



## INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (IECE) PROJECT

### EXAMPLE OF IECE PROVISION: NORWAY

#### 1. Abstract

In today's Norwegian society, kindergarten is viewed as beneficial for all children. Consequently, nearly all children growing up in Norway are enrolled in kindergartens. In 2014, 90% of all children in Norway under the age of six and as many as 96.6% of three- to five-year-olds were in kindergartens. Children with special educational needs are usually in the same kindergartens as the other children in the community.

Norwegian kindergartens are owned by the municipalities (47%) and by private owners (53%). The fees are statutory and set by the authorities. Municipalities and private owners receive financial grants from the authorities that cover most of the costs, which means that fees are relatively low. The same act and national framework regulate both public and private kindergartens.

For more facts about Norwegian kindergartens, please visit <http://utdanningsspeilet.udir.no/2014/en/content/chapter-3/>

Espira Solknatten Kindergarten is a privately-owned kindergarten in the municipality of Bergen. There are approximately 160 children from one to six years old in Espira Solknatten. The children are divided into eight different groups: four groups for children under three years and four groups for children over three. In Espira Solknatten there are some children with special needs, e.g. children with different forms of delayed or deviant development and children with disabilities.

There are 32–33 employees in Espira Solknatten, of which 15 are trained kindergarten teachers. This is higher than the Norwegian average (the Norwegian Kindergarten Act obliges kindergartens to have one trained kindergarten teacher to each group of 14–18 children over three years old, and to 7–9 children under three years old). The rest of the employees are childcare workers and assistants.

#### 2. Inclusive features

Espira Solknatten Kindergarten is accessible to all children in the locality of Bergen municipality. The kindergarten is privately owned (by the Espira Group), but the municipality of Bergen benefits from available places in the kindergarten. All the kindergartens in the municipality, whether privately owned or owned by the municipality, offer places to children with all kinds of needs.

The Norwegian Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks for Kindergartens

[http://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/barnehage/rammeplan/framework\\_plan\\_for\\_the\\_content\\_and\\_tasks\\_of\\_kindergartens\\_2011\\_rammeplan\\_engelsk.pdf](http://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/barnehage/rammeplan/framework_plan_for_the_content_and_tasks_of_kindergartens_2011_rammeplan_engelsk.pdf)) is a legally binding document regarding the direction and aims of kindergartens in Norway. The Framework Plan is based on a holistic approach to both care and education and on the basic respect for the value of childhood itself. The Framework Plan:

- is general to all kindergartens (privately owned and owned by municipalities);
- is general to all children and all age groups (one to six years);
- focuses on four basic elements: play, learning, care and formation;
- focuses on inclusion and children's participation.

The staff at Espira Solknatten Kindergarten work actively and well within the framework with all children. Children with special educational needs, including children needing extra care and support (hereafter called SEN), are included in all daily activities related to play, learning and formation.

The kindergarten is organised into eight groups and the children with SEN are included in different mainstream groups. In addition to ordinary kindergarten activities, children with SEN have different kinds of special support and time/hours for special education during the day. The support and the time/hours for special education are basically performed by trained specialist teachers.

The staff that support and educate children with SEN receive guidance and have completed various relevant courses. Some of the guidance and courses are given by the municipality. The municipality also offers a wide range of relevant activities for these children during kindergarten time, such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and music therapy. All these activities require and develop good co-operation between the municipality of Bergen and the kindergarten. They also require good co-operation with parents. Some of the staff in the kindergarten have also received guidance from 'Statped' (national service for special needs education: <http://www.statped.no/Spraksider/In-English/>), in which the parents are also involved.

### 3. Inclusive highlight

Espira Solknatten Kindergarten is a very good example of a typical, inclusive, Norwegian kindergarten.

It is a kindergarten that focuses on the positive outcomes of including children with SEN and the enrichment inclusion provides. It manages to include these children in an ordinary daily kindergarten life. It is also a good example of a privately-owned



kindergarten that takes the same responsibility for including children with different kinds of needs as a public kindergarten. Espira Solknatten Kindergarten is also an excellent example of good co-operation between privately-owned kindergartens and municipalities and kindergartens and parents.

Three best practice elements found in Espira Solknatten are as follows:

- Children with SEN are included in daily activities, such as learning and play activities, group meals and outdoor activities;
- Kindergarten staff are well-educated and have received/receive relevant guidance;
- Both co-operation and communication with parents are frequent and good.



Figure 1. Children in Espira Solknatten Kindergarten

#### 4. Other evidence of quality IECE

In the Norwegian kindergarten sector, inclusion and participation are expected, both by the authorities and by the local municipalities.

From [The Education Mirror 2014](#):

*Kindergartens appear generally good at including children with special needs. Cameron et al. (2011) point out that kindergartens are among the most inclusive institutions in the education system. Kindergarten staff is very conscious about ensuring inclusive practices (Solli and Andresen 2012). The kindergarten's role as an inclusive arena relies upon staff to understand their roles and duties when dealing with a diverse group of children and upon how they facilitate interaction (Solli 2012).*

The proposed Norwegian example is a good example of inclusion and participation



for all children with all sorts of needs. The kindergarten has worked systematically with inclusion, participation and competence development for the staff. It involves parents in the planning and evaluation of daily activities and pedagogical plans. The kindergarten has worked systematically and well to employ well-educated staff and it continuously works for competence development of staff members.

Espira Solknatten is also a kindergarten that co-operates with the University College connected to kindergarten teacher education.

Espira Solknatten Kindergarten is also an excellent example of good co-operation between the public and private sectors and it shows that good inclusion is possible in both sectors.