

## **Area-based policies in urban areas: how to promote good living conditions for children and youth (Norway, 2012)<sup>1</sup>**

### **Part II**

#### **On the national report, part II**

The ambition of the second part of the national report is to provide more in-depth information about the measures in the Groruddalen Action Plan and the State Grant Scheme to promote good living conditions among children and youth in urban areas.

The sub-report includes the summaries of two reports evaluating (1) the Grant scheme to promote good living conditions among youth in urban areas, and (2) the free core time scheme in kindergartens in Groruddalen. Further, the report provides further information about other aspects of the Groruddalen Action plan. Much of this information is drawn from written material from the various districts. In addition, IMDi organised a meeting between key actors in the Groruddalen Action Plan and the State Grant Scheme, and Fafo. The meeting was held 13th September 2012. One of the authors of the National Report participated in the meeting. In the meeting, key measures of the two initiatives were presented, and for some of them, additional written material was provided. The meeting, and the material provided, gave access to rich information, some of which is utilised in this report. Footnotes are used to mark where information from this meeting is used.

The document is structured as follows:

- Section A. State grants to combat poverty among children and youth in larger urban areas
  - Summary of a key evaluation report
  - Examples of projects from two city districts in Groruddalen

- Section B. The Groruddalen Action Plan

The Action Plan: overall

The free core time scheme

- Summary of an assessment report
- Evaluation by Statistics Norway
- Ongoing evaluation by Statistics Norway and Fafo
- Feedback from practitioners

Språkløftet, the national strategy to enhance language and social competence in young speakers of minority languages

Norskoffensiv in Groruddalen (NOG)

The Stork Project

- The research project
- The public health project

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared for the Peer Review in Social Protection and Social Inclusion programme coordinated by ÖSB Consulting, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and Applica, and funded by the European Commission.



The public health project in District Alna  
Initiatives to maintain cultural and voluntary organisational life

## **Section A. State grants to combat poverty among children and youth in larger urban areas**

### **1. The 2010 evaluation report: summary**

The grant scheme was evaluated in 2009/2010. The evaluation resulted in the report:

Nuland, B.R., Reegård, K. and Sandlie, H.C. (2010), *Tiltak for fattige barn og unge. Evaluering av fattigdomstiltakene innenfor tilskuddsordningen Barne- og ungdomstiltak i større bysamfunn*. Oslo: Fafo, report no. 19/2010

Below is the summary of this evaluation report. The report is also available (in Norwegian) at <http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/20163/20163.pdf>

Through the *Measures for children and youth in urban areas* grant scheme, the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion (BLD) has since 2003 provided grants for concrete poverty measures aimed at children, youth and families affected by poverty. The scheme covers 23 urban areas and seven of city districts of Oslo. Youth groups, city districts, voluntary organisations and public and private sector agencies and institutions are eligible for grants.

The targeted grants are allocated to cities and areas with the most living condition problems. One of the main purposes of the grant scheme is to increase awareness of those targeted measures to prevent and mitigate the consequences of poverty for children and young people. The municipalities/city districts can apply for funding for programmes that will increase/improve the possibility of social inclusion among children and youth from poor families. Special focus is given to establishing programmes enabling all children and youth to take part in extra-curricular activities, and for them to experience vacation and holiday trips regardless of their parents' financial situation, education, ethnic origin or geographical location. Additionally, there is a focus on programmes improving the possibilities to find work or alternatives to work/school for youth with poor or incomplete educational background.

This report evaluates the grant scheme for the period 2003-2009. The overall purpose of the evaluation was to gain more insight into the performance of the ministry's poverty initiative. In the work, the project distinguished between two levels of the evaluation: (1) evaluation of the measures, and (2) evaluation of how the grant scheme is managed within the municipalities/city districts covered. The following issues are central to the discussions of this report:

*Understanding poverty:* How are local poverty issues defined, understood and assessed? How is the reality of child poverty understood?

*Application process and development of measures:* How do the involved actors work in terms of drawing up applications for grants, development of programmes and how is this work organised?

*Cooperation:* Which actors have been taking part programmes' efforts? What role does cooperation between different actors play, and what is the public and non-governmental organisations' participation?



*Foundation:* How is the work anchored, and to what extent are these efforts part of an overarching local strategy to combat poverty among children and young people?

*Interaction:* How is the national strategy part of the grant scheme understood at the local level? How is the cooperation between the national level and the local level, and what needs does the local level have from the national level as part of implementing the grant scheme?

*Good practice:* Can we identify "good practice", i.e. measures that to a greater extent than others reach the target group and give positive output?

It has not been part of the project to assess any change or effects over time for individual children, young people or families who have participated in programmes part of the grant scheme. The evaluation has three sets of data: a document study of administrative data, a qualitative study of eight municipalities, and a questionnaire survey directed to the contact person for the grant scheme in all participating municipalities and city-districts. Each municipality/city district has one contact person who acts as a local coordinator in the grant scheme. We must take into account that in many cases, the contact person is more or less considering and assessing the effort and the measures they have coordinated.

**Some key findings from the evaluation work can be summarised as follows:**

*The grant scheme*

Grants for action against poverty among children, youth and families were created as part of *Measures for children and youth in urban areas* in 2003, and the total grant increased every year until 2008. In 2009, BLD, who administers the grants, appropriated 31,500,000 kroner for programmes in 23 municipalities and seven city districts in Oslo.

The greatest proportion of programmes that have received grants have been holiday and extra-curricular activities. There was a slight increase of the proportion of qualifying measures for young people from 2007 to 2009. Long-term and concerted efforts to combat marginalisation of children and young people experiencing poverty was a new measure category in 2008. These measures were often combined with qualifying action for youth with little or incomplete education.

*Understanding poverty*

Local understanding of the concept of poverty shows that social participation is considered just as important as the material standard of living.

The interviews revealed that informants generally were reluctant to use the terminology "child poverty», and rather used "roundabout" phrases such as "vulnerable children and young people."

In particular, three groups were highlighted as particularly vulnerable to poverty in the municipalities: children and young people with non-western origins, children of parents without work, and youth who have dropped out of high school (drop out).

Nearly three out of four municipalities have based the work on child poverty in a municipal action plan/strategy. However, only one quarter of these are concrete municipal action plans/strategies to combat poverty (not part of the general municipal action plans).



### *Application process and development of measures*

There are few municipalities who have developed their own criteria for the assessment of programme applications. The municipalities relate to and use the criteria set forth in the ministry's circular paper.

Few municipalities have initiated overarching municipal processes for developing new measures. Rather, it seems to be more or less how the professionals who work with children and youth in the target groups who identify the problems that define what will govern the local priorities.

In some municipalities, SLT / Salto (Coordination of Local crime prevention measures) is an important forum used to discuss possible measures and the development of new applications.

The majority of the municipalities also receive grants from other related grant schemes aimed at vulnerable children and young people. Over half of the contact persons in the survey reported that these grants were seen as part of the overall context of the municipality's efforts.

### *Measures initiated*

The municipalities/city districts have developed a wide variety of different measures covering all three measure types. We find several examples of great creativity and great commitment in the development of measures.

The number of children and young people the various measures stipulate should reach, varies depending on the nature of the measure - from under 10 children for the measures that are based on close individual follow-up, to over 100 for more open/universal measures.

### *Organisation, cooperation and working method*

The municipalities have chosen different methods and ways to structure their efforts. The organisation chosen is largely adapted to local conditions, key people, local culture and experience of previous project work.

Many local government agencies participate in operating the measures, and as such, several measures have led to cooperation and coordination between different departments within the municipality, and between the municipal departments and non-governmental organisations.

Several municipalities would like more participation from or cooperation with actors in the private business sector, arts, school, child protection services.

The sharing of sensitive personal information poses a challenge for some measures. This is especially true when the child protection agency is involved. Most measures have found working methods enabling the sharing of sensitive information.

The contact persons think it is important that users have influence on the measures developed, and the majority partly agree that in fact, active user participation is in place in their own municipality. However, the interviews conducted showed that few measures have created a system for user interaction or for enabling users to be able to influence the measures developed.



### *Target groups and achievement of goals*

The majority of measures is aimed at the target group under 15 years of age. Our impression from the case municipalities is that there is greater focus on young people than on children.

Few initiatives are directed specifically at one specific target group, but there are a few measures targeting only boys or only girls. A quarter of the measures (in 2009) have explicitly referred to children from ethnic minority backgrounds as part of the target group.

Children with disabilities are seldom explicitly mentioned as a target group.

Measures are mainly intended as inclusive measures, and most of the measures aim to reach target groups through broad measures that do not produce stigma.

The interviews showed that it is unclear whether some measures managed to reach the most vulnerable children and young people. This notwithstanding, most of the measures analysed are believed to have made a positive difference for those who took part.

Children from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly girls, are mentioned as a difficult group to reach.

The measures have only defined criteria to identify whether goals are achieved to a limited extent. However, most municipalities express that they reached their own goals.

The local authorities state that grant funds have led to increased awareness and knowledge of child poverty, and that this has in turn led to the development of new methods to remedy poverty among children and youth.

### *Foundation and continuation of measures*

Programme agents in case studies would like the measures to be continued. However, the questionnaire survey shows that only four percent of the municipalities had concrete plans for the continuation of all measures, and that two out of three had plans for the continuation of some of the measures.

The main reasons given to justify why measures would be brought to an end were lack of local funds and tight municipal budgets.

Findings from interviews show that the foundation and anchoring of measures is a topic many practitioners think a lot about. Several informants point to the uncertainty and unpredictability associated with funding making the anchoring and foundation of measures challenging.

An important part of the work of anchoring is related to how the administrative and political leadership in the municipalities/city districts are involved in the grant scheme. Our findings suggest that the local political level has had but limited involvement in the actual work. New requirements from the ministry that all applications are to be politically discussed and passed in the municipality before they are sent to the ministry might lead to increased political involvement in the future.

### **Good practices and success criteria**

Based on the contact persons and programme agents' subjective assessment of what constitutes good practice in the intervention work, we have defined nine criteria for success. The nine factors are not ranked, but the factors make up the



main impression of what are the important aspects involved in enabling the measures to reach the target group and to make a positive difference. Key success factors were enthusiasts/driving force, continuity of staff, that the measures are embedded in services that already exist, good collaboration, a system for the recruitment of participants, the development of measures that lead to social integration, contact with parents, early intervention and involvement of employers and the private sector.

We also find a gap between the ideals and the realities in the local government's work against child poverty. Goals such as early intervention, active user participation, and politically anchored measures prove to be challenging to implement in practice in spite of being considered very important aspects of the work. There are few contact persons who consider their own municipality/city district successful when it comes to combating child poverty which they themselves identify as important aspects. The exception is the extent to which the municipality/city district has developed a variety of measures popular among children and youth as part of the grant scheme. Almost all contact persons say that they wholly or partly agree that this is something their community has developed.

Three out of four municipalities have conducted evaluations or implemented measures to evaluate programmes in the grant scheme. In other words, one out of four municipalities have not conducted evaluations or implemented measures to evaluate any programmes in the grant scheme.

Our interviews show that the discussion related to the continuation of the measures often depends on whether an evaluation shows that the objectives of the measures have been achieved and that participants have had positive experiences. It can be challenging to conduct evaluations indicating that the objectives of the measures have been achieved in the types of programmes involved in the grant scheme, in particular to measure the effect of the type of work that often programmes are involved in, i.e. early intervention or large universal programmes.

### **The relationship between central and local government**

The vast majority of contact persons in grant municipalities say they are satisfied with the ministry's role. But there are two aspects that are described as disappointing; the annual reporting system, and the annual contact person meeting. Several contact persons would have wanted a different method for the annual reporting on programme activity thereby enabling to a greater extent to report the efficiency of programmes and the quality of their work. Furthermore, there seems to be a general consensus that the contact persons would benefit from a meeting place where they could get professional input and the opportunity to discuss experiences with other grant municipalities.

### **Evaluation of the measures, and evaluation of how the grant scheme is managed in the municipalities/city districts**

Whether the programmes and measures implemented will have an effect on the children/youths on a long-term basis is difficult to assess. Likewise it is difficult, if at all possible, to assess whether such efforts have the desired effect on breaking the pattern of poverty for children. What can be said at this point is that the effort seems to have the effect that the municipalities involved strengthen their effort to combat child poverty and that there is increased focus on the problem across different sectors of local governments.



Following the evaluation of the grant scheme, many municipalities come across as successful in their efforts, in the sense that they have developed measures the contact persons in the community and programme agents consider to be successful for the target group, and the operation of the measures are organised in a way that programme agents are satisfied with. However, there is no clear answer as to exactly what measures provide a basis for positive evaluation, or exactly what kind of organisation is good or satisfactory. The diversity of programme development and organisational forms is an illustration that measures are adjusted to local challenges, and since the local challenges and conditions vary, there is thus no reason to point out one or two municipalities or measures as particularly successful. But we have pointed out some elements that may be worth noting and that we have defined as good practices and success criteria.

That the measures were established with the involvement of a vast array of actors in the local community might enable local ownership to the programmes. It has been important to make this effort multi-disciplinary, and to give incentives for developing improved collaboration structures not only between local authorities but also between the local authorities and local NGOs. But perhaps most importantly is how the measures help to raise awareness of problems and local competence concerning poverty among children and youth. Our findings show that many local and non-governmental actors are involved in measures in the grant scheme, and three out of four municipalities find that the grant scheme has contributed to a more or less great extent to increase the municipality's awareness and expertise.

Although the national action plans are essential to keep the fight against poverty high on the agenda, the local government plays a crucial role in the efforts made to achieve a unified effort in combating poverty (Hansen et al 2008). In order to achieve the overall national goal in the fight against poverty, to develop programmes and knowledge to increase the focus on poverty, and to contribute to better coordination of measures for poor children, adolescents and families (Action against Poverty 2008), one is entirely dependent of civic awareness and ownership of the work.

In the concluding chapter, we discuss challenges related to the process from a national strategy to its implementation in the municipality. One of the findings was that several municipalities wanted more control over grant funds. We see it as a positive finding that municipalities increasingly want to have ownership of the effort. At the same time, we believe that it has been important that the Ministry has a central role in the management of grant schemes. The national focus on child poverty also has an impact on the municipal level, and it will be necessary that the ministry continues to keep the issue on the political agenda, both on the national and the local agenda.

Our findings regarding how the local level perceives the organisation of the grant scheme is in line with findings in other studies looking at municipalities' perception and thoughts regarding grant scheme funding (e.g. Hansen et al 2008). The findings are two-sided. On the one hand, the feedback clearly indicates that the municipal projects and programmes initiated have been at the mercy of the state grant funds, and would not have been possible without them. On the other hand, there are several municipalities who have preferred the transfers to be organised in a different way, e.g. framework financing. Framework financing, several claim, would enable local authorities to make their own priorities. It is difficult to assess whether framework financing would lead to a different outcome or different measures than the grant scheme. Instead, we have tried to identify what is needed to make the fight against poverty as much a local strategy as it is a national strategy. An important factor will be the extent to which the municipality itself and programme agents feel ownership of the initiative, and that measures become



communal property. We will argue that the grant scheme has created a room for action in the community and increased awareness of the work on poverty among children and youth. However, the uncertainty surrounding the continuation of programmes is proof that the programmes lack local political legitimacy and that there are challenges related to local political and economic priorities.

Our study reveals that multiple informants are reluctant to use the term "poverty" about the work being done. When municipalities are somehow comfortable with the concept of poverty, it is debatable whether it is appropriate to have this actual label on policies, measures and grant schemes (Hansen et al 2008: 41). It is also debatable whether poverty is the correct label. The aim of the initiative is to ensure opportunities for participation and development for all children and young people (AID 2008). Moreover, the majority of the measures initiated are not in themselves measures to combat child poverty as a problem (at least in the short term), but rather measures to ensure social inclusion with a social understanding of poverty. Meanwhile, poverty has been a central policy objective for many years. It might be that choosing other terms will lead to watering down the objectives as part of the effort as they would just become a part of the general work done in the municipal services. This would risk losing the awareness within the local services of the economic importance for the well-being of children (Nuland et al 2009b).

#### Recommendations to the Ministry

- The scheme should increasingly be viewed in connection with, and advertised along with other related grant programmes.
- Better systems should be developed for reporting on the measured work, including a system for measuring the achievements of targets and goals.
- The Ministry should consider whether the annual contact meeting can have a different form.
- The Ministry should consider creating a website for the grant scheme which contains an updated listing of the programmes receiving funding, including contact information for all measures in the grant scheme.

#### Recommendations for grants municipalities

- Municipalities should work to improve their capabilities to further refine risk groups locally, and it should work with how local practitioners and measures to a greater degree can complete surveys of target group.
- Municipalities who receive funding should work out specific overarching objectives for their work. Such clarification should involve local politicians, so that the work in the programmes is essentially politically agreed on, and we recommend that these objectives be incorporated into concrete municipal plans.
- Municipalities may consider establishing a position working as child poverty co-ordinator.
- Municipalities should work on how to increase children and young people ability to affect the workings of programmes and development of systems for user interaction.
- Municipalities should work to define the municipality's practice with respect to voluntary commitment and NGOs in a way that would enable voluntary organisations/NGOs and municipal agencies to be complementary and to facilitate good working relationships and collaboration.





## 2. More on the Grant Scheme: examples of projects in Groruddalen<sup>2</sup>

One project funded by the grant scheme in Groruddalen is Gran åpen skole (Gran open school) in district Alna. The measure simply implies that Gran school, which is a school with a very high proportion of immigrants, keeps open between 1pm and 6pm, so that pupils have a place to stay. The measure is intended for pupils from 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade, that is, those who are too old for the ordinary after-school arrangement. The "open school" at Gran school is also open for pupils in these age groups from neighbouring schools. One free meal is served during the open school period; also, pupils can get help with homework. The sports rooms are available, as are the library and computer room. Also in Alna, money from the grant scheme are used to maintain a music workshop, which is seen as an alternative to the established culture schools also run by the municipality. The culture schools offer instruction a range of music forms, but rates of parental payment are relatively high. The music workshop is free, and is seen as a preventive measure for children and youth from low-income families.

In district Grorud, money from the grant scheme is divided into two main areas: measures to combat poverty among children and youth, and measures to promote integration and prevent school drop-out among youth at risk. This is in line with the general guidelines for the grant scheme. In Grorud, the larger projects are all labeled as measures to combat poverty, while the measures targeting youth at risk are spread more thinly. In 2012, the district had 20 different projects, divided into seven to combat poverty and 13 youth projects. The youth projects often had the form of support for voluntary organisations that had promising initiatives going, or singular arrangements targeted at young people in the district.

Among the seven projects developed to combat poverty and social exclusion, two can be highlighted in particular. The largest of these is "Ung i arbeid – fritid som kvalifisering" (Youth in employment – spare time as qualification"), which has run since 2007. A core activity of the project is to target youth still in compulsory (secondary) schooling, in order to prevent drop-out. This focus follows from the realisation that youth who drop out of high school, often show a number of earlier warning signs, including high rates of truancy while in compulsory schooling. Social teachers in secondary schools get together in a project group, each listing names of students in their school who they deem to be at risk. The project leaders then contact the youth in question, often at the youth club or other leisure arenas, and invite them to the project. When presented in the right way, which project leaders are reputedly good at, the proportion who are interested are high. A key method is to help the youth in question find a part-time job, for which they are paid at a reasonable rate. Typical jobs include working in shops, which is made possible through cooperative agreement with shop owners, and renovation, where youth form a patrol that, among other things, work with removing graffiti. Also, youth in the project have been involved with developing holiday projects for younger kids in low-income families. The aim of the project is to motivate participants to go back to school, and also to engage in inclusive leisure activities.

The project has not been formally evaluated, but one cohort of participants was tracked in high school, and it turned out that the drop-out rate was zero among these students. This was seen as a crucial indicator of success. Practitioners highlight the "carrot" of the part-time job as a major factor in this success, combined with very committed and well-qualified project leaders. The project leaders followed up the participants in all areas of life, and they also had very good contacts within the district administration. As such, they were a link between at-risk youth and the local government. In cases where participants had mental health

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<sup>2</sup> This section draws on information given at the meeting 13th September.



issues, psychologists at school were contacted. Also, the role of social teachers was highlighted. Secondary schools are not the local government's responsibility, and also, the schools tend not to communicate much between themselves. The project group created a forum where representatives for all secondary schools in the district met.

The second project in district Grorud was an informal anti-poverty initiative. The district had reserved a relatively small sum of money, to be made available when local leaders could see that children and youth were excluded from activities for financial reasons. Leaders – who could be teachers, school nurses, activity organisers, or others – could apply for small sums of money, in cooperation with the family, to include the children. The aim could be to pay for membership in sports clubs or other leisure activities, or – for those who were members – to travel to sports tournaments or other arrangements central to their chosen activity. The maximum amount one could apply for was NOK 5000, and the local leader who organised the application committed to making sure that the money was spent as planned.

It was emphasised that this money was very well targeted, and that they could play a major role in promoting inclusion. The Ministry that grants the money is however skeptic of this use, because it may take over a role that should be played by the social welfare administration or by the child welfare service. Spending money directly on families is outside the scope of this grant. This discussion highlights the tension between local priorities and directions inherent in the grant scheme, and also shows how the grants can – even though they are explicitly designed not to do so – “compete” with existing, and well-established, measures.



## **Section B. The Groruddalen Action Plan**

### **B1. The Groruddalen Action Plan: overall**

As noted in the National Report Part I, there are four program areas in the Groruddalen Action Plan. This report, and indeed the Peer Review, deals only with program area 4, but the context of the other program areas is important. This is partly because the Groruddalen Action Plan is thought of as a whole, even though measures are organised in four areas, and partly because measures in one area has implications for the running of measures in another. For instance, the “targeted area” approach in program area 3 overlaps with some of the initiatives in program area 4, and some public health measures in program area 4 are realistic only because practitioners in program area 2 have developed accessible recreational areas. This section briefly presents the four program areas that make up the Groruddalen Action Plan.

#### *Program Area 1 - Environmentally-friendly transport in Groruddalen*

Program Area 1 is intended to facilitate a more environmentally friendly transportation of goods and people, better air quality, less noise, pleasanter aesthetic environment, more universal design and better road safety. The goal is that it should be possible to walk, cycle and use public transport both along and across Groruddalen. The program area is also meant to help integrate the Groruddalen suburbs into an environmentally friendly transport grid for the Oslo region.

*Responsibility:* The Ministry of Transport and Communication, and the Municipality of Oslo by the Unit for Transport and Environmental Affairs.

#### *Program Area 2 – the river Alna; Green Areas, Sport and Culture*

The purpose of Program Area 2 is to improve the blue-green structure and diversity of the natural environment, improve conditions for outdoor recreation, physical activity and sports, and improve the air quality. Cultural monuments will be protected and used, and people are encouraged to appreciate the local history of the area.

*Responsibility:* Ministry of the Environment, and the municipality of Oslo by the Unit for Transport and Environmental Affairs.

#### *Program Area 3 – Development of Housing and Local Communities*

The purpose of Program Area 3 is the strengthening of local place identity, effective housing structures, good local centres and commercial/industrial areas, attractive residential areas with enjoyable outside areas, and good housing and building standards. This programme area divides into three schemes: urban redevelopment (*Områdeløft*), the community grant (*Bomiljøtilskudd*) and area planning. Importantly, *Områdeløft* has targeted four selected city district areas with particular challenges. The projects are both of a physical and social nature, mainly targeting leadership training for organisations, participation, community improvements, creation of social meeting places and a selection of centers as attractive meeting places. There is a particular focus on youth even though most of the projects embrace all groups of the population. The targeted areas are Furuset in district



Alna, Veitvedt-Sletteløkka in district Bjerke, Romsås in district Grorud and Haugenstua in district Stovner.

*Responsibility:* The Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development / the State Housing Bank, and the municipality of Oslo by the Unit for Urban Development.

#### *Program Area 4 – Social Inclusion and Standards of Living*

The purpose of Program Area 4 is to improve living conditions, schools, facilities for children and adolescents, culture, neighbourhood facilities, and stimulate inclusion through participation, involvement and voluntary work. The scheme is meant to improve and strengthen city districts and schools, also after the programme's lifetime. The program area includes aims of improving public health conditions, and improving conditions for informal associations.

*Responsibility:* The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion and the Municipality of Oslo by the Unit for Welfare and Social Services.

The overall set-up and performance of the Groruddalen Action Plan has been subjected to a process evaluation (Asplan Viak 2010) and a midway evaluation (Ruud 2011). Both evaluations are available online (see the list of references), the latter has a summary in English.

#### **The Groruddalen Action Plan, Program area 4**

As is evident from part I, this national report focuses on Program Area 4 in the Groruddalen Action Plan alone. As listed in part I, program area 4 has six explicit goals, related to children's language skills, education, employment, health, and voluntary participation. Table 1 gives an overview of the measures included in Program Area 4: their name, which year they started, where funding comes from and how large the funding was in 2012. The various measures are described in Part I.



**Table 1. Funding for Program Area 4 in 2012**

	<b>Started (year)</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Sub-target</b>	<b>State grant (NOK)</b>	<b>Municipal grant (NOK)</b>
Free core time	2007	Districts	4.1	37,1	
NOG	2008	UDE*	4.3		1,5
Public health projects	2007	Districts	4.4	4,5	
Means to voluntary participation and local engagement	2007	Districts	4.6		4
Means to organisations and voluntary action	2007	Districts	4.6	1,8	
Improved levels of living	2011	Districts	4.3; 4.4		2,5
<i>School development programs</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>UDE*</i>	<i>4.2</i>	<i>8</i>	
<i>Mandatory longer school-days</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>UDE*</i>	<i>4.2</i>		<i>10,5</i>

*Italics: not included in this review*

\* UDE= the Education Unit in the municipality of Oslo

Footnotes to the table regarding varying starting points, and variations in funding over time, have been dropped.

Source: Annual Report 2011/Action program 2012, part 3: distribution of means for 2012



## **B2. The Free core time scheme**

### **B2.1. Summary of the assessment report**

The free core time scheme was assessed in 2008/2009. The mapping covered the scheme in the five city districts it was implemented: the four city districts in Groruddalen, and district Søndre Nordstrand.

The mapping resulted in a report:

Bogen, H. and Reegård, K. (2009), *Gratis kjernetid i barnehage. Kartlegging av et forsøk i fem bydeler i Oslo*. Oslo: Fafo, report no. 31/2009

Below is the English summary of the report. The report is also available (in Norwegian) at <http://www.fafo.no/pub/rapp/20121/20121.pdf>

Since 2006/2007, five Oslo city districts have been taking part in an experiment that provides free core hours for four- and five-year-olds in kindergartens. The aim of the project is to help to prepare children – in particular those with a minority language background – for starting primary school with regard to both their Norwegian language competence and their general social skills. The scheme is also intended to make parents more aware of the need to monitor their children's progress at school by strengthening parents' Norwegian language competence as well as their parental role in general. Offering all four- and five-year-olds free kindergarten facilities for part of the day means that more children have the opportunity to benefit from the language stimulation activities carried out in kindergartens, as well as to learn the language and develop social skills through playing with other children.

In this report we have mapped how the five city districts have organised the experiment involving free core hours. We have emphasised how they attempt to recruit children to the kindergartens and the measures they have implemented vis-à-vis parents to strengthen the parental role. We have also mapped the half-day kindergarten scheme that the districts have established, since it is often this service that many parents with a minority language background first come into contact with via the recruitment work.

We have collected information about the experiment from several different bodies: kindergarten administration units in the city districts, and from child health clinics, kindergartens and schools. We have also interviewed some parents with a minority language background who have children in half-day kindergartens.

#### *Organisation and recruitment*

All five city districts have made use of several different methods to disseminate information on the free core-time offer and to recruit children to kindergartens. The districts have made great efforts to come into contact with all those with children who do not have a kindergarten place, which means that most of the parents in the city districts are now aware of this scheme. In the reports, all five city districts also say that the majority of four- and particularly five-year-olds currently have some form of kindergarten option.

The kindergarten administration units in the city districts are collaborating with several other bodies in their attempts to recruit children to kindergartens. Child health clinics are a particularly important arena for recruitment and dissemination of information about kindergarten facilities and free core hours. These centres call



in all children for check-ups at the ages of two and four. Most of the parents attend these check-ups, at least once a reminder has been sent. To a large extent the child health clinics have formalised the cooperation with the city districts' kindergarten administration units and the kindergartens. They test children's language competence, and if a child does not have a kindergarten place they inform the parents about the kindergarten facilities available and about free core hours. In addition, the child health clinics give assistance in filling in the application form for kindergartens. This usually takes place when the children are called in for a check-up at the age of four, but several of the clinics we interviewed start the work of informing the parents at the check-up for two-year-olds. Some of the informants we interviewed were also of the view that beginning language stimulation at the age of four is somewhat late considering the need for such activities before the children start at primary school.

Outreach activities such as door-to-door campaigns, telephone calls or information sent by post have also been used in all five city districts. The districts compare data from the National Register with information from the child health clinics on those who do not have a kindergarten place. In cases where nobody comes to the door, the information brochure is put into the post box. A recurring problem in all the districts with such recruitment activities is the high incidence of people moving into or away from the districts. Lists are not always correct and updated. In addition this is resource-consuming work. Several of the city districts state that this method of recruitment was most relevant at the beginning before the offer of free core hours had spread among a large proportion of those living in the district.

Other major recruitment strategies were given as attending the registration procedure at schools, hanging up posters and putting announcements in newspapers. At the autumn registration before schools start, surveys are made to find out whether children have attended a kindergarten and whether they speak good Norwegian. If this is not the case, the parents are informed about the kindergarten scheme and the importance of children learning Norwegian before starting primary school. Our interviews with all groups of informants show that the city districts practise proactive recruitment methods involving the use of many different channels. However, the districts claim that much of the recruitment now works almost automatically since "jungle telegraph" functions increasingly well, i.e. information on free core hours is spread by word of mouth among the inhabitants of the various city districts. Satisfied mothers talk to friends, neighbours, family and colleagues about the kindergarten facilities and free core hours, thus lowering the social threshold for other mothers to make use of the service offered. The kindergartens now tell us of informed mothers who contact them to find out about the core hours scheme and to ask when their children can benefit from the service.

The "open" kindergarten is an important service for parents who were largely unaware of kindergarten facilities until an acquaintance mentioned them, or who had not regarded such facilities as relevant to them. The open kindergarten is a free service where parents and children can spend several hours together each week in the kindergarten in order to meet other children and parents. Here they are informed about the importance of children learning Norwegian before starting primary school, and language stimulation is offered along with information about programmes for parents. The open kindergarten can also function as a recruitment channel for other more extensive kindergarten services such as half-day and ordinary full-day attendance as the parents learn more about what kindergartens actually are and become aware that a child-minding service makes it possible for the parents themselves to participate in various activities. The parents are also given help in applying for a kindergarten place. However, some of them do not want a full-day service – particularly if the mother is at home. It is therefore



important to offer a shorter option in the form of both the open kindergarten and the half-day service. This provides a lower threshold for deciding to use a kindergarten and the language stimulation that is offered. And the fact that the service is also free makes the decision easier for low-income families.

An important finding in this evaluation is that all the informants point out that for the recruitment to succeed it is very important for the kindergarten to be situated reasonably close to the child's home so that taking children to the kindergarten and collecting them does not take an unduly long time. Many mothers have younger children at home, and this makes delivering and collecting children difficult. Several of the city districts also said that the lack of suitable and available premises was a limiting factor in the development of the kindergarten scheme and the low-threshold services. For some of the parents, having to travel a long way can create a barrier to using the kindergarten service.

The kindergarten administration units in all five city districts report that many parents ultimately want to send their children to kindergarten when they realise what this facility offers and hear about the free service for four- and five-year-olds. An increasing number have also become aware of the importance of their children learning to speak Norwegian before starting primary school, even though they want the child to be at home during its first years of life to learn its mother tongue.

Even though the half-day service also provides language stimulation, the fact that the majority of the half-day services almost exclusively comprise children from minority language backgrounds may limit this scheme. This can result in a more difficult language stimulation process than if the child attended a kindergarten that had several children with a Norwegian language background. Some of the city districts have managed to combine the half-day and the full-day service on the same premises where children from minority language backgrounds can play outside with children from a Norwegian background and where parents can become more familiar with the ordinary kindergarten service. The city districts also report that a growing number of children transfer from half-day to full-day kindergarten.

The various city districts' choice of strategies for recruitment to kindergarten has promoted greater cooperation between various bodies in the districts. The recruitment of children to kindergartens is not only the kindergarten sector's responsibility; many other bodies play a role. The same applies to the recruitment of parents to various parental programmes and courses. The city districts' cooperation and their coordination of language programmes for children below school age entail both the establishment of new forms of collaboration and the further development of existing forums and methods. At the same time, in this study the kindergarten administration units report that there is little cross-district collaboration on the development of various programmes in connection with free core hours, and little exchange of experience gained from the scheme. The informants claim that there is more cooperation among the city districts on the Language Promotion scheme – a nine-municipality programme targeted at promoting Norwegian language development and social skills among children.

### *Services for parents, participation and involvement*

The kindergarten is an arena where children and parents with different cultural backgrounds get together. It is a setting for contact and learning – not only for the children but also for the parents. This survey shows that the kindergarten gives mothers the opportunity to participate in activities outside the home, while they also meet other mothers for social contact when they take their children to and collect them from the kindergarten. Our interviews with the mothers in the





kindergartens gave us a clear impression that they had good contact with each other and with the kindergarten staff. A previous evaluation conducted by Fafo shows that mothers' involvement and participation in kindergartens and the daily life of their children is of linguistic benefit since they get involved with their children's learning (Gautun 2007). Our study also shows that small language tasks to be done by the children at home provide linguistic benefit for the mothers, thus making them more capable of helping their children with homework and of monitoring progress. In addition, activities and arrangements at the kindergarten are important to enable the mothers to meet outside their homes, to create trust between mothers and the kindergarten, and to make it easier for mothers to get an impression of what their children actually do there. They may thus feel more reassured when they leave their children at the kindergarten.

Services for parents that have been initiated through funds allocated for free core hours are organised somewhat differently depending on the city district. The services vary in extent and scope: some districts offer a wide range of services, while others have fewer options. The impression from this evaluation is that the city districts use the funds for free core hours not only to start up new initiatives but also to strengthen existing programmes and methods. The services for parents that recur in most of the districts are ICDP courses – guidance programmes for parents targeted at strengthening the parental role through the parents discussing together the various challenges they encounter as parents. Some city districts have also offered family training, the content of which is similar to the ICDP courses. Focus is on the importance of parents in childhood and in child development. However, parents and children attend this programme together, and emphasis is placed more on the interaction between parents and children. And whereas the ICDP is offered in the parents' mother tongue if they so wish, family training is given in Norwegian so that both parents and children learn to interact in Norwegian – for example discussing what has happened during the day at the kindergarten.

In addition to parental guidance, other city districts have given priority to low-threshold programmes – for example walking, knitting and cookery groups that give priority to learning the language and understanding Norwegian society through practical tasks. All communication takes place in basic Norwegian.

All parents are offered a child-minding service while they participate in the various activities. The opening hours for this child-minding service are correlated with the times of the courses. And while the parents attend activities the children receive language stimulation. The services for the parents are often also given in the same premises as those for the children, or take place in the immediate vicinity. This makes it easier for parents to participate since they have child-minding facilities nearby while they take part in various activities. Some of the five city districts had formed or were in the process of forming so-called family centres where many activities targeted at parents and children are brought together. The open kindergarten and child health clinics, which are major arenas for recruitment and the dissemination of information, are often included in this setting.

Some Norwegian language training is conducted within the framework of the funds for free core hours – mostly in the form of language training associated with other schemes, for example those mentioned above. However, some city districts run more traditional Norwegian language training as a low-threshold programme. In addition, parents are given information on other existing language training options – those run by the municipal adult education services for instance. The city districts offer free child-minding facilities for those who have children aged four or five. However, the kindergarten administration units in some of the districts are of the view that the Norwegian language training that is run by the adult education services is often too theoretical and abstract for many of those with an immigrant



background. They claim that too much priority is given to formal learning in which students learn the words but do not fully realise what they mean. Some districts have therefore set up language options with more emphasis on practical learning linked to the daily life of children – for example what type of winter clothing children need and what a child's birthday party involves in Norway. Mothers thus improve their Norwegian language competence at the same time as the learning is linked to specific and relevant aspects. The objective is to combine language learning with social awareness and learning in the parental role.

Our survey indicates that the services for parents have gradually become very popular with the mothers, and there are waiting lists for several of the programmes. Some options have gained an excellent reputation within immigrant environments and are regarded as "safe" since both the mother and the father regard the mother's attendance as acceptable. Some mothers with an immigrant background seldom or never have contact with public authorities and may feel insecure when faced with new services. But as some options gradually become more popular and gain a good reputation, more applications are received. This applies to both Norwegian language courses and knitting groups.

#### *A good start, but still some way to go*

Even before the experiment with free core hours, the city districts have for many years had a large proportion of inhabitants with a minority language background. They have also run language courses for some time. The funds for free core hours have given the districts a greater opportunity to strengthen and systemise this work. The experiment has contributed to increasing both the kindergartens' and the parents' awareness of the importance of providing language training in kindergartens. The city districts view the funds for free core hours in the context of other similar initiatives and allocations, thus making the language effect of free core hours difficult to isolate from other programmes – for example the schemes for Language Promotion and for Early Intervention in Schools. Oslo municipality has set few or no standard procedures as to how the city districts are to organise free core hours. Some new initiatives have been started, but in most cases the districts have chosen to continue with the methods and strategies that had already been successful, and the funds from free core hours strengthen and complement existing programmes.

The remit of this evaluation has not included investigating the effect of the experiment on children's language skills. However, the city districts report great satisfaction with the scheme with regard to the development of these skills. The mothers we have talked to are also very pleased with the scheme: they can see that their children's ability to speak Norwegian has improved and that they enjoy being at the kindergarten, and the mothers themselves have become more capable of helping and supporting their children through their involvement in everyday life at the kindergarten and through different types of courses and Norwegian language training. The mothers stress the importance of the scheme being free: a free kindergarten service reaches families with limited financial resources where the mother is often at home. Although these families do not actually need child-minding facilities since one of the parents is at home, they do need their children to take part in language stimulation activities and to have the opportunity to be with other children.

If free core hours are to have the effect of removing social inequalities, it is important that the time children spend in the kindergarten provides more than supervision and care. For example it should include language stimulation for the children who need it. A general lack of qualified kindergarten staff, a high



percentage of minority language assistants with poor Norwegian language competence, and an extremely high proportion of minority language children, particularly in half-day kindergartens, can create challenges for the language stimulation work. However, experience with the free core-hours kindergarten appears so far to have been good. Many processes have been initiated: more children will be recruited to kindergartens and more will benefit from the language stimulation service. More parents, particularly mothers, participate in various activities that serve to strengthen the parental role. Recruitment strategies have been developed, as well as collaborative relationships with other bodies in the city districts – all of which are gradually beginning to produce results. New kindergarten services are being formed, and new ways of involving parents are being initiated. Several of those employed in kindergartens are being trained in methods that strengthen language stimulation. And the scheme – both the kindergarten services and the programmes for parents – is at last starting to be widely known among parents.

## **B2.2 Evaluation by Statistics Norway**

In 2010 Statistics Norway (SSB) published a discussion paper where the effect of preschool on the school performance of children from immigrant families was analyzed (Drange and Telle 2010). In particular the authors aimed at measuring the effect of the programs of free core time in Kindergartens in two districts of Oslo. The effects of preschool participation at age 5 on school performance at age 16 are estimated. The population consists of children whose both parents are born outside Norway. Their discussion paper is summarised in the following.

According to Drange and Telle, there are a number of studies investigating the effect of preschool participation on subsequent school performance, but few studies focus on the effects for children from immigrant groups. From general studies it has been concluded that preschool participation seem to have beneficial effects for girls and children from disadvantaged families (see page 3 in the discussion paper for a list of references). Furthermore, the authors refer to a study carried out by Currie and Thomas in 1999, who find that taking part in a head start program for Hispanic children proved to have positive effect when the mother was born in the US, but not when the mother was foreign born (Drange and Telle 2010: 3).

Drange and Telle (page 5-6) points to several possible positive effects of time spent in preschool. According to Heckman, “learning begets learning”, so children taking part in Kindergartens will benefit from this when they start at school. Furthermore, early preschool enrolment will in itself enhance children’s language skills as children’s ability to learn new languages are higher at younger ages. The child may also benefit from the effects on the parents; when the child is in Kindergarten employment and education may become more attractive for the parents. This will in turn both increase the household income and lead to a stronger integration of the parents into society.

The empirical strategy in Drange and Telles paper, is to utilise a difference-in-difference approach taking advantage of the variation caused by the intervention (free core hours) being implemented in two city districts of Oslo leaving other similar districts unaffected. The main assumption is that “the trend in school performance of the children in the treatment area would have been the same as for the children in the comparison area, in the absence of the intervention” (page 11). Drange and Telle discuss several reasons why this assumption may not hold (page 12-13), for instance if the family composition in the comparison and treatment area changes, if some children are excluded from the dataset for reasons related to the



intervention, or if there are other concurrent programmes that could have affected the school performance of children in the treatment or comparison area. Finally there are challenges related to the measurement of the outcome variable. School performance at 10<sup>th</sup> grade is assessed at the school level. The teachers are legally instructed to mark the students due to objective criteria, but there is "a chance that every cohort is graded by the general level of the children at school. Thus if a particular cohort perform particularly well, the teachers may lower the marks of other children in order to retain a similar level as earlier cohorts (or require better achievements than previous years to provide a given mark". (page 14&15). According to Drange and Telle they are, by different methods, able to take all these challenges into account in their analysis.

Drange and Telles post-reform population is children from immigrant families born in 1993 who reside in a city district in Oslo the year they turn four. The pre-reform sample is similarly defined as all children from immigrant families who are born in 1992 and who reside in a city district of Oslo the year they turn four. Children from immigrant families in the two intervention districts are defined as living in the treatment area. The dataset FD-trygd, which is a combination of a number of Norwegian registries, combined with an education database, is utilised in the analysis. A summary measure of each 10<sup>th</sup> grade performance in the 12 graduating subjects is constructed and the main measure of cognitive outcomes is grade point average (GPA), which is the average mark of the 12 subjects 10<sup>th</sup> graders get a final assessment of. In addition a non-cognitive outcome measure is included, constructed by marks for the ability to organise and the ability to keep order (page 17).

The descriptive results on the GPA shows that for girls in the treatment area the GPA increases significantly from 3.8 in the cohort before intervention to 4.1 in the affected cohort. There is no similar increase in the comparison area. For the boys there is no improvement in school performance (page 19). The regression results confirm this finding. Girls' results improve by 0.26 grades, which amount to about a whole grade in three of the graduating subjects. For boys the coefficients are negative, but not statistically significant (page 20). The preschool intervention has no effect on the non-cognitive outcome (page 21).

The data does not enable the researchers to say why the intervention was more beneficial to girls than to boys. Furthermore, the preschool free of charge was offered to children in particularly challenged districts of Oslo with a high share of immigrant families. Thus the results do not necessarily generalise to the population of children from immigrant families in general. However, the authors finally remarks that "as most western cities with a substantial proportion of children from immigrant families experience a concentration in particular neighborhoods, our findings might suggest that provision of free preschool could be a powerful weapon in the battle for improved educational outcomes, integration and social mobility of girls from immigrant families in such areas" (page 29).

### **B2.3 Ongoing evaluation by Statistics Norway and Fafo<sup>3</sup>**

The free core time project is currently being evaluated by Statistics Norway and Fafo. The evaluation project started in 2011, and is to be completed by December 2014. No publications have come out of this evaluation yet.

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3 This outline is based on the project description, which is not publicly available.



The ongoing evaluation is made up of four modules:

- An effect evaluation of how the offer of free core time has affected children's school results,
- An investigation of how the organisation of the free core time project, and the contents of the project, has affected results,
- An evaluation of how the city districts' work with free core time has improved the involvement of parents in kindergartens, and
- An evaluation of how the goals of the project have been constructed and understood, and to what extent the aims goals have been reached.

The project will use various methods and data. Data registers contain information of children's school results and parent's participation in education and employment, as well as a number of background characteristics. Register data will be supplemented by a survey among heads of kindergartens in the relevant city districts in Oslo, and by qualitative interviews with parents, employees in the city district administration, and heads of kindergartens.

## **B2.4 Feedback from practitioners in Groruddalen<sup>4</sup>**

Practitioners in the Groruddalen districts report that increasing numbers of parents apply for full-time kindergarten for their children. Only four hours per day is free, but once parents get to know the nurseries through part-time enrollment, they are increasingly likely to apply for more. Similarly, one often sees that when a 4- or 5-year old is enrolled in a kindergarten as part of the free core time project, parents apply for a place for a younger sibling as well. Both these trends are taken as indications that more parents are getting to know what kindergartens have to offer, and that they want this for their children beyond what is offered in the free core time-project. These developments have however not been confirmed in evaluations, but are based on anecdotal evidence from practitioners working with the initiative.

## **B3 Språkløftet**

Språkløftet has been translated as "the national strategy to enhance language and social competence in young speakers of minority languages" (Rambøll 2009). It is part of the strategic plan "Equal education in practice!", and was started on a national basis in 2007. Oslo participated through the four districts in Groruddalen, as part of the Groruddalen action plan, and the project also included eight of the other bigger cities in Norway. Nevertheless, the half-way evaluation of the Groruddalen Action Plan described the Language Initiative as "an archetypical measure" within Program Area 4 (Ruud et al. 2009;165), indicating that the national initiative fitted well with the overall action plan, even though it is not exclusive to Groruddalen. All in all, nine municipalities participated (Oslo, through the Groruddalen districts and Søndre Nordstrand, Drammen, Bærum, Skedsmo, Fredrikstad, Stavanger, Skien, Trondheim and Tromsø).

Språkløftet must be seen in close connection with another initiative, Utviklingsprosjektet (the development project in primary schools where more than 25 % of the pupils are speakers of minority languages). Both initiatives are key measures under the plan "Equal education in practice!", and both aim at enhancing

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4 As given in the meeting 13th September 2012.



children's learning outcome, through language enhancement, language development effort and development of social competence.

*Språkløftet* is a project covering both kindergartens and schools, while *Utviklingsprosjektet* is limited to schools where more than 25 % of the pupils are speakers of minority languages.

Evaluations of the projects (Rambøll 2009, Hagen et al. 2012) indicate that the projects have heightened attention to language skills and language learning. The projects have produced new models: both models for cooperation on the administrative level, and new models and methods for language learning in kindergartens and schools. The projects have generated many initiatives on language enhancement and language learning, but social competence has been less emphasised. One reason for this may be that the challenges of working with children speaking a multitude of different languages proved even more challenging than anticipated, and that the efforts to develop good language training for all children overtook efforts to work with social competence (Hagen et al. 2012).

The evaluations pointed out that there were variations between the municipalities regarding how the projects were implemented over time, and also in which partners were involved. Examples of involved parties included representatives from the city councils, schools, kindergartens, the Public Health Service, parents, expertise and others, i.e. cultural institutions (op.cit). *Språkløftet* has made district councils more aware of what nurseries can contribute to improving living conditions for children in the area, and alerted politicians to what nurseries can do regarding language teaching, given time and resources.<sup>5</sup> This closer cooperation between district councils and nurseries that emanated from the project is also emphasised in the Oslo Municipality's Education Unit's feedback on the project (Annual Report 2011).

The cooperation between kindergarten and school and the development of transfer procedures between them are considered to be most successful. This is highlighted in both the mid-way evaluation (Rambøl 2009) and the final evaluation (Hagen et al. 2012). Procedures for cooperation and joint arrangements have been established and written into local action plans, to be maintained as permanent forms of working. These initiatives have led to mutual respect, shared understanding of the educational work and a shared responsibility to ensure that the transfer from nursery to school will be as smooth as possible. However, how successful this work has been varies from one municipality to another, indicating that at least some participants in the project still have some way to go.

An important aim of *Språkløftet* has been to involve multilingual parents in kindergarten and school activities. Through the project, teachers in schools and nurseries have found new ways to reach parents. Examples of such channels include a variety of information, Norwegian-training, and social gatherings. Most participants still feel they have some way to go with regard to parental involvement, but the project has given them a platform to build on (Hagen et al. 2012).

Regarding the methodological approach to language learning, it is common to organise children/students in small groups when language learning is in focus. Emphasis is placed on structure, systematics, and the use of concretes. The content is often theme-based and structured according to the seasons. In schools, reading and reading skills are focused. Purchasing and development of new teaching materials have been important steps to strengthen the language teaching.

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<sup>5</sup> Feedback from district councils, reported in the Annual Report for 2011.



Both kindergartens and schools use mapping to follow the children's language development and to assess student learning outcomes. A variety of mapping tools have been tested, and as a result, most schools and kindergartens have found their preferred tools, also regarding multilingual children/students. The most common appears to be Språk 4, which is a standardised approach carried out by pediatric nurses. The tool will cover important aspects of the 4-year-old's language skills, including understanding, the ability to structure sentences, articulation, understanding of words, concepts of numbers, and short term memory. Språk 4 consists of a simple folder with pictures, a guide for the adult carrying out the test, and a mapping scheme. Here are however a number of other, similar, mapping tool available. An overview of the tools used in connection with Språkløftet are given in Hagen et al. 2012, appendix 8.

As also noted in Part I of the National Report, enhancing the skills of managers and teachers in kindergartens and schools has been a priority. Such education has been organised as courses, conferences, and guidance from external expertise. However, the final evaluation pointed out that the possibility of attending to such courses etc. has been somewhat unevenly distributed.

Språkløftet has mainly been a tool for developing methods and improving modes of cooperation. Work that was started up as part of Språkløftet has been continued, past 2011, under a local project called The Oslo Nursery (Oslobarnehagen). All schools that were involved in the project have continued with a program named "Tidlig Innsats Early Years" (TIEY). Neither of these continuations is limited in time (Annual Report 2011). Since 2008, the National centre for multicultural teaching (NAFO) has been responsible for Språkløftet and the associated activities (Annual report 2011), aiming to anchor the initiative in current knowledge about multicultural teaching.

#### **B4. On Norskoffensiv in Groruddalen: context and new user groups**

The aims and organisation of the Norskoffensiv Groruddalen (NOG) are set out in part 1 of the report. Briefly, the offensive is a low-threshold language course for adult migrants with very limited knowledge of Norwegian, offering them language training sufficient to pass Norwegian test 2. This test indicates the language skills necessary to function on a daily basis, but will normally be insufficient to get a job.

The course fills a gap in the Norwegian language training chain for immigrants, but it is not always used as intended. The use of the Norskoffensiv by different groups must be understood in the light of the Introduction Act in Norway 2003, which as amended in 2005. Under this Act, some groups of newly-arrived immigrants have the right and duty to undertake 300 hours of training in Norwegian language and social orientation. This includes all categories of humanitarian immigrants, immigrants who have been granted family unification with a humanitarian immigrant, and immigrants who are granted family unification with a Norwegian citizen. The right and duty is limited to immigrants between 16 and 55 years of age; immigrants between 55 and 67 have a right, but not a duty, to take the course. For all these categories, the course is free. Labour migrants from outside the EEA have a duty, but not a right, to the course. This implies that they are obliged to take it, and to pay for it themselves. Migrants from the EEA have neither a right nor a duty to undertake Norwegian language training. They may however seek Norwegian training, and organise and pay for it themselves. The courses offered under the Introduction Act, Ordinary courses in Norwegian and Social



Orientation for adults, are organised by the Norwegian Agency for Life-long Learning (VOX).

The NOG courses are a supplement to the courses offered as part of the Introduction Act. Their main target groups are immigrants who have not benefitted from the offers under the Act: either because they arrived before 2003 – before the Act was introduced – or because they were unable to participate immediately after settlement for practical or familial reasons. In the first years the NOG was implemented, several participants belonged to groups that were entitled to language and social orientation under the Introduction Act. NOGs expenses on these students were reimbursed, which made it possible to expand the activity (Annual report 2011). The proportion of participants that reimbursements were made for decreased from 71 per cent in 2008 to 20 per cent in 2010.

The Annual Report for 2011 points out that in recent years, immigrants from the EEA have increasingly used NOG-courses. Many of these users are well educated. As EEA citizens, however, they have neither a right nor a duty to language training. The Adult Education Centre in Groruddalen (Smedstua VO) reported that some students who did not have the right to free Norwegian training, dropped out of their courses and approach NOG instead. This is seen as unfortunate, given that NOG was never intended as an alternative to ordinary language training, but rather as preparation for such training (Annual report 2011). Practitioners have also suggested that some immigrants move to Groruddalen from other districts in Oslo – genuinely or pro forma – in order to sign up for NOG. In a situation where a majority of migrants have no right to free language training, it is not surprising that a free program may be attractive to more groups than it was initially intended for. So far, no measures have been implemented to narrow the target group; however, the initiative to develop home-based study programs for educated migrants (see the National Report, part I) can be understood in the light of the high demand for NOG-courses.

There has been an evaluation of one language course for immigrant women in Groruddalen (Rysst 2009). The course was part of the Groruddalen Action Plan, but it is not stated in the working paper whether or not it was explicitly a NOG-course. The evaluation was based on qualitative observation and a few interviews with participants. The course in question aimed not only at improving language skills, but also at improving interpersonal skills and promoting inclusion. It was assumed at the beginning of the course that the participants would know a little Norwegian, but in practice, many participants started almost from scratch. This was despite the fact that many of them had lived in Norway for up to 20 years. A challenge in this particular course was that a majority of participants were Pakistanis, and easily communicated with each other in Urdu during breaks. This made the other participants feel excluded. The course leaders combined knowledge of society and culture with Norwegian training, for instance by talking about challenges of raising children in Norway in Norwegian language, or pointing out names of different food items during the lunch breaks. The participants responded enthusiastically. Part of the course was also to cook Norwegian food, and to travel on excursions to get to know the city better. The female participants talked about how the course improved their self-esteem, and many reported that their husband and children strongly encouraged their continued participation in the course: the husbands could see that the wife was happier, and the children were relieved that their mothers were more able to support them at school and in other situations outside the home (Rysst 2009).





## **B5. The Stork project**

### **B5.1 The Stork Research Project**

Public health project Stork is, as outlined in Part I, both a research program and a public health initiative. The research part was funded by the Norwegian Research Council and the South-Eastern Norway Regional Health Authority (Helse Sør-Øst). This section described more in-dept how the project was carried out.

#### *Dissemination of information and recruitment of informants<sup>6</sup>*

Participants in the research project were recruited at the local health centers. Recruitment material was carefully designed, with information in eight languages, and with a careful selection of photographic material illustrating that women of all ethnic backgrounds were welcome. Moreover, drawings and photos were used to illustrate the test procedures the women would be asked to undertake. In addition to the targeting of pregnant women at the health centers, a variety of approaches were used:

Potential participants were informed, orally and in writing, when they reserved their first pre-natal check-up. Information was given by office personnel, personnel in laboratories, and mid-wives at the health station.

All GPs in the districts were informed about the project,

- an information meeting was held with all the female interpreters employed by the municipality of Oslo. The interpreters were enthusiastic about the intentions of the project.
- A newsletter was distributed to GPs twice a year, containing information about the progress of the project and preliminary findings.
- Posters with small business cards were strategically placed in the districts (service stations, medical centers, pharmacies, libraries, adult education centers).
- The project was covered in the local radio and local newspapers
- And last but not least: the "jungle telegraph" was an excellent channel for distributing information, mainly in the Pakistani community.

As mentioned in Part I, 74 per cent of the women who were approached, agreed to participate. The attrition rate after this initial enrollment was only 4 per cent, caused by families moving out of the area, still-births and miscarriages.

The organisers of the project have been asked if there were any lessons from the project that can be implemented in other contexts, and if there were ideas that they were enthusiastic about at the time, but that turned out not to work in practice.<sup>7</sup> As success factors, the emphasis on interpreters is highlighted. Professional interpreters were used wherever possible, and children were never asked to be interpreters for their mothers. The translation of material, including

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<sup>6</sup> This section is based on information given at the meeting 13th December by an organiser of the project.

<sup>7</sup> This question was posed in a letter sent out in preparation for the 13th September meeting. The representative from Stork was the only participant who explicitly responded to these queries in writing.



questionnaires (see below) into the eight most common minority languages in Groruddalen, was also seen as important. Information was tailor-made, with frequent use of pictures and illustrations. Third, it may have been significant that the recruitment of participants took place in a familiar arena, where women felt safe. Also, all the tests were undertaken at the health station. Prior to the project, women had to contact their GPs in order to have blood tests done, and many pregnant women from minority backgrounds neglected to do so. As a consequence, midwives did not have information from blood tests, and advice and follow-up measures were thus difficult to target. The fact that the entire information gathering for the research project took place at health stations also implied an increased awareness, and more knowledge, among local health workers. This anchoring was valuable in the second part of Stork, where public health measures targeting pregnant women was implemented. Generally, the involvement of the health stations and GPs were seen as essential for making the project a success.

One initiative that organisers believed in, but that failed, was an information meeting with men and women in the Somali community. Information about the meeting was disseminated through community leaders. However, nobody showed up for the meeting. Why this happened, is not known, and similar meetings with other migrant groups were not attempted.

#### *Methods and tests*

Methodologically, the research project consisted of a questionnaire and a set of medical tests (Jenum 2010). The questionnaire covered information regarding socioeconomic factors, several aspects of ethnicity, medical history, actual pregnancy, and modifiable factors such as physical activity and food intake. Physical activity was measured by type and intensity, frequency, and duration. Further, the questionnaire brought up a set of psychosocial variables, including social support, self-efficacy, perceived control, and identity. A food frequency questionnaire was developed to reflect the variation in the diet of ethnic minority groups, where pictures of different food items were used to facilitate categorisation. The measurements included (but were not limited to);

For the mothers:

- Blood pressure
- Height
- Body weight and composition
- Skin fold thickness
- Physical activity(measured by armband carried for 4–7 days)
- Blood and urine samples

For the babies:

- Weight
- Length
- Head circumference
- Additional neonatal measurements: thighs, mid-upper arm, abdominal circumference, skin folds
- Growth indicators



The analysis of the data gathered for the STORK research project is still being analysed. Publications and findings are disseminated at the website

<http://www.med.uio.no/helsam/forskning/prosjekter/stork-groruddalen/>

The most highlighted finding in the research project so far is that gestational diabetes is as common among Norwegian majority women in this part of the country, as it is among immigrant women. Using the WHO definition of gestational diabetes, 11 per cent of majority women screened in the STORK project had the diagnosis, as did 15 per cent of the minority women. This difference remained significant after testing for age, the number of children, and BMI. When also controlling for education and body height, however, the difference disappeared, and majority women appeared as vulnerable as minority women. The most important risk factors in both groups were age (older mothers were more exposed), having many children, having a low education, having a family member with diabetes, and having a low body height.

## **B5.2 STORK – the public health project<sup>8</sup>**

Phase 2 of Stork is a public health initiative based on, and guided by, the findings from the research project. A key measure is physical activity for pregnant women and women who have recently given birth. Activity groups for these categories have been initiated in all the three districts that participate in Stork.

The districts uniformly report that it is demanding to recruit women to the activity groups. Organisers have tried out different practices, such as calling the women (or have an interpreter call), or sending an SMS with an invitation. The questionnaires in the research part of Stork contained questions about attitudes and beliefs regarding physical activity, and when recruitment of participants in the public health project proved to be slow, organisers turned to these questionnaires to identify barriers. It appears that many women are worried about exercising when they are pregnant. The “barrier questions” are to be more carefully analysed, and can provide a basis for information that targets the barriers directly.

The project leader for Stork is based in Stovner, but worked with Grorud and Bjerke in 2011 in order to initiate and carry out interventions in phase 2. The aim is that the interventions should be similar across the districts. The project leader also works with updating statistics, and has organised a day seminar where key findings from statistics were presented and discussed.

Since 2011, all districts have expanded their pre-natal care in the light of the new findings regarding gestational diabetes. Increased testing for diabetes is offered, together with information about diet and physical activity. Rates of participation in this expanded health care project are even higher than in the Stork research project – about 85 per cent of the women who are approached, accept the offer.

The reports from the project all highlight the improved attention to, and screening for, gestational diabetes a major success of the Stork intervention. In the physical activity program, all districts reported that it was challenging to recruit participants, but that they did reach some women who had very little experience with physical activity and were in very poor physical shape. Through their participation in the

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<sup>8</sup> The information in this section comes from the districts’ annual report schemes, made available at the meeting 13th September.



project, their physical condition improved. Some of the women also asked for the activity program to be expanded, which is seen as an indication of enthusiasm.

When asked to report on the conditions for the success of the program, city districts highlighted the fact that the project was so closely linked to the health stations. This was seen as a good arena in which to recruit participants, and the ownership felt by employees at the health station ensured their continued commitment to recruiting and following up participants. The good routine for disseminating information in an accessible and easily understood way was also highlighted, as was the cooperation between Stork and other institutions where potential users were met (Labour and Welfare Offices, the Introduction program, language courses, kindergartens etc.).

As obstacles for the project, and factors that could undermine the continuation of Stork, the low participation rates in the exercise classes organised were highlighted by all districts. This was seen, at least partly, as a matter of improving access and information. Also, the fact that all project leaders were engaged in temporary positions undermined the continuity and long-term planning of the project. The districts also pointed out that developing methods for improving physical activity rates and diet among pregnant women was a major task that went beyond what city districts could be expected to do on their own.

## **B5A. The public health project in District Alna<sup>9</sup>**

As noted, Alna is the only district in Groruddalen that has not implemented Stork, but rather developed a separate public health project. Crucially, Alna has employed a public health coordinator in a fulltime position. Also, the district highlights that the activities are anchored in the district's general plan "Local public health plan for district Alna 2010–2012". The activities under the public health project in Alna have been the following:

Low threshold physical exercise group for women. Examples of classes have included water gym, spinning and training with weights. 120 women participated in 2011, both women from the majority population and women from the various minorities. Participants reported feeling in better physical shape, and feeling more confident by the end of the semester than by the beginning, and the classes were also important social meeting places.

Diet course "Better food for better health". The aim of the course is to inspire participants to improve their diet through practical advice, and to increase awareness of what common food items actually contain. The course is run as five classes à two hours in a 12 week period. The target groups are people who wish to improve their eating habits, and people who need to change their diet to prevent illness, or cope better with a diagnosis they already have. Two courses were run in 2011, each with 15 participants. The evaluation from participants has been positive.

AktivGravid ("ActivePregnant"), is based on the findings in Stork. Alna has tried to develop a package including group exercise with an instructor twice a week, diet advice, and health information from a midwife. The aim has been to inspire a healthy lifestyle during and after pregnancy. Participants have been recruited through midwives and GPs, but like the Stork districts, Alna has found it hard to recruit pregnant women to exercise classes. Only 2-5 participants have successfully been recruited.

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<sup>9</sup> The information in this section comes from the districts' annual report schemes, made available at the meeting 13th September



Summer training. As ordinary exercise classes paused for summer, outside training in the Furuset park was initiated. The park has recently been supplied with outdoor exercise equipment. The number of participants varied, but those who showed up were enthusiastic.

Exercise class at Furuset senior center. This was seen as an important preventive measure for the elderly in the district. About 20-25 elderly participated, which meant that the class was full every week.

"Health day", an open arrangement initiated in cooperation with a number of immigrant organisations. Experts, some of them celebrities with a high public profile, were invited to give talks about the importance of exercise and diets, and providers of gym classes and healthy food were invited to have promotional stands. 80-100 persons visited the arrangement, and feed-back was enthusiastic.

An important aspect of the Alna public health project is the "Healthy life and mastering" initiative. Municipalities in Norway have recently been given increased responsibility for preventive health measures.<sup>10</sup> The Directorate of Public Health has developed a concept called "the Healthy life prescription" (Frisklivsresept), where the main emphasis is on the individual's responsibility for his or her own health situation. The main measures are "change-oriented guidance" regarding physical activity, diet and smoking habits. Since the project started in September 2011, GPs in the district Alna has directed about 100 inhabitants to the project. By January 2012, about 30 of those were on a waiting list. The "healthy life prescription" initiative is funded by different sources, and provides an integrated approach that also creates bridges between otherwise unconnected activities in the district. Because the healthy life-project has proved important, Alna has employed a "healthy life councilor" in a 50%-position to work solely with this project. With this extra resource, the full-time public health-coordinator is freed to focus more energy on other aspects of the Alna public health project.

In addition to all this activity, Alna granted money to local partners who worked with motivating different population groups to exercise and more healthy living.

## **B6. Initiatives to maintain cultural and voluntary organisational life**

The four Groruddalen districts are awarded money, both from the state and from the municipality of Oslo, to promote and maintain voluntary activities. The state grants and the municipal grants have different intentions, and are used in somewhat different ways.

The municipal grant is to be used for strategic development of the districts' role as a facilitator for voluntary organisations. *Alna* has given priority to three distinct subprojects: (1) "in from the sidelines", a project to mobilise parents for voluntary work with children and youth; (2) new strategies for improving music activities, and (3) "Desi Nation Furuset", a concert project. *Bjerke* gave priority to local sports clubs and sports projects. *Grorud* spread the money thin, and gave small awards to, for instance, a hiking project, the running of a cultural centre, and the establishment of a new local history museum. *Stovner* supported cultural arrangements, sports, and a project to educate young people as leaders.

The state grant shall be used for measures that promote voluntary action and arrangements across ethnic and national background. Money can also be awarded

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10 This is part of a larger organisational reform in Norwegian healthcare services that will not be discussed here.



to local organisations to promote the involvement of immigrants locally, improve immigrants access to social networks or facilitate immigrants' chances to promote their interests in meetings with local authorities. Alna, Bjerke and Stovner have used the funds to support a wide range of local initiatives, most of them explicitly cross-cultural or targeted at one or more group of immigrants. District Grorud intended to support a Tamil group who aimed at starting up a cultural centre. For practical reasons, the centre plans had to be postponed, and Grorud wished to transfer funds from 2011 to 2012 (Annual report 2011).

These initiatives have never been evaluated as such, and the mid-term evaluation has little to say about them. There has however been a project in district Bjerke, in targeted area Veitvet, that investigated the meaning and relevance of voluntary organisations in a highly diverse neighbourhood (Ødegård 2010). The study pointed out that immigrants' own organisations – often made up exclusively of immigrants from one country – tended to be exclusionary. Yet such organisations played an important role in maintaining links with the country of origin, the development of biculturalism, in the learning of language to bicultural children born in Norway, and as arenas for political activism. The study indicated that many of the immigrants who were active in such organisations, also has solid relationships with majority institutions and networks. Hence minority organisations can be a base for further development of networks. This does not necessarily happen, however, and there were also a number of examples of immigrant organisations that appeared to be closed to the outside world. At the same time, majority organisations – including sports organisations – had limited success in recruiting among the newcomers to the area, and struggled with declining membership. The study points out that these majority organisations had been developed over time, and relied on a number of implicit assumptions that outsiders might find hard to understand (Ødegård 2010:98).

The study from Veitvet however suggests that local authorities, through the initiatives in the Groruddalen Action Plan, have played a role in linking the various organisations and networks. One aspect of this has been "courses", where resource persons from established clubs and networks have been taught how to formalise their organisation. If nothing else, increased formalisation makes it possible to apply for funding from the local authority. The ambition is however also that formalisation will make the groups more visible locally, and give them a clearer profile. In turn, this can enable previously informal networks to play a more active role in developing the community.<sup>11</sup> In these processes, the aid of individual resource persons – people who know how bureaucracy works, have experience in project management and cultural competence – can be invaluable (Ødegård 2010:102). The study acknowledges that these efforts seem promising, but also questions the intervention of public bodies into the voluntary sector. For organisations, it can be a dilemma that they are simultaneously expected to be informal and "driven from below", and to be key actors in state efforts to promote integration.

The importance of the "bottom-up" approach was highlighted by one of the organisers in district Bjerke.<sup>12</sup> At one point, the district council tried to establish an umbrella organisation called "the cultural forum", to create a joint meeting place for

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11 An informant at the 13th September meeting described typical initiatives locally as "women running an activity in the basement", typically various forms of dance classes. With increasing formalisation, these activities became less vulnerable, and could be maintained even in cases where the woman who initiated them moved away from Bjerke. Also, the district authorities could help the entrepreneurs find more attractive locations than what they typically had.

12 In the presentation given at the meeting 13th September.



all the organisations and initiatives in the district. This has so far been unsuccessful, as the activity leaders appear not to see the need. The district notes that the increased cooperation of local initiatives is a social process that cannot be stressed, and recognises that the “cultural forum” was a top-down measure that was either premature or basically superfluous.



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