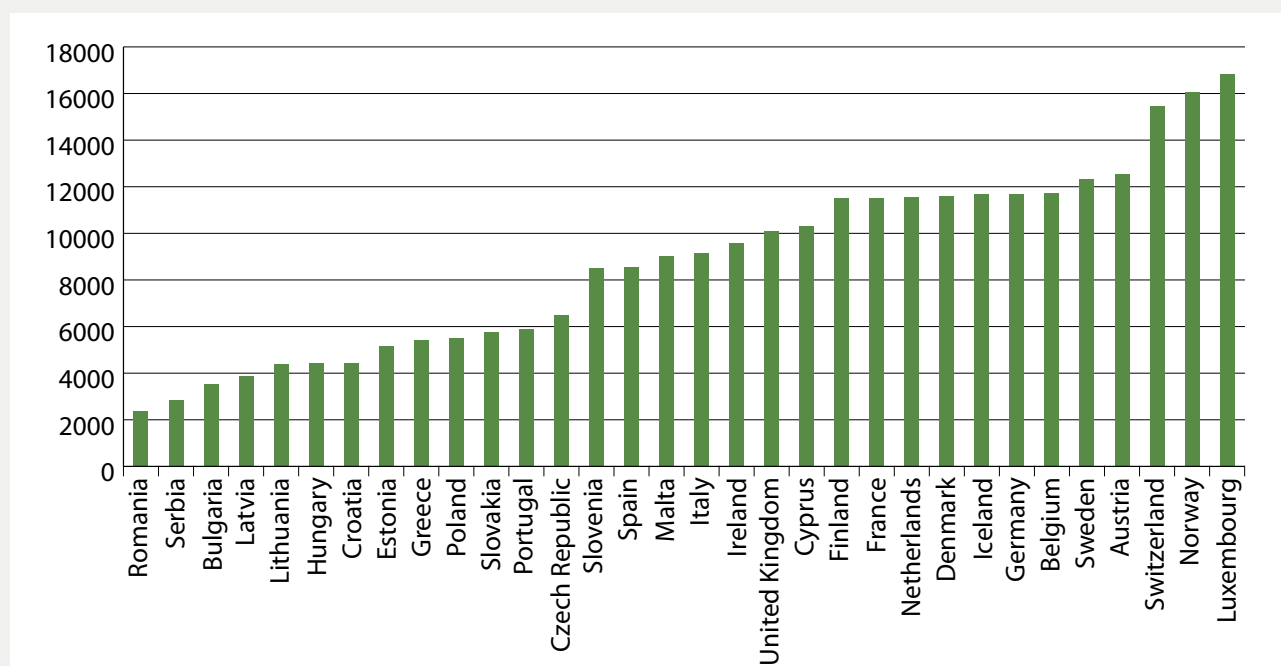
The Norwegian income level is high, as is the general standard of living in Norway. As the poverty threshold is set as a specific percentage of the total income, this also means that the Norwegian poverty threshold is high. Even if we adjust for differences in cost-of-liv-

ing levels between European countries, Norway has the second-highest poverty threshold in Europe (see figure 1). This means that those who are below the poverty threshold in Norway have greater purchasing power than those who are below the threshold in other countries. As a result, many doubt whether it is correct to call those with the lowest incomes in Norway poor.

In this context, we must remember that the central idea behind the concept of relative poverty is that there are differences in income and standard of living between various groups in the population. It is of little consolation to those with the fewest resources in Norway that poor people in such countries as Romania have much worse living conditions. Poor people in Norway compare themselves with other people in Norway. There has always been a certain relative element to all understandings of poverty, as illustrated by this quotation from Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations*:

“By necessities I understand, not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without.”
(Smith 1776, part 2, article 4).

FIGURE 1: Poverty thresholds in various European countries, measured in purchasing-power-adjusted Euro (PPS). Single people. 2013.



Source: Eurostat’s databank, table tessi014, read 1 April 2015.

Distribution within the families

In calculating child poverty rates, we take as a starting point the family's combined income and presuppose that the resources are distributed equally within the family, but it is not a given that all family members consume an equal share of the family's resources (Sen 1983a). On the one hand, some research has concluded that parents reduce their own consumption to ensure that their children have the best possible living conditions (Sandbæk (ed.) 2004, 2008, Thorød 2006). In such cases, the children will have better living conditions than the family's income would suggest. Many studies show that children in low-income families generally do not have major material deficiencies, even though the family has an income below the poverty threshold (Fløtten

and Pedersen 2009). On the other hand, there can be families where for various reasons the children's needs are *not* prioritised, for example if the parents have problems that mean that they do not manage to prioritise in such a manner. In such cases the children will have *worse* living conditions than the family's income would suggest.

In quantitative studies of the scope and distribution of child poverty, it is not possible to identify whether all family members receive their proportional share of the family's combined resources. Therefore, the summaries in this memorandum assume that there are no uneven distributions internally within the families, so that in a family with an income below a specified low-income threshold all family members will be deemed to be equally poor.

IS THERE A "CORRECT" DEFINITION OF POVERTY?

The discussion of how best to define and measure poverty has been going on for as long as poverty has been studied. These discussions are not limited to western welfare societies, but also apply to measuring poverty in the world's poorest countries (Ravallion 2014).

The most important objective of a definition of poverty, a measure of poverty and a poverty threshold is to identify the individuals for whom, we believe, society has a responsibility to help out of their situation. The definition and threshold must therefore have a general and a political legitimacy. However, it is impossible to find a definition of poverty or a poverty threshold that with 100 per cent certainty delimits only those whom it is, we believe, most important to help. If the threshold is set too strictly, there is a risk of excluding some of those who have major problems; if it is set too leniently, we risk including people who are managing perfectly well. The preceding discussion illustrates that we face many dilemmas when delimiting poverty and when attempting to find the best possible measure of poverty to understand modern Norwegian poverty. In this search for the best and most accurate measure of poverty, it is important to

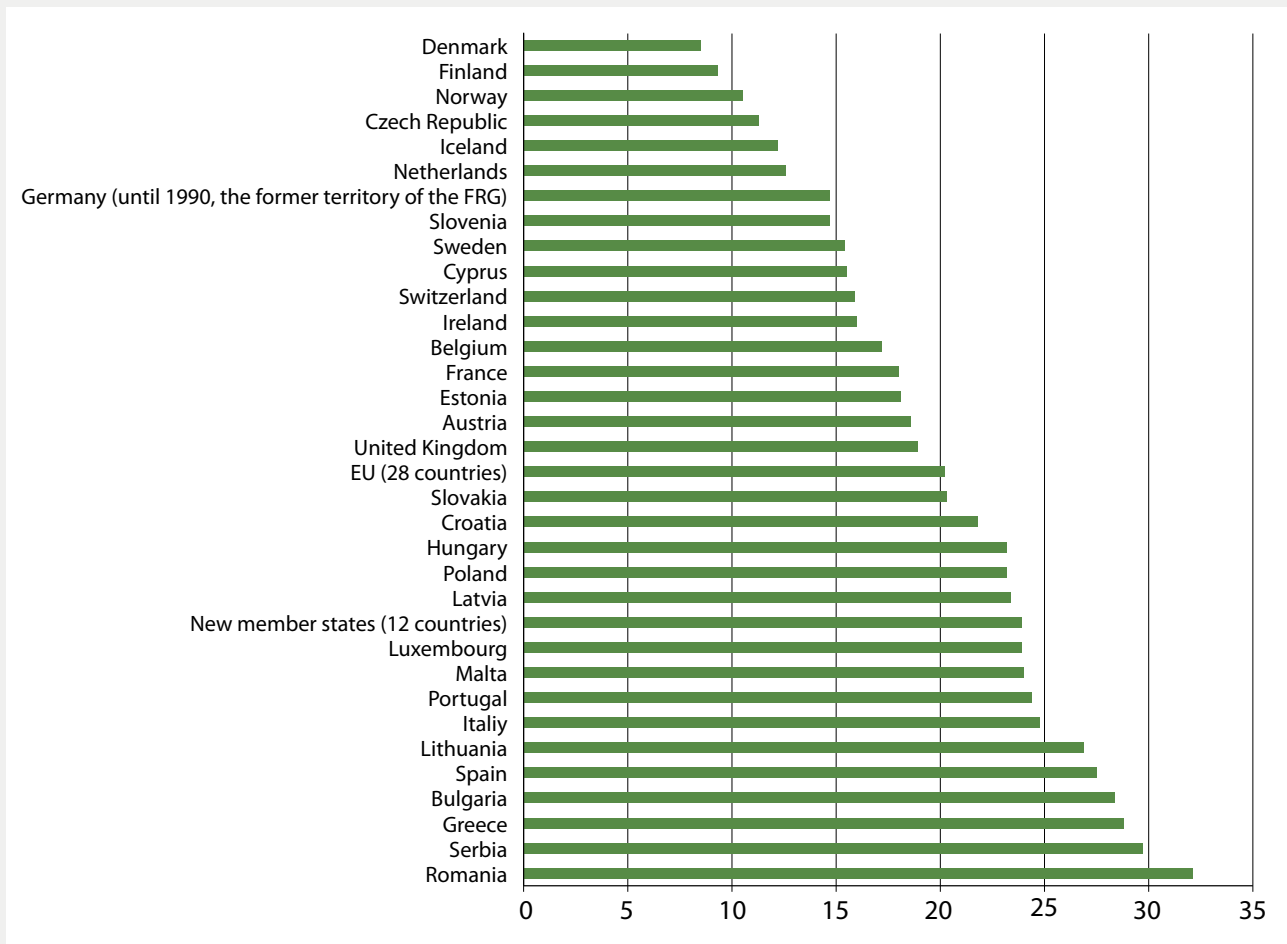
understand that there is no one measure of poverty that is free from problems and dilemmas. What is defined as poverty will always be a normative question (Orshansky 1969). Based on this recognition, most researchers, and most authorities, have decided to take as a basis a concept of relative poverty, and to use income as an indicator of poverty. It is relatively easy to obtain good income data, and such a measure of poverty makes it possible to study trends over time, compare the situation between various countries, and examine differences between groups in the population.

CHILD POVERTY IN NORWAY

Even though child poverty receives a lot of attention in Norwegian politics and among the general public, Norway is still one of the countries in the world where child poverty is at its lowest (figure 2). There are many explanations for this. Firstly, employment levels are high in Norway, including among mothers,

and differences in pay levels are small. This contributes to generally high household incomes. Secondly, there are a number of distribution elements in Norwegian policy that help to equalise differences created in the employment market. We will come back to this subject later.

FIGURE 2: Percentage of children under the age of 18 who live in families with an income below 60 per cent of equivalised income⁵ in 2013.



Source: Eurostat's databank, table ilc_li02, read 1 April 2015

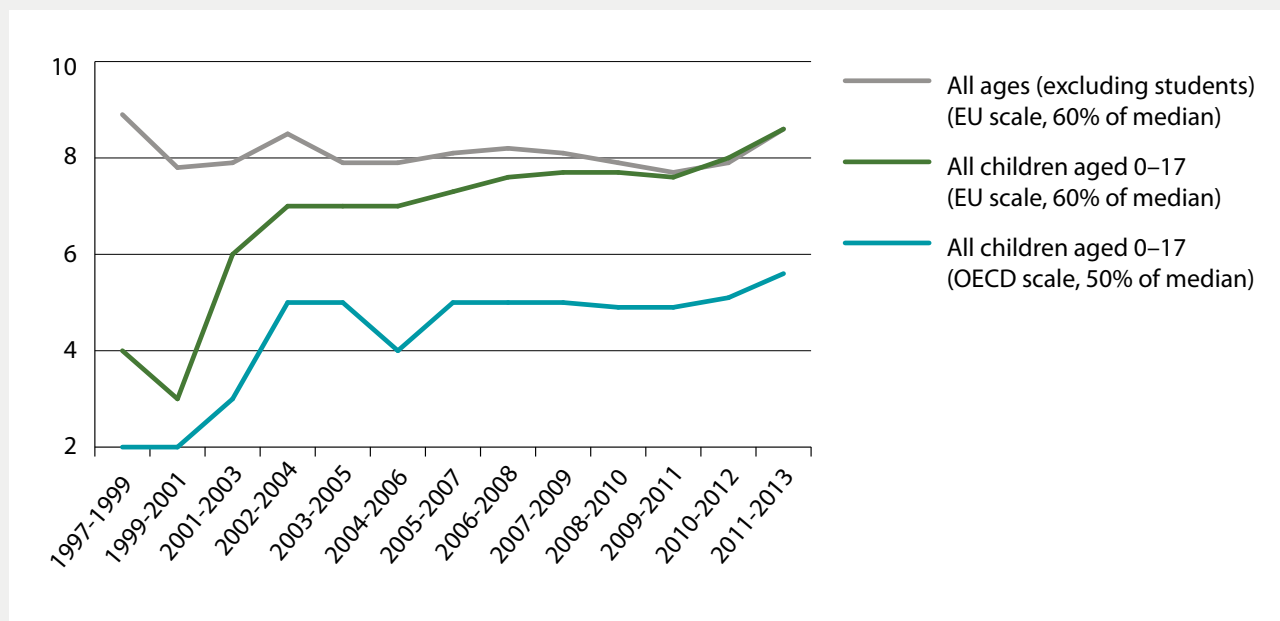
⁵ Equivalising the household income means that the size of the family has been taken into consideration when calculating the percentage of poverty. The equivalisation scale used by Eurostat allocates the first adult over the age of 18 in the household a weighting of 1, other adults a weighting of 0.5, and children under the age of 14 a weighting of 0.3.

Increase in child poverty in Norway

Even though there are fewer children who live in families with a low income in Norway than in other countries, the proportion of Norwegian children living in families with incomes below 60 per cent of the median income for

at least three years in a row has been steadily increasing (figure 3). There has been no equivalent increase for the population as a whole, and since 2009–2011 the proportion of children living in families with a low income has been equally large as the proportion of the entire population with a low income.

FIGURE 3: Percentage of children between the ages of 0 and 17 who live in a family with an income below 50 and 60 per cent of the median income over a three-year period, and the percentage of the entire population (excluding students) who have incomes below this level.



Source: Epland et al. 2011 for 1997/1999–2006/2008, Statistics Norway's statistics databank for the other years, tables 09571 and 10498, read 1 April 2015

There are various possible explanations for the increase in the proportion of children living in families with a low income. Epland and Kirkeberg (2015) have shown that the majority of the increase is due to immigrant children increasingly being overrepresented in the low-income group. During the period 2004–2006, children with an immigrant background made up less than 39 per cent of children in families with a persistent low income. In 2011–2013, the equivalent proportion was over 50 per cent. By comparison, children with an immigrant background made up approximately 12 per cent of all children during the period.

The increase in the proportion of immigrant children in the low-income group is due to the fact that there has been an increase in the number of children with an immigrant

background over the last ten to 15 years, and there has been an increase in the number of children with a background from countries where the risk of poverty has traditionally been high. The high risk of poverty in certain groups of countries is again due to the fact that the adults have problems with entering the Norwegian employment market. There is insufficient space here to discuss employment among immigrants, but please see for example NOU 2011:7 for a thorough discussion of this topic.

Another cause of the increase in children living in families with a persistent low income is the fact that child benefit has not been increased since 1996, as a result of which its purchasing power has been reduced. In 2001 the supplement for additional children was

also discontinued. For families with a low income, child benefit makes up a significant part of their income, and when its real value falls this affects the situation of these families (NOU 2009: 10). The distribution committee showed that if child benefit had been adjusted in line with the consumer price index from 1996 to 2006, the number of people with a low income would have been reduced by almost 30,000 (NOU 2009: 10, page 232).

A third matter that can influence the trend is the discontinuation of cash benefit for three-year-olds as of 2006.⁶ No studies have yet been carried out to investigate this, so its significance on the proportion with a low income is unknown.

Differences between children

It has already been noted that children with an immigrant background are strongly overrepresented in the low-income group. The most important explanation of this, as previously mentioned, is that on average there is a lower rate of employment in many immigrant groups than in the population as a whole (NOU 2011:7) and at the same time their families are larger (Kirkeberg and Epland 2014). Employment is particularly low among immigrant women. In addition to this, a number of immigrant groups have a lower level of education than average (Blom and Henriksen 2008), as a result of which these are at risk of ending up in poorly paid jobs even if they do find employment (see Fløtten et al. 2011: 45). The vulnerable financial situation of parts of the immigrant population is also illustrated by the fact that many receive financial support from the state

(NOU 2011:7, table 9.2). Therefore, it is not the immigrant background in itself that explains why these children are overrepresented in the low-income group, but the fact that the parents have many of the characteristics that contribute to increased risk of poverty.

The factor of greatest significance for a family's risk of poverty is the adults' level of employment. Whereas 8 per cent of all children under the age of 18 live in a household where no one is employed, for children in low-income families the proportion is almost 50 per cent (2011 figures) (Kaur 2013: 61). Children in single-provider households where no adult is in employment have an even greater risk of poverty (Nadim and Nielsen 2008).

Level of employment is closely correlated with level of education. People in the low-income group have a lower level of education than the population in general. Whereas 16 per cent of all children under the age of 18 live in a family where the main provider has a low income, for children in low-income families the proportion is 34 per cent (2011 figures) (Kaur 2013: 62).

Children in low-income families also differ from other children in that the family more often receives financial assistance (social assistance benefit) (5.9 per cent of all children, compared with 29.3 per cent of children in low-income families) and more often receives housing benefit (6.5 per cent of all children, compared with 34.3 per cent of children in low-income families) (Kaur 2013: 63). The fact that low-income families are more financially vulnerable is, however, not a cause, but a consequence, of poverty.

⁶ Cash benefit for two-year-olds was discontinued in 2012, but that cannot have affected poverty trends over the last decade.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF POVERTY

There are two main aspects to consider when it comes to the consequences of growing up in a family with a low income. Firstly, there are the immediate consequences, i.e. the experience of living in a family with a low income. Secondly, there are the long-term consequences, and the conclusion of the research that has been carried out so far is that those who have lived with a low income while growing up are more at risk of having various problems with living conditions later in life.

As we have seen above, there is no one definition of poverty used by everyone, and many – including Statistics Norway – have in recent years been more cautious about using the term “poverty” when measuring poverty based on income after tax. What was formerly referred to as poverty is now described by many as low income.

Whether the various definitions of poverty will result in researchers and others abandoning the term is unclear, but it can be helpful to remember that a number of different socio-economic groups can overlap with those who have a high risk of poverty. People with a low income will often also be people with low education, poor health or low-income professions – or possibly no job at all.

In this review, we will concentrate on studies that explicitly comment on the consequences of growing up and living in poverty. Nevertheless, when commenting on the consequences of growing up in poverty, it is important to be aware that there is uncertainty over whether it is the poverty in itself or other (often unobserved) characteristics that are the cause of individual disadvantages in living conditions occurring more often among the poor.

Social activities

In Norwegian poverty politics, it has been much emphasised that all children and young people should have the opportunity to participate in the ordinary activities of their contemporaries. For instance, this has been expressed in the action plans against poverty (Annex to Proposition to the Storting No. 1 (2008–2009) – State budget 2009, page 13). The action plans do not specify in detail

which activities it is important for children to participate in, but it is reasonable to assume that the most important thing is to ensure that children have the opportunity to participate in organised leisure activities such as sporting or cultural activities, and that children and young people are not cut off from their contemporaries due to poor finances. This was confirmed, for example, in a questionnaire from 2007, where a representative sample of the population was asked about which consumer goods and activities they considered to be necessary for children in Norway (Fløtten and Pedersen 2009). This survey showed that social activities and goods that made such activities possible were considered to be necessary by a great majority of those asked (see figure 1 in Fløtten and Pedersen 2009). Over 90 per cent of the population believe, for example, that children and young people must have the opportunity to participate in organised leisure activities.

Poor children participate somewhat less in leisure activities

In the questionnaire from 2007, it was asked whether children/young people actually had the opportunity to participate in leisure activities (Fløtten and Pedersen 2009). There are two important findings from these analyses: Firstly, the survey shows that most children and young people (84 per cent) actually participate in organised leisure activities. Secondly, the survey shows that it is less common for children in poor families to participate in such activities than it is for other children to do so: 14 per cent of children in non-poor families do not participate in organised leisure activities, whereas the equivalent figure for children in poor families is 32 per cent. In other words, almost one in three children from families with a low income do not participate in such activities.

In the survey, parents were also asked to state whether the lack of participation in organised leisure activities was due to the family’s finances or other conditions. In total, 3 per cent of the parents stated that the lack of participation was due to poor finances. This explanation was used by 1 per cent of non-poor parents, and 18 per cent of parents from poor families.

In another survey addressing social participation among children and young people from low-income families, there was a separate

additional sample consisting of families with a background from Somalia or Pakistan (Fløtten and Kavli 2009). This survey showed that participation in leisure activities was much lower among these children than among children in general: 59 per cent of children with a Pakistani background and 51 per cent of children with a Somali background participated rarely or not at all in organised activities.

In the survey, a subjective measure of income was used to assess the family's finances. In families where the parents stated that the finances had been poor for all or most of the time over the last two years, the children were less likely to participate in organised leisure activities. In the general sample, 23 per cent of children/young people from families with poor finances did not participate in organised activities, whereas the equivalent figure among the Somali/Pakistani sample was 63 per cent (Fløtten and Kavli 2009: 107). The family's finances seem to have some significance for participation, but this effect appears to be stronger among the majority population than among the minorities.

NOVA's survey of living conditions of children in low-income families also includes questions about participation in organised leisure activities. This survey shows that 23 per cent of the children in the low-income sample never participated in organised activities, whereas the equivalent figure for the control group was 11 per cent. This survey shows, as do the other two surveys, that most children from low-income groups participate in organised leisure activities, but that children from the low-income group are generally less active than other children (Stefansen 2004: 111; see also Kristoffersen 2010: 165 and Sletten 2011).

Differences between the sexes in participation in organised leisure activities

A couple of the above-mentioned surveys studied differences between the sexes in participation. NOVA's survey shows that there are fewer girls than boys who participate in activities in the low-income group, whereas there are no such differences in the control group (Stefansen 2004: 112). This finding was not confirmed by Fløtten and Kavli's survey. This can perhaps be explained by the fact that

the survey is based on different measures of poverty (subjective measures versus income measures). It may also be due to the general sample in Fløtten and Kavli's survey not distinguishing between children with an immigrant background and other children (in this survey, the only difference described is that between the general sample, which has a relatively low participation of people with a non-western background, and the additional sample of people with a Somali or Pakistani background). Moreover, the two studies cover somewhat different age groups.

When it comes to differences between the sexes in participation in organised activities among children with an immigrant background, the findings point in the same direction. Fløtten and Kavli found that girls with a Somali or Pakistani background participated much less in organised leisure activities than boys with a background from Somalia or Pakistan. Even after controlling for other background variables, girls with a Somali or Pakistani background have a lower likelihood of participating in organised leisure activities than boys (Fløtten and Kavli 2009: 109). The NOVA survey also concludes that girls' participation in organisations is linked to ethnic background. There are almost three times as many girls with a non-western background as girls with a Norwegian or other background who do not participate in organised activities (61 per cent versus 21 per cent) (Stefansen 2004: 113).

Spending time with friends

When it comes to informal contact with friends, there are no clear findings to lean on. Fafø's survey from 2005 (Fløtten and Kavli 2009) finds a correlation between informal contact with friends and family finances for children with a Pakistani or Somali background, whereas the difference in the general population sample is not significant. NOVA's studies of children and young people in low-income families find no differences between the low-income sample and other children/young people in terms of social gathering. On the contrary, NOVA's study from 2009 finds that non-western young people in the low-income group answered more often than other young people that they belong to a group of friends who spend a lot of time together (Sandbæk and Pedersen (eds.) 2010: 171).

Going away on holiday

Within the public debates on child poverty, a lot of emphasis is placed on the significance of being able to go away on holiday. In recent years there have been media stories at the start of the summer holidays about poor children who are unable to go away on holiday, and many organisations arrange holiday trips for children. The emphasis in the media on the significance of holiday trips is not necessarily reciprocated among the population in general. In the survey by Fløtten and Pedersen (2009), only a minority of less than 20 per cent believed that it is necessary for children and young people to be able to go on holiday *abroad* once a year⁷.

The survey showed that 55 per cent of the children/young people do not go on holidays abroad each year, but the differences connected with the family's finances are relatively small. Some 55 per cent of the non-poor families with children do not go on foreign holidays each year, whereas the same is the case for 63 per cent of low-income families. In the sample, a total of 19 per cent state that their children do not go on foreign holidays due to poor finances (35 per cent of the poor families, and 16 per cent of the non-poor families).

When it comes to children with a non-western background, it is *more* common that they go on holidays abroad than it is for other children (66 per cent versus 44 per cent). This can probably be explained by the fact that foreign trips for non-western children mean an opportunity to visit family or friends in their country of origin, and that non-western families therefore prioritise this highly. The sample survey is too small to make it possible to analyse differences in this area among poor and non-poor families with different ethnic backgrounds.

In the survey by Fløtten and Kavli from 2003, the respondents (i.e. families with children)

were asked whether they could afford to pay for a week's holiday away from home at least once a year if they wanted to. This question has not been included in any of the publications from the project, but the figures prepared for this memorandum show that 77 per cent of the respondents answered that they could afford it. If we intersect the question about the possibility of holidays with the household's finances, we find that only 14 per cent of those who see themselves as poor stated that they could afford to pay for a week's holiday a year⁸. The equivalent figure for those who see themselves as being among the financially wealthiest, or who have good finances, is over 90 per cent. If we intersect the question with a different measure of financial situation, i.e. the measure that states whether the family has had good or bad finances over the last two years, we similarly find that only 15 per cent of those who have had poor finances all the time over the last two years can afford a week's holiday away from home. When it comes to those who have had good finances, or mostly good finances, most of the time, the proportion who could afford a holiday was as much as 93 per cent.

Health

The relationship between health problems and access to resources (the so-called health gradient) is gradually becoming better understood (Wilkinson and Marmot 2003; Sund and Krokstad 2005). Those with the lowest income or education are those who have the poorest health, whereas those who have a high income or education generally have the best health. What is more uncertain is to what degree it is low education that leads to poor health (via, for example, work or behaviour that is harmful to health), or whether low education is partly a consequence of poor health.

Based on what we know about the distribution of good health and poor health, we can assume

⁷ An equivalent question for the population in general, where the example given was one week's holiday in a cabin in Norway per year, showed that 44 per cent believed this was necessary. Therefore, if instead the question had been asked as to whether children/young people should have the opportunity to have one week's holiday away from home per year without specifying a *foreign* holiday, it is highly likely that a higher proportion would have considered the holiday as a necessity for children and young people.

⁸ The respondents were asked: How would you describe your family's financial position in comparison with other families in Norway? The possible responses were: a) Among the wealthiest, b) financially secure, but not particularly wealthy, c) not much money, but not poor, d) poor. Some 6 per cent of respondents answered that they were poor.

that there are more people with poor health among those who are poor, whereas it is more uncertain why the poor people have poor health.

If children growing up in poor families have poor health, or end up with poor health, it is possible that the very experience of poverty affects health. Classic studies carried out by the Norwegian doctor and researcher Anders Forsdahl showed that growing up in poverty in Finnmark in the early 20th century affected the incidence of heart disease many decades later.

Many would protest that poverty 100 years ago involved a much greater lack of food, clothing and housing than is the case now, and that such a correlation is no longer relevant to those who are poor today. Even though most poor children today have their basic needs for food, clothing and housing provided, there are some analyses that show that even now children in poor families have poorer health than other children. The results largely rest on research carried out outside Norway, often in the USA, but there are also studies from Norway that show that poor children have poorer health than others.

For instance, NOVA has carried out a preliminary study of poor children (Sandbæk and Pedersen (eds.) 2010), finding that poor children more often than other children have a low body height, are overweight, have weekly psychosomatic symptoms and are diagnosed with ADHD. In addition, studies of young people in Oslo have shown that poor young people have a higher frequency of headaches, pain in the shoulders/neck and mental disorders (Haavet et al. 2004).

A correlation has therefore been demonstrated between low income and poor health, but more research is needed to prove any independent effect of low income on health.

Among doctors it is well known that what are described as “negative life events” affect health both in the short and the long term, and poverty is an example of such an event (Clench-Aas et al. 2004).

Many of the poor children are of school age, and if poverty affects health this can also have consequences for coping with a typical school day, which will in turn affect future opportunities for education and employment.

Poverty and mental health

In addition to the physical health problems that may be associated with poverty, mental health can also be affected by difficulties with family finances. A range of studies, primarily from the USA, have shown that there is a correlation between the family’s finances and a child’s mental health, such as depression, behavioural problems, antisocial behaviour or anxiety (see table 1 in Bøe 2013 for an overview).

In a Norwegian doctorate dissertation (Bøe 2013), the relationship between mental health and low income is investigated in a Norwegian context. Based on the Barn i Bergen (Children in Bergen) survey, Bøe and his colleagues find a significant correlation between poor family finances⁹ and mental health problems among children (behavioural problems, hyperactivity, emotional problems and problems relating to contact with contemporaries) (Bøe et al. 2012a). Furthermore, Bøe and his colleagues (2012b) find a correlation between family finances and sleep problems among children. It is apparent from these studies that there is also a correlation between the parents’ level of education and mental health problems in the children. The correlation between the health problems and the family finances is nevertheless significant for many of the health problems in the multivariate analyses (Bøe 2013: 58).

When it comes to the question of how family finances can be of significance for children’s mental health, a number of possibilities can be considered. One possible mechanism is that sleep problems are an indirect mediator between low income and mental health problems (Bøe et al. 2012b). Another possible mechanism is that poor finances are of significance for the parents’ emotional situation and for their behaviour as parents, and that consequently this can be a mediator between low income and the children’s mental health (Bøe et al. 2014).

Performance at school

If growing up in poverty affects health, it would not be surprising if this has consequences on performance at school. Dearing, Zachrisson and Mykletun (2011: 786) write that *“fattige barn i gjennomsnitt har dårligere språkutvikling og kognitiv utvikling, og klarer seg dårligere på skolen enn barn fra mer velstående familier”*

“poor children on average have worse language development and cognitive development, and are less successful at school than children from more affluent families”). The survey from NOVA referred to above (Sandbæk and Pedersen (eds.) 2010) shows that there is little difference between poor children and other children in terms of well-being at secondary and upper secondary school, but that self-reported grades (in some subjects) are somewhat lower among poor children than among other children, both at secondary school and during upper secondary education.

Low grades can be demotivating for further studies, and this can limit available options in the transition from secondary to upper secondary education and from upper secondary to higher education. The role played by grades in determining the actual educational choices made among the poor has not been studied, but we know that the proportion of people in households where the main earner has a low level of education is twice as high in low-income households (approximately 40 per cent) as in the population as a whole (Kaur 2013).

Material living conditions

Poverty was formerly defined as lacking fundamental necessities such as food, clothing and a roof over one’s head. For the vast majority of poor children in today’s Norway, this is not their experience of poverty. An table created by UNICEF shows that fewer than 2 per cent of Norwegian children lack at least two items from a list of 14 such items “considered normal and necessary for a child in an economically advanced country”. By comparison, the figure for Spanish children is 8 per cent, for French children 10 per cent, for Polish children 21 per cent, and for Romanian children 73 per cent (UNICEF 2012: figure 1a). In such a context, therefore, material deprivation in Norway appears very limited. The survey by Fløtten and Pedersen (2009) shows that, even though material living-conditions deprivation is greater in families with children with a low income than in other families with children, it is not the case that all children in low-income families experience great material deficiencies. Therefore, there are two sides to poor children’s material deficiencies: on the one hand, children in poor families are at greater risk of experiencing material deprivation than other children; on the other, a minority of children in poor families experience serious material deprivation. Naturally,

this is due to the fact that the low-income group is a very varied and composite group: some have had poor finances for a number of years, whereas others have only had a low income for a short period. In addition, those in the low-income group will have varying levels of support from family and personal network, which is of significance for their material standard of living.

Housing and local environment

In Norway, it is very common to own your own home. Generally, about eight people in ten live in a home they own, and two in ten rent. Among families with children with a low income, the proportion who own is the same as in the population in general, i.e. eight in ten. If we look at all families with children together, nine in ten own their own home. The proportion of families with children who own their own home is therefore somewhat lower among low-income households (Kaur 2013), but there are not great differences in the proportion who own.

When we look at how many live in crowded conditions, the differences are clearer. In the period between 2001 and 2012, the proportion of families with children with a low income who lived in crowded conditions was two to three times as high as the proportion among all families with children (Kaur 2013, Sandbæk and Pedersen (eds.) 2010). Moreover, the NOVA survey shows that children in poor families are more likely to share a bedroom than other children (Sandbæk and Pedersen (eds.) 2010).

Figures from Statistics Norway show that families with children with a low income have a (not significant) tendency to live in homes with damp and dry rot compared with others (Kaur 2013). Nevertheless, in NOVA’s survey, which looks at families with children who are poor over a number of years, there is a clear high frequency and accumulation of housing problems compared with the control group. NOVA surveyed the incidence of damp/draughts/cold, poor standard of materials, and noise from traffic and neighbours. All of these indicators, apart from traffic noise, occurred more frequently in poor families with children. NOVA concludes that there are particular quality problems in municipal housing, and therefore that allocating municipal housing cannot be said to be “a way out of difficult living conditions” (Sandbæk and Pedersen (eds.) 2010: 121).

Outlook

We have seen above that children who live in poverty are more exposed to health problems, and that there is a risk that these health problems will stay with them later in life. We have also seen that poor children's self-reported performance at school is somewhat lower than average. These correlations harmonise well with what is known about social reproduction, as we mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, and help to explain how social position can be passed on from generation to generation. In addition, there are a number of studies that have explicitly looked at the significance of growing up in poverty for outcome as (young) adults. Lorentzen and Nielsen (2009) used the parents' receiving financial assistance (social assistance benefit) as an indicator of poverty, and found that children of such benefit recipients are much more likely to become benefit recipients as adults. Wiborg and Hansen (2009) carried out a similar survey and found that when the parents' income was low when the child was growing up, this increased the likelihood of receiving financial assistance (social assistance benefit) and of unemployment at the age of 20. Epland and Kirkeberg (2009) found that of those children who were living in low-income households in 1986, 12 per cent themselves had low incomes as adults in 2008. The equivalent for those who had lived in households that did not have a low income was 6 per cent.

We saw above that children in poor households more often live in rented housing. Living in rented housing as a child correlates with poverty and poor health as an adult. People who have lived in rented housing during their childhood have a greater likelihood of becoming recipients of financial assistance (social assistance

benefit) and ending up as disabled compared with people who grew up in housing owned by the family (Nielsen 2011). Additionally, children living in rented housing have a greater likelihood of themselves living in rented housing when they are adults.

There are therefore grounds to claim that growing up in a poor family is not just a problem there and then, but that children in low-income families are also more vulnerable to disadvantages in living conditions later in life.

Are the consequences the same for all poor children?

This review of the consequences of poverty has two important conclusions. Firstly, children who grow up in families with a low income have a greater likelihood than other children of having a number of disadvantages in living conditions. Secondly, most children who grow up in low-income families do not have the specified disadvantages in living conditions. This two-pronged conclusion arises from the fact that the group in poverty is a very varied and composite group. We can imagine a continuum, from a situation where a family has a low income for a very limited period but otherwise has no psychosocial or health problems, to a situation where a family has had a low income for a number of years and the provider(s) has/have major health problems, a low level of education, very little experience on the employment market and a poor social network. Needless to say, the consequences of having a low income will be widely divergent in these two types of families, and the latter type of family will probably require a greater number of, and more complex, solutions than a simple increase in income to improve the children's living conditions.

ANTI-POVERTY POLICY

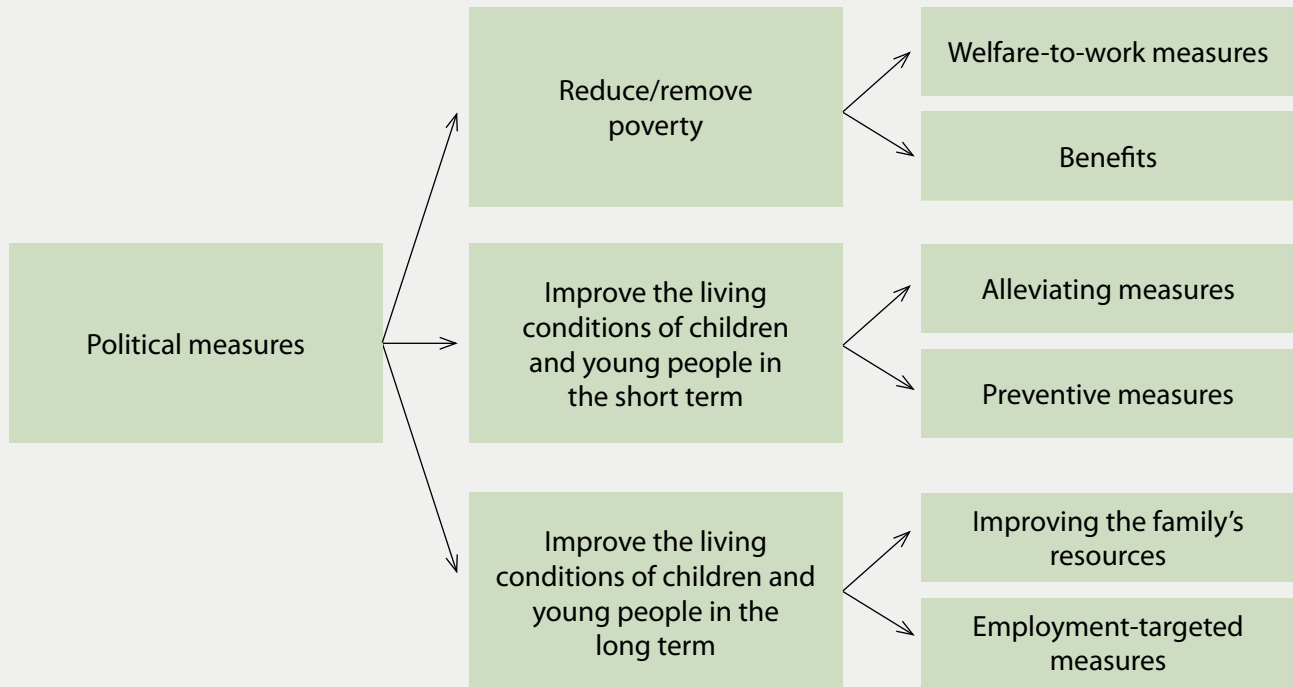
Equalising differences has been an explicit goal in a plethora of policy areas. The Distribution Committee (NOU 2009:10: 284) highlighted how family policy and education policy impact the distribution of human capital; how macroeconomic and employment market policy affect primary income distribution; how tax policy and income transfer (from state to municipal and county authorities) impact secondary income distribution; and how housing policy, health and care policy

and consumption policy affect the ultimate distribution of economic resources. These ambitious policy distribution targets, which have resulted inter alia in high employment and relatively small pay differences, are the main reason why Norway has lower child poverty rates than most other countries. However, consideration also needs to be given to which of these policy areas should be prioritised in order to successfully reduce poverty.

When it comes to measures to combat poverty, it is expedient to split these into measures that can help to reduce poverty, and measures that can help to alleviate the consequences of poverty without necessarily reducing poverty per se.

Additionally, with regard to child poverty, it can be useful to split measures into those that alleviate the immediate consequences of poverty, and those that can positively impact children's future lives and living conditions (figure 4).

FIGURE 4: Schematic summary of initiatives to combat poverty and the consequences of poverty



Reducing the incidence of poverty

With poverty measured by income, reducing the number of children growing up in poor families naturally involves boosting families' incomes. Measures that help to improve children's living conditions have no effect on poverty statistics, as such measures do not impact the family's income. Family incomes can only be raised by the children's parents/guardians increasing their incomes or through the benefits system.

Increased employment

As illustrated above, low employment is the major cause of income poverty. The parents of many poor families, while not permanently unemployed, often only perform casual and/or sporadic work (Nadim and Nilsen 2008). There can be many reasons for being less frequently in employment. On the one hand there can be individual causes:

- Physical or mental health problems
- Poor Norwegian-language skills
- Inadequate skills or a mismatch between an individual's skills and those demanded by the employment market
- A deliberate decision that an adult, most often the mother, will stay at home with young children. If the family's main provider has a low-paid job, this could result in the family's income falling below the official poverty threshold. This could also happen if the household's main source of income is state benefits (Fløtten et al. 2011).

On the other hand, many structural factors can also result in low employment:

- Economic downturns
- Increased competition from economic migrants (Friberg et al. 2013)
- Employers – rightly or wrongly – can regard certain individuals as high-risk, unreliable or inefficient

- Exposure to discriminatory attitudes, for example on grounds of disability or ethnic background (Midtbøen and Rogstad 2012).

There is no doubt that Norway's high level of employment is the main reason why the country's poverty rates are lower than those of many other countries. Similarly, there is no doubt that all political parties regard work-to-welfare measures as the most important tool to combat poverty. What is unclear is whether such measures can eradicate the issue of poverty, or where the line for such measures should be drawn.

Firstly, there is often an imbalance between the skills offered by people in poverty and those demanded by the employment market. If this imbalance is not addressed, work-to-welfare measures will be unlikely to improve everyone's situation. A number of measures and schemes have been introduced under Norwegian employment policy to resolve this problem, but evaluations of the various measures reveal that these have had varying effect.

Secondly, we have to take account of the groups with which low-income workers are competing. The Norwegian employment market has undergone significant changes since the expansion of the EU in 2004, in particular due to the influence of migrant workers. While this has had many positive consequences for Norway and the Norwegian economy, it has also ramped up competition for jobs for groups who are less frequently in employment (Friberg et al. 2013).

Thirdly, we have to consider challenges relating to individuals' freedom of choice. A family can decide that not all members of the family will work full-time, and no one could reasonably deny individual families' rights to make such a choice. However, the problem arises the instant this choice results in extremely low income levels – perhaps so low that they dip below a given poverty threshold. What should the authorities do in such situations? If the household comprises solely adults, it could perhaps be claimed that the authorities bear no responsibility (assuming that we can be 100 per cent sure that the lack of work is the result of a voluntary decision), but what if there are children in the household?

It is not possible within the scope of this memorandum to discuss the full breadth of work-to-welfare measures; however, we would like

to point out that certain challenges attach to this policy. These challenges are arguably even greater in Norway than in many other countries. As employment levels are essentially high in Norway, it can be presumed that those people outside the employment market will find it harder to gain work than their counterparts in countries with lower employment. It is more difficult to raise employment rates from 78 to 80 per cent than from 65 to 67 per cent.

Increasing income through benefits

While high employment is considered to be the most important reason for low poverty rates in Norway, the taxation and benefits system is the second-most important. Effective social schemes help to level out income differences, and poverty rates in Norway would be much higher if the Norwegian welfare system did not contribute to families' overall incomes.

In many ways it may appear that the simplest way to solve the poverty problem would be to “buy one's way out” by raising the level of benefits to families with children (or all benefits, for that matter). In theory it would be possible to raise everyone's income above 60 per cent of the current median, and thus eliminate the poverty problem. While such a form of guaranteed minimum income would naturally come at a price, the greatest difficulties are the incentive effects it would cause. The most discussed conflict of objectives within poverty policy is striking a balance between ensuring that benefits are high enough that recipients' living conditions are acceptable, but not so high that they have negative incentive effects.

An alternative to introducing a form of minimum income could involve raising the level of individual benefits specifically aimed at families with children. The fact that child benefit has not kept pace with inflation is one contributory factor that has led to an increase in the number of children in low-income families, and, as has already been mentioned, a few years ago the Distribution Committee revealed that the percentage of low-income families with children would have been 2 per cent lower if child benefit had been adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index between 1996 and 2006 (NOU 2009:10 233).

Any decision to resolve poverty problems using the benefits system would nonetheless have to be aligned with both consideration of the sustainability of the welfare state and the opinion of the population at large. The expenses of the welfare state are expected to increase significantly on the back of an ageing population (Fløtten et al. 2013), and in such a situation it cannot be taken for granted that increasing benefits would be a viable option. Furthermore, regardless of whether the welfare state can or cannot raise the level of some or all benefits, the structure of welfare state schemes must be sanctioned by the general public. The people who finance the welfare schemes through their taxes must believe that the welfare pot is being fairly distributed.

Measures to improve children's immediate living conditions

While some of the measures to raise families' income can have virtually immediate effects, it can take a long time for others to pay off. Therefore, children's actual living conditions must be taken into account while waiting for the families' economic situation to improve. Children live in the present, and cannot wait a number of years for improvements in their living conditions that give them the best chance of enjoying a good life and realising their goals and ambitions. Discussions of child poverty in Norway place a significant emphasis on specific measures that improve living conditions, and we will indeed comment on these, but let us first take a look at general poverty-preventing measures that also have an immediate impact on children's living conditions.

Preventive measures

As mentioned above, distribution considerations feature prominently in a number of policy areas, not least as part of education policy. Ensuring that all children have access to high-quality health services, to good kindergartens and to an efficient education system, irrespective of their family's income, is extremely important, both for the children's future opportunities in life and their immediate living conditions. The health service should safeguard all children's health. Children shall be afforded the best possible opportunities to develop their human capital throughout kindergarten and later schooling.

In addition, the health service, the kindergartens and the schools must be institutions capable of recognising whether some children live in families with particular problems, including financial.

A number of US studies have concluded that good kindergarten services can help to reduce social inequality, and that good kindergartens for children who need extra support and stimulation can provide major socio-economic benefits (Knudsen et al. 2006). While we cannot yet claim that the US findings also apply to Norway, one Norwegian study has revealed that kindergarten attendance has a beneficial effect on children's subsequent education and employment prospects, and that kindergartens reduce later reliance on social services (Havnes and Mogstad 2009). Moreover, attending kindergarten and school is not only of importance for children's future lives, it also provides opportunities for social contact with contemporaries.

Alleviating measures

Although attending kindergarten and school is of major importance for children's and young people's living conditions and social affiliation, it is a fact that much social contact (and social education) takes place in other arenas. Some children have limited opportunities to participate in various leisure activities due to their family's finances, whether this is due to insufficient resources to pay fees, or inadequate resources to furnish children/young people with the requisite consumer goods. The consumer goods needed by children will vary with age, place of residence and environment; however, these will often comprise items such as appropriate clothes, access to the Internet, mobile phones, money for public transport, etc.

During the last decade both the national and municipal authorities have attached significant importance to measures intended to increase children's opportunities to participate in activities with their contemporaries, whether organised leisure activities or simply contact with friends. Both the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and NAV have operated grant schemes specifically designed to alleviate the consequences of growing up in poverty, and the Norwegian municipalities have initiated a wide variety of measures to improve children's situation (Nuland et al. 2009).

We do not yet have any impact evaluations of the extent to which these measures have affected children's living conditions. A survey from 2009 (Nuland et al. 2009) concluded that around half of the municipalities that had received grant funds had achieved the targets they set for themselves for the measures (which included improving children's and young people's participation levels). Another example is the child poverty survey carried out in Kristiansand, where an evaluation of families' satisfaction levels with the Activity Card revealed that 38 out of 39 families believed the card had been of great benefit to the children (Hellström and Pedersen 2013).

In other words, alleviating measures have a positive impact on children's immediate living conditions, but do not reduce families' income poverty per se. There are also "grounds to question whether it is realistic to expect that the measures that have been implemented as a result of the initiatives that are being evaluated here could also combat reproduction of poverty ... These types of measures can help, but will not be sufficient in isolation to achieve this objective." (Nuland et al. 2009: 96).

Measures to improve children's long-term life opportunities

The fact that it has been proven that poverty can be passed on from generation to generation makes reducing the long-term consequences of poverty an important undertaking. Here it should be emphasised that while most people who grow up in a low-income family or in a family that receives financial assistance (social assistance benefit) do not necessarily do the same as an adult, the likelihood of experiencing extremely difficult finances is nonetheless greater. It should also be emphasised that it is not possible to state with certainty whether it is low income/receiving financial assistance (social assistance benefit) in the family that actually impacts the likelihood of future economic difficulties, or other family characteristics. Despite this, it remains important to discuss measures that could reduce the likelihood of poverty being passed on from generation to generation.

The first type of measures that will be of importance for children's future life opportunities are the preventive measures mentioned

above. Safeguarding children's health and education is the most important way to avoid reproduction of poverty, where one important step involves preventing young people dropping out of the education system.

In addition to such measures, it may be necessary to place a particular emphasis on helping young people from poor families make the transition from school to work. Young people from low-income families are less likely than their contemporaries from better-off families to have a wide network to rely on or various contacts who could open the door to employment. This is partly explained by the fact that people in low-income families tend to be less frequently and less intensively in work than those in other families.

A final way to help to improve children's long-term life opportunities is to address family problems other than those relating to low income. Such problems could be the full or partial driver of low-income problems, or could have no impact on income levels at all. In the above review of the potential consequences of poverty, we confirmed that poverty is a negative life event, and naturally the more negative life events children experience when they are growing up, the greater the negative impact this is likely to have on their future.

Examples of measures in other countries

Identifying effective measures to reduce child poverty and/or reduce the consequences of poverty is not an exclusively Norwegian concern. Measures have been taken to combat child poverty in many countries, with these countries often looking to each other for examples of effective measures.

In international comparisons of child poverty, Norway and the other Nordic countries are often cited as successes when it comes to combating poverty. Policies to stimulate high employment, combined with redistributing tax and welfare policies, have resulted in comparatively low poverty rates. The area in which Norway could potentially learn most from other countries concerns measures to alleviate the effects of poverty. There is no overall summary of the types of alleviating measures that are available, and no one can definitely

say how much could be learned from looking at measures in other countries. Measures to combat child poverty are often local in nature, and something that works in one context will not necessarily work in another (Fløtten and Grøden et al. 2014). The extent of poverty, the composition of the group of poor children, the structure of the welfare and education systems and the distribution of responsibilities between the public and private sectors are all factors that can impact the efficacy of various measures. Even if the measures cannot necessarily be directly imported, they may well be something we can learn from in some way.

A review of holistic measures to combat child poverty in the Nordic region and the United Kingdom (Fløtten and Grødem et al. 2014) concluded that many social innovations are currently underway in Europe, but that very few of the measures have been sufficiently evaluated to be able to determine whether they have had the desired effect. However, many activities have been initiated in the United Kingdom, some of which can be mentioned here.⁹ Many of these projects are intended to improve family interaction and function:

- Family intervention projects: These projects involve intensive follow-up of families with particularly advanced problems. One single social worker coordinates all the work performed by various agencies, and is in personal and direct contact with the family. The actual follow-up starts with documentation of the family's problems, after which a work plan is drawn up outlining the measures that need to be implemented and how these will be achieved. On average social workers spent 7.5 hours a week with each family. The measures could involve help to coordinate the services received by the families, support for the children's schooling, assistance in avoiding dropping out of school, one-to-one parental guidance or help with balancing the family finances. Several studies have concluded that the family intervention projects have produced many positive results that have improved children's living conditions and resulted in improved interaction within families, but the programme has not managed to place
- more parents in employment. However, it is not possible to establish which specific project measures have had a positive impact, and it is further worth noting that this project also employed somewhat authoritarian working methods that are far from the Norwegian ideal of equal partnerships.
- The structure of the Nurse-Family Partnership is based on the template of a programme that in the USA is deemed to be one of the best documented intervention programmes targeting families with young children. The programme is aimed in particular at young mothers (under the age of 20), who are followed up closely from pregnancy until their children reach the age of two. The mothers (and occasionally the fathers) receive regular home visits where they are given help in mastering parenting skills and in defining life goals. In this programme also, there has been no attempt to identify exactly which elements of the programme are responsible for the good results; it is the totality of the programme that matters.
- The Sure Start Local Programmes targeted pre-school children and their families who lived in particularly disadvantaged areas. The programmes were unusual in the sense that they were locally based. Several hundred Sure Start centres were established, which did not offer a particular type of service. While some new services were developed, other existing services were coordinated and/or improved. The services spanned everything from child supervision to adult education. All the centres have drop-in centres for parents and children, where initiatives follow evidence-based parental programmes. The Sure Start programmes have been evaluated several times, but here too it has proved difficult to establish any clear causal relationships. An evaluation carried out in 2012 concluded that Sure Start had had a clear impact on the children's situation, for example in that parents had developed more stimulating home surroundings and better nurturing methods.

⁹ The review is based on Fløtten and Grødem et al. 2014

These three examples serve to illustrate the types of measures that can be implemented to alleviate the consequences of poverty, and to hopefully reduce poverty in the long term. As mentioned above, we have to be cautious about transferring measures from one context to another. The “lower-class” issues that exist in the United Kingdom, for example, are of a different nature and scope to those we are used to in Norway. The measures also vary

in content, and it is difficult to establish with any certainty whether these measures have any effect and, if so, which specific areas of the measures are effective. Certain particular features stand out as especially positive in all the evaluations, for example that participants receive close follow-up and feel empowered by being able to contribute themselves and in that the services are coordinated and aligned.

IS MORE KNOWLEDGE NEEDED?

The review in this memorandum shows that there is plenty of knowledge about child poverty in Norway. It is known how poverty is changing in scope and which groups are particularly vulnerable. In addition, a certain amount is known about how poverty comes about and the types of problems with living conditions that low incomes can bring for families and children. Nevertheless, there are a number of knowledge gaps that could beneficially be filled:

Firstly, there is a need for a greater understanding of the mechanisms that lead into and out of poverty. With the help of data from administrative registers, much is known about the duration of poverty and which groups are in poverty a long time, but little is known about why some families in a particular population group do not become poor, whereas others do – or what enables some to get out of poverty quickly, whereas others stay poor. The obvious explanation is differences in employment activity, but what is it that affects the tendency to get into work among people who share a number of objective characteristics? Conditions such as place of residence, network, attitudes and personal resources can be significant. Identifying what other characteristics are common to families with a persistent low income will make it easier to consider what sort of measures can be developed to prevent families with children from becoming locked into poverty.

Secondly, there is very little knowledge about what types of measures actually alleviate the consequences of poverty. A range of measures have been implemented in Norwegian municipalities, yet few or no evaluations have been

made of the effect of these measures. There are many grounds to support the application of a wide variety of measures, depending on the poverty-related challenges prevalent locally, but it is worth investigating whether there are some elements of the measures that are particularly effective.

Thirdly, there may be grounds to review the state benefits system to see how current benefits help to keep families with children out of poverty, and to consider whether there is anything that can be changed to further reduce child poverty without introducing negative incentive effects that are too great. Some families with children are entirely outside the employment market, and reducing poverty by means of welfare-to-work initiatives may be unrealistic in these cases. What sort of services can be offered to these families to improve their income?

Fourthly and finally, it could be relevant to investigate whether there are any measures of poverty that are more successful than the measurement of income in delineating the group that we want to help. In this memorandum, it has been emphasised that poverty is a normative phenomenon and that there is no one “correct” definition of poverty. Nevertheless, it would be of interest to discuss whether there are any definitions and measurements of poverty that would cover the Norwegian situation better than income below 60 per cent of the median.

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A SUMMARY OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

1 • DEFINITION OF THE CHILD

Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

2 • NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Convention applies to every child without discrimination, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status, whatever they think or say, whatever their family background.

3 • BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.

4 • IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights by creating systems and passing laws that promote and protect children's rights.

5 • PARENTAL GUIDANCE AND A CHILD'S EVOLVING CAPACITIES

Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to provide guidance and direction to their child as they grow up, so that they fully enjoy their rights. This must be done in a way that recognises the child's increasing capacity to make their own choices.

6 • LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

7 • BIRTH REGISTRATION, NAME, NATIONALITY, CARE

Every child has the right to be registered at birth, to have a name and nationality, and, as far

as possible, to know and be cared for by their parents.

8 • PROTECTION AND PRESERVATION OF IDENTITY

Every child has the right to an identity. Governments must respect and protect that right, and prevent the child's name, nationality or family relationships from being changed unlawfully.

9 • SEPARATION FROM PARENTS

Children must not be separated from their parents against their will unless it is in their best interests (for example, if a parent is hurting or neglecting a child). Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this could cause them harm.

10 • FAMILY REUNIFICATION

Governments must respond quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents apply to live together in the same country. If a child's parents live apart in different countries, the child has the right to visit and keep in contact with both of them.

11 • ABDUCTION AND NON-RETURN OF CHILDREN

Governments must do everything they can to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally by their parents or other relatives, or being prevented from returning home.

12 • RESPECT FOR THE VIEWS OF THE CHILD

Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously. This right applies at all times, for example during immigration proceedings, housing decisions or the child's day-to-day home life.

13 • FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Every child must be free to express their thoughts and opinions and to access all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

14 • FREEDOM OF THOUGHT, BELIEF AND RELIGION

Every child has the right to think and believe what they choose and also to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide their child as they grow up.

15 • FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

16 • RIGHT TO PRIVACY

Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life, including protecting children from unlawful attacks that harm their reputation.

17 • ACCESS TO INFORMATION FROM THE MEDIA

Every child has the right to reliable information from a variety of sources, and governments should encourage the media to provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

18 • PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND STATE ASSISTANCE

Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by creating support services for children

and giving parents the help they need to raise their children.

19 • PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

20 • CHILDREN UNABLE TO LIVE WITH THEIR FAMILY

If a child cannot be looked after by their immediate family, the government must give them special protection and assistance. This includes making sure the child is provided with alternative care that is continuous and respects the child's culture, language and religion.

21 • ADOPTION

Governments must oversee the process of adoption to make sure it is safe, lawful and that it prioritises children's best interests. Children should only be adopted outside of their country if they cannot be placed with a family in their own country.

22 • REFUGEE CHILDREN

If a child is seeking refuge or has refugee status, governments must provide them with appropriate protection and assistance to help them enjoy all the rights in the Convention. Governments must help refugee children who are separated from their parents to be reunited with them.

23 • CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all

they can to support disabled children and their families.

24 • HEALTH AND HEALTH SERVICES

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food, and a clean environment and education on health and well-being so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

25 • REVIEW OF TREATMENT AND CARE

If a child has been placed away from home for the purpose of care or protection (for example, with a foster family or in hospital), they have the right to a regular review of their treatment, the way they are cared for and their wider circumstances.

26 • SOCIAL SECURITY

Every child has the right to benefit from social security. Governments must provide social security, including financial support and other benefits, to families in need of assistance.

27 • ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and social needs and support their development. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

28 • RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free and different forms of secondary education must be available to every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity and their rights. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

29 • GOALS OF EDUCATION

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

30 • CHILDREN FROM MINORITY OR INDIGENOUS GROUPS

Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

31 • LEISURE, PLAY AND CULTURE

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

32 • CHILD LABOUR

Governments must protect children from economic exploitation and work that is dangerous or might harm their health, development or education. Governments must set a minimum age for children to work and ensure that work conditions are safe and appropriate.

33 • DRUG ABUSE

Governments must protect children from the illegal use of drugs and from being involved in the production or distribution of drugs.

34 • SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation.

35 • ABDUCTION, SALE AND TRAFFICKING

Governments must protect children from being abducted, sold or moved illegally to a different place in or outside their country for the purpose of exploitation.

36 • OTHER FORMS OF EXPLOITATION

Governments must protect children from all other forms of exploitation, for example the exploitation of children for political activities, by the media or for medical research.

37 • INHUMANE TREATMENT AND ATTENTION

Children must not be tortured, sentenced to the death penalty or suffer other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment. Children should be arrested, detained or imprisoned only as a last resort and for the shortest time possible. They must be treated with respect and care, and be able to keep in contact with their family. Children must not be put in prison with adults.

38 • WAR AND ARMED CONFLICTS

Governments must not allow children under the age of 15 to take part in war or join the armed forces. Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war and armed conflicts.

39 • RECOVERY FROM TRAUMA AND REINTEGRATION

Children who have experienced neglect, abuse, exploitation, torture or who are victims of war must receive special support to help them recover their health, dignity, self-respect and social life.

40 • JUVENILE JUSTICE

A child accused or guilty of breaking the law must be treated with dignity and respect. They have the right to legal assistance and a fair trial that takes account of their age. Governments must set a minimum age for children to be tried in a criminal court and manage a justice system

that enables children who have been in conflict with the law to reintegrate into society.

41 • RESPECT FOR HIGHER NATIONAL STANDARDS

If a country has laws and standards that go further than the present Convention, then the country must keep these laws.

42 • KNOWLEDGE OF RIGHTS

Governments must actively work to make sure children and adults know about the Convention.

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

Barn som lever i fattigdom: regjeringens strategi (Children Living in Poverty: The Government's Strategy) has been formulated with reference to relevant documents such as:

Report to the Storting 19 (2014–2015): Public health report: *Mestring og muligheter (Mastering and Opportunities)*, Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services, 2015.

En god barndom varer livet ut: tiltaksplan for å bekjempe vold og seksuelle overgrep mot barn og ungdom ("A Good Childhood Lasts a Lifetime: Action Plan to Combat Violence Towards and Sexual Abuse of Children and Young People"), Norwegian Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2014.

Lærerløftet: på lag for kunnskapsskolen ("Teacher development – teamwork for the knowledge school"), Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2014

Nasjonal strategi for boligsosialt arbeid (2014 – 2020): Bolig for velferd (National Strategy for Social Work in Housing (2014–2020): Housing for Welfare), Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2014.

Proposition to the Storting 39 L (2014–2015) *Endringer i arbeidsmiljøloven og sosialtjenesteloven (adgang til midlertidig ansettelse mv. og vilkår om aktivitet for stønad til livsopphold) (Changes to the Working Environment Act and the Act relating to social services (access to temporary employment etc. and activity requirements for financial assistance for subsistence))*, Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2015.

RELEVANT WEBSITES

www.rodekors.no

www.bufdir.no

www.imdi.no

www.hdir.no

www.nav.no

www.barneombudet.no

www.husbanken.no

www.ung.no

www.minstemme.no

www.ssb.no

www.sifo.no

www.korspahalsen.no

www.boligsosialt.no

www.idrett.no

www.frivilligsentral.no

www.frifond.no

www.lnu.no

www.sivilsamfunn.no

www.ungdata.no





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