



**Convention on the
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**WRITTEN REPLIES BY THE GOVERNMENT OF NORWAY TO
THE LIST OF ISSUES (CRC/C/NOR/Q/4) PREPARED BY THE
COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD IN CONNECTION WITH
THE CONSIDERATION OF THE FOURTH PERIODIC REPORT OF
NORWAY (CRC/C/NOR/4)***

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**Additional and updated information to the fourth periodic report of Norway to the
Committee on the Rights of the Child**

PART I

1. *Commission on anti-discrimination legislation*

The Commission to propose comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation was appointed by the Norwegian Government on 1 June 2007. The Commission has submitted a proposal for a consolidated and more comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Act prohibiting discrimination on grounds of gender, pregnancy, leave of absence due to the birth or adoption of a child, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion, belief, political views or age.

The Commission proposes the inclusion of a provision on anti-discrimination in the Constitution. According to the Commission, this would mark the fact that the principle of anti-discrimination is a fundamental component of the Norwegian legal system and of Norwegian society. A constitutional provision would also influence the interpretation of Norwegian law and give the principle greater weight in legal and political arguments. The majority of the Commission also proposes that the anti-discrimination provision in the Constitution should be worded in such a way that it can be enforced by the courts and function as a barrier to legislation through the courts right of judicial review.

The Commission's report is being circulated for public consultation until 30 December 2009. After reviewing the consultation responses, the Government will submit the draft of a new anti-discrimination act to the Storting (the Norwegian parliament).

2. The amendment to the Education Act relating to the school subject of Christianity and Religious and Ethical Education (CREE) was adopted by the Storting in 2008 and entered into force on 1 August 2008. The new name of the subject is Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics.

3. *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)*

Before the Convention can be ratified, Norwegian legislation on legal capacity and guardianship has to be amended. The Government's proposal for new legislation is now being considered in the Storting. The Government is also considering other legislation and measures in this area, with a view to ratification in 2010. The Government will also examine the possibility of ratifying the *Optional Protocol* to the CRPD following ratification of the Convention.

The 2005 *Strategy plan for families with children who have disabilities* will be reviewed and measures for better relief care and aid to families with severely disabled children will be introduced during the 2009–2013 parliamentary period.

4. The *research project on child poverty*, "Do the measures against child poverty reach children and young people from the poorest families?", has been delayed, and the findings will be published in 2010. The findings will be used in the consideration of further measures for reaching children and young people from the poorest families.

5. A new chapter in the *Child Welfare Act, Chapter 5A, Care centres for minors*, was adopted on 30 May 2008. The new chapter, which is fully in line with the Ministry's proposal, entered into force on 1 July 2008. Reference is made to paragraphs 471–477 of Norway's fourth periodic report.
6. Under the *Action Plan against Human Trafficking 2006–2009*, Norway has strengthened the legal rights and protection of victims of trafficking. Thus the new Immigration Act, which was adopted on 15 May 2008 and enters into force on 1 January 2010, has strengthened legal protection of trafficking victims. One of the most important provisions in the new Act is that former victims of trafficking are to be considered as members of a particular social group in accordance with the Refugee Convention. The Act also states that being a victim of trafficking is to be considered a possible humanitarian ground for the granting of a residence permit.

Furthermore, the reflection period, described in paragraph 546 of Norway's fourth periodic report, was extended by instruction from 45 days to six months. On 15 May 2008 the instruction was revised so that the reflection period now encompasses a wider range of persons, including nationals of EU/EEC countries, foreigners with residence permits in other Schengen states and foreigners with temporary residence permits in Norway.

On 1 November 2008, a new instruction was introduced under which victims of trafficking who are also witnesses in a court case against the perpetrators are as a rule to be granted a residence permit. The purpose of this provision is to facilitate legal procedures against the perpetrators and protect the victims against reprisals.

The extension of the reflection period and the instruction concerning protection of witnesses are included in section 8-3 and 8-4 respectively of the Immigration Regulations. The new regulations enter into force on 1 January 2010.

The Coordinating Unit for Assistance and Protection for Victims of Trafficking (KOM) is a project for nation-wide coordination of assistance and protection of victims of trafficking. The unit is organised into two groups. The first group consists of representatives from the relevant directorates and agencies, including the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs and the social services for children, young people and families. The second group consists of NGOs, including Save the Children, and representatives of various projects. Both groups have regular meetings, at which issues relating to identification and assistance to child victims of trafficking are frequently discussed and resolved. In accordance with measure no. 14 in the action against human trafficking, in 2008 KOM developed a set of guidelines for identifying possible victims of trafficking, which include a list of indicators. KOM is currently developing a handbook on the responsibilities of all the agencies involved in dealing with trafficking cases.

PART II

New bills and enacted legislation

The Marriage Act and The Adoption Act

Amendments to the Marriage Act were adopted by the Storting on 17 June 2008 and entered into force on 1 January 2009. The amendments give same-sex couples the same right to marry as heterosexual couples. An amendment to Norway's Adoption Act also gives same-sex married couples the same right to be considered for adoption as heterosexual married couples.

The Child Welfare Act

On 1 July 2009, section 1-3 of the Child Welfare Act, which specifies to whom the Act applies, was amended to permit every child who has received assistance and care from the child welfare services to continue to receive assistance, when the child consents, after they have reached the age of 18 years. A sentence was added, stating that: "the termination of a measure when the child reaches the age of 18 and the rejection of an application for a measure after the child has reached the age of 18 shall be regarded as individual decisions and shall be justified by the consideration of the child's best interests, cf. section 4-1." As a consequence of the amendment, the Ministry of Children and Equality will update the guidelines and circulars concerning after-care for those between 18 and 23 years old.

Section 4-5 of the Child Welfare Act concerning follow-up of assistance was amended in June 2009. The reason was that efforts to provide satisfactory conditions by means of assistance measures were sometimes continued for too long a period of time. Section 4-5 of the Child Welfare Act now reads: "When a decision is made to provide assistance measures, the child welfare service shall draw up a time-limited plan of measures. The child welfare service shall closely monitor the progress of the child and the parents, and assess whether the assistance provided is appropriate, and if relevant whether new measures are necessary, or whether there are grounds for taking the child into care. The plan of measures shall be evaluated on a regular basis."

In June 2009 section 6-7a of the Child Welfare Act, which concerns the response to reporters, was amended. The Ministry had received reports indicating that the child welfare service was invoking professional secrecy to an unjustified extent when responding to persons who report concern about a child's welfare to the service. The amendment gives reporters in such cases the right to a response within three weeks of receipt of the report.

To improve supervision of the child welfare service, a new section 2-3b was included in the Child Welfare Act giving the Norwegian Board of Health supervisory authority in 2009. The amendment will enter into force on 1 January 2010.

A new act relating to the establishment of an expert child commission dealing with child welfare cases was adopted on 27 March 2009. The Act will enter into force on 1 January 2010.

The Kindergarten Act

A new section 12a in Act no.64 of 17 June 2005 relating to kindergartens (the Kindergarten Act) entered into force on 1 January 2009. The section gives children who have turned one year old by the end of August a legal right to a place in kindergarten.

On 5 December 2008, the Storting approved a new purpose clause in section 1 of the Kindergarten Act. The review of the purpose clause in the Kindergarten Act was initiated after the government had stated that they wanted to review the Christian purpose clause in the Act relating to primary and secondary education (the Education Act). The purpose clause sets out the core values of the kindergartens. Under the amended provision undue preference is no longer accorded to the Christian religion and it is emphasized that the kindergarten shall promote common values. The kindergartens are to base their activities on “the fundamental values of the Christian and humanist heritage, which are also those inherent in human rights.” Before the new amendment can enter into force, other amendments must be made to the Kindergarten Act, which are being circulated for consultation.

The Education Act

The Education Act has been amended every year. The following is a brief outline of the most important and relevant amendments.

As from 1 August 2008, linguistic minority pupils have a right to special language education in upper secondary schools. As from 1 August 2009, school owners (local authority and private) have an obligation to chart the Norwegian language proficiency of linguistic minority pupils in primary and secondary education.

As from 1 August 2009, local authority and private schools have an obligation to ensure early intervention for pupils in the first four years of school who have difficulties in reading and mathematics, especially pupils with special learning needs.

High teacher density is the important mean of fulfilling this obligation, as well as improved educational methods. Budget allocations for more teachers have been made.

As from 1 August 2009, local authority and private schools have an obligation to submit an annual report on the school’s learning outcomes, learning environment and the number of pupils who do not complete their schooling.

On 9 December 2008 the Storting adopted an amendment to the purpose clause in section 1-1 of the Education Act, which applies to all 13 years of primary and secondary education. Under the amendment, undue preference is no longer accorded to the Christian religion, and schools are to base their activities on fundamental values in Christian and humanist heritage and traditions, values that also appear in different religions and beliefs and are rooted in human rights.

The Immigration Regulations

A new provision in the Immigration Regulations entered into force on 1 May 2009. This provision states that an unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC) between the ages of 16 and 18 years may be granted a temporary permit that expires when the child is 18 years old. The provision may be applied when the sole reason for granting a permit is that the Norwegian authorities are unable to trace the care-givers of the minor asylum seeker (section 21). The provision reflects a more restrictive policy than previously, when UASC were granted renewable residence permits regardless of the grounds for the permit.

The new Immigration Act and the new Immigration Regulations

On 15 May 2008 the Storting approved a new immigration act, which will enter into force on 1 January 2010, at the same time as the new immigration regulations. The following proposals for new provisions concerning children mentioned in Norway's fourth periodic report (paragraph 18) have been implemented in the new Act:

- A provision stating that the assessment in asylum cases must take into consideration that the applicant is a child (section 28) has been added.
- In the assessment of the need for protection against persecution, specific consideration is to be given to the question of whether the acts of persecution affect the child (section 29).
- It is specified that the best interests of the child are to be a primary consideration in cases affecting children, and that the threshold for granting a residence permit is to be lower for children than for adults (section 38 and, in cases concerning expulsion, section 70).
- A child's right to be heard is to be regulated in the Immigration Regulations (section 81).
- Several provisions extend a child's right to live together or have contact with both parents. An extended refugee definition is used (section 28) that will lead to more applicants being granted refugee status and exempted from the maintenance requirements for family reunification. In visa cases particular importance is to be attached to a child's need for contact with their parents (section 10).

In the new Immigration Regulations, which enter into force on January 2010, the following provisions concern children:

- A child's right to be heard according to Article 12 in the Convention on the Rights of the Child is included in section 17-3. According to this provision, children over the age of seven, or younger children capable of expressing themselves, are to be given information and the possibility of being heard before a decision is made. The authority to draw up guidelines on how to implement a child's right to be heard in the various types of cases and application situations is delegated to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration.
- A provision in section 14-1 states that a foreigner who has a child in Norway shall not, as a general rule, be expelled if the reason for expulsion is illegal stay.

- A provision in section 14-2 states that expulsion shall not, as a general rule, imply a permanent prohibition against new entry into Norway when the foreigner has a child in Norway.

The Criminal Procedure Act

The amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act mentioned in paragraph 525 of Norway's fourth periodic report were adopted by the Storting on 7 March 2008 and entered into force on 1 July 2008.

Penalty provisions on genocide

The amendments mentioned in paragraph 644 of Norway's fourth periodic report concerning new penalty provisions on genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes were adopted by the Storting on 7 March 2008 and entered into force on the date of adoption.

Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act

A new anti-discrimination and accessibility act entered into force on 1 January 2009. The Act prohibits discrimination on the ground of disability and sets out a duty of general accommodation (universal design) of areas and buildings open to the public. It also imposes an obligation relevant to children with disabilities: reasonable individual accommodation in day-care institutions, schools and other educational institutions such as universities.

Shelter Service Act

The establishment of shelter services for victims of domestic violence is made statutory from January 2010. Under the Shelter Service Act municipalities are obliged to offer shelter services to persons who are victims of domestic violence. The Act states that children are users in their own right and that municipalities are obliged to offer children services adapted to their individual needs.

Parental leave

With effect from 1 July 2009, the father's quota of parental leave was extended to 10 weeks. Reference is made to paragraph 336 of Norway's fourth periodic report. The total parental benefit period is now 46 weeks (100% of covered earnings) or 56 weeks (80% of covered earnings). In the case of adoption, the benefit periods are 43 and 53 weeks respectively.

Assisted fertilisation

An amendment to the Biotechnology Act provides that cohabiting and married lesbians have the right to be considered for medically assisted reproduction on the same basis as heterosexual couples. The biological mother's partner/spouse will be granted co-mother status by the Children Act if she has consented to the fertilisation, the fertilisation has taken place at an approved health-care facility in Norway or abroad, and the sperm donor's identity is known. The co-maternity rule applies in the case of children born after the legislative amendments took effect on

1 January 2009. For children born before that, the only way for the biological mother's partner/spouse to have parental status is by adopting the child as a step-child.

The Planning and Building Act

The new Planning and Building Act entered into force on 1 July 2009. Reference is made to paragraphs 132–134 of Norway's fourth periodic report. Municipalities now have a particular responsibility to give children and young people the opportunity to participate in all planning processes.

The Guardianship Act

In Report No. 110 (2008–2009) the Storting, the Government presented a proposal for a new act relating to guardianship. Reference is made to paragraph 81 of Norway's fourth periodic report. The new act will replace the existing Acts of 1898 and 1927. It reflects a clear change of attitude towards persons with special needs, mental diseases and disabilities, and states that such persons are not merely “objects” of charity and social protection, but also persons with rights who are capable of asserting these rights and making decisions concerning their lives based as far as possible on free and informed consent. When a person is considered legally incapacitated in certain respects, the Act states that the person is to be heard and that their wishes and preferences are to be taken into account as far as possible. The person himself shall also be entitled to effective access to the courts for the purpose of having the incapacity order altered or revoked.

Violence against children

In 2009 a proposition for amendments to the Children Act on violence against children was submitted to the Storting. The bill emphasises that a child must not be subjected to violence or in any other way treated so as to harm or endanger his or her mental or physical health and proposes that a prohibition should be included on all forms of violence against children, including violence inflicted as part of a child's upbringing. The bill is now being considered in the Storting.

New institutions

Centres of care and education in countries of origin for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC)

Norway has experienced a massive influx in applications from unaccompanied children in the last three years (from 403 UASC in 2007 to 1647 by 30 September 2009). The large number of UASC has resulted in pressure on the Norwegian reception system and poses a challenge to municipalities that do not have sufficient capacity for the settlement of these minors. Furthermore, the Government is concerned about the risks these children face when migrating. In order to reduce the number of UASC arriving in Norway, the Government is currently making efforts to establish centres for care and education in many of the countries of origin where there is a shortage of such facilities. The centres are intended to provide children returning to their home country with adequate care and opportunities for development. Local children who reside in the countries in question are also to be given access to the centres.

Reception facilities for UASC over the age of 15

In paragraph 478 of Norway's fourth periodic report it was stated that the responsibility for caring for UASC over the age of 15 would be transferred to the child welfare authorities in 2009. However, according to the policy platform of the new Norwegian Government, of September 2009, this reform will not be carried out within the current parliamentary period. This means that responsibility for these children will continue to lie with the immigration authorities. UASC are given accommodation and care either in separate reception centres or in a separate department of a reception centre for adult asylum-seekers.

Separate units for young offenders (under 18 years)

It is the Government's goal to avoid placing persons under the age of 18 years in prison. Two separate units with a total of 10 places are to be established. They will be administered by the correctional services for children, one in Bergen and one in Oslo. This is a two-year project that will be continuously evaluated. Work with the young offenders in these units will be intensive and individually adapted, with an emphasis on cooperation with local authorities and services.

Newly implemented policies

The white paper concerning quality in day care institutions

The Government has presented a white paper concerning quality in day care institutions (Report No. 41 (2008–2009) to the Storting, *Quality in Day Care Institutions*).

Extended and enriched school day with a whole-child approach

A gradual process of extension and enrichment of the school day has been initiated. This involves the introduction of a larger number of teaching periods in primary and lower secondary schools, more physical activity, help with homework and various after-school activities.

A new manifesto against bullying

In February 2009 a new government manifesto against bullying was presented. To help schools and school owners to make effective, systematic efforts to prevent degrading treatment like racism, bullying or violence, the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training is publishing guidelines for "A better learning environment" in autumn 2009.

Preventing dropouts

The Government intends to introduce several measures to increase the number of young people completing upper secondary education. Closer individual follow-up of pupils and apprentices will be facilitated. Young people who have already dropped out of school will be more closely followed up. In addition, schooling will be made more closely work-related and will allow for greater flexibility so that the needs of individual pupils can be taken into account. There will also be a stronger focus on close cooperation between the education system and working life.

Guidelines for early intervention to prevent drug and alcohol problems

Guidelines for early intervention to prevent drug and alcohol problems were introduced in August 2009. They deal with child-related issues and have been developed by the Directorate of Health in cooperation with four ministries and their subordinate agencies.

Newly implemented programmes and projects, and their scope

Action plans

Action plan against violence in close relationships

Reference is made to paragraph 261 of Norway's fourth periodic report. In December 2007, the Government launched a third action plan against violence in intimate relationships for the period 2008–2011 ("The Turning Point"). Prepared by five ministries in collaboration, the 50-measure plan is based on the need to view the work against such violence in an integrated, cross-sectoral perspective. The plan has the following goals:

- The victims are to be guaranteed the necessary help and protection.
- The spiral of violence is to be broken by strengthening the treatment services offered to the perpetrator.
- The victims are to be offered facilitated conversations with the perpetrator.
- Knowledge and cooperation in the support apparatus are to be strengthened.
- Research and development work is to be implemented.
- Violence in intimate relationships is to be given greater visibility.
- Violence in intimate relationships is to be prevented through public education.

Crime preventing Action- plan – 35 measures for increased safety

The Government launched the action-plan in August 2009. The aim of the plan is to develop the crime-preventive work in an integrated, multi-professional perspective, realising that co-operation is crucial. Implementation has started and will continue the next years, some measures until 2012. The plan consists of three sections:

- To develop and implement relevant knowledge
- Early intervention towards minors at risk of delinquent behaviour
- Various measures to strengthen cooperation between professions agencies

Norway universally designed by 2025 – Action Plan for Universal Design and Increased Accessibility (2009-2013)

The plan applies to almost all areas of society, and all the ministries are involved in the implementation. A wide range of tools is to be used to reach all levels of the public sector and promote development in this area in the private sector. The work is being coordinated with the National Transport Plan 2010–2019.

New Plan of Action to Promote Equality and Prevent Ethnic Discrimination, (2009–2012)

The plan of action is mainly concerned with measures to combat discrimination of persons from minority backgrounds, including immigrants and their children, Sami people and other national minorities. Implementation of the plan incorporates a gender perspective. It also focuses on discrimination that especially affects children and youth, in schools/education, the housing market and clubs/bars/restaurants. The plan includes 66 new measures and nine ministries are responsible for its implementation.

Action Plan to Combat Female Genital Mutilation (2008–2011)

This is the Government's third plan of action to combat female genital mutilation. Reference is made to paragraph 320 of Norway's fourth periodic report. The plan consists of 41 existing and new measures and has been divided into six main areas: effective enforcement of legislation, competence-building and knowledge transfers, prevention and opinion-building, accessibility to health services, extra efforts during holiday periods and promotion of intensified international efforts.

Counselling and voluntary genital examination

In addition to the measures in the above action plan, the Government decided in 2008 to introduce an offer of counselling and voluntary genital examination to all girls and women who come from areas where, according to the World Health Organisation, the incidence of female genital mutilation is 30% or more. This offer will be part of the municipal health service and will be carried out by a qualified doctor within one year of arrival in Norway. Counselling and genital examination will also be offered to all relevant groups of girls (immigrants and those born in Norway of immigrant parents) prior to the start of school (5–6 years old), then again in the fifth grade (10–11 years old), and the 10th grade (15–16 years old). According to the Patients' Rights Act, genital examination may only be carried out with the valid consent of the patient/parent/guardian.

Plan of Action to Strengthen Sami Languages

A Plan of Action to Strengthen Sami Languages was presented in May 2009 and covers the period 2009–2014. The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion was responsible for drawing up the plan, and the work is being carried out in cooperation with line ministries and in consultation with the Sámediggi (the Sami Parliament). The objective of the plan is to lay the foundation for broad-based, long-term efforts to preserve and support the various Sami languages.

Plan of Action to Improve the Living Conditions of the Roma in Oslo

In 2009 the Government presented a plan of action to improve the living conditions of the Roma population who live in Oslo and have Norwegian nationality. In cooperation with the Roma, the municipality of Oslo has developed a model for adult education of young Roma (16–34 years). The project started in 2007, and the aim is to improve proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics, and digital skills in this group. One of the expected consequences of the project is to make the Roma take a greater interest in the education of their children. The project offers child-care facilities for parents while they attend classes.

Plan of action for the work with film projects directed at children and adolescents 2009–2011

The organisation Film & Kino and the Norwegian Film Institute have drawn up a plan of action for the work with film initiatives directed at children and adolescents. Key elements in the plan of action are film screening in day-care institutions, film clubs and festivals for children, classes and study sheets on film for teachers, making films and games available in school libraries and providing support for children making films themselves.

The child welfare service and the Sami language

The Ministry of Children and Equality is working to strengthen the supervisory activities of the child welfare service as regards the Sami language and culture in relation to Sami children in institutions and foster homes.

Programmes and projects

Better monitoring of children's rights in Norway

The Ministry of Children and Equality initiated a project “Better monitoring of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child” in 2008. Reference is made to paragraph 11 of Norway's fourth periodic report. The Ministry's responsibility for and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has been strengthened by the following measures:

- Inter-ministerial meetings are arranged four times a year and a contact person in the relevant ministries has been appointed.
- A dialogue forum between youth representatives and the Minister of Children and Equality has been started.
- The Government commissioned a study performed by an independent expert to examine whether Norwegian legislation in the relevant areas satisfies the requirements of the CRC. The study is now being reviewed by the relevant ministries.
- A research project was initiated in 2008 to collect information on educational programmes related to the CRC at universities and university colleges. The report on this project will be published in December 2009.
- Information and competence-development activities on children's rights have been arranged. In June 2009 the Ministry of Children and Equality arranged a two-day seminar on the CRC for government employees. In November 2009 the Ministry arranged a conference in connection with the anniversary of the CRC for municipalities, politicians, ministries, universities, research institutions, the Ombudsman for Children and NGOs.
- The Ministry of Children and Equality has translated the general comments by the Committee on the Rights of the Child into Norwegian. All the translated comments are published on the Ministry's website.

Competence development among child welfare employees

In 2007, the Ministry of Children and Equality launched a strategy (for 2007–2012) to raise the level of competence among municipal child welfare employees. The following is a list of some of the measures and publications under the strategy.

- *Nine regional conferences* on child welfare were arranged in 2008. The aim of the conferences was to spread information about effective methods and measures for young people with serious behavioural problems, children who live with violence in the home and children of parents with psychiatric problems or substance abuse.
- A DVD on *after-care* in child welfare cases has been distributed to municipalities. Two research projects on this subject have been carried out.
- A report on Examples of good child welfare services in cases of domestic violence, child sexual abuse and physical abuse has been published by Norwegian Social Research – NOVA and financed by the central government child welfare authorities (NOVA report 5/2008).
- As part of the Government's strategy for increasing the multicultural knowledge in the child welfare service, the Ministry of Children and Equality has initiated the mentoring project "The Nightingale". The aims of the project are to improve the multicultural knowledge of students in child welfare and social work programmes through mentor activities among children, youth and families with a minority background, and to encourage children and youth with a minority background to complete secondary school and go on to higher education. Eight universities and university colleges are taking part in the project, which is currently being evaluated.
- To develop good models for *coordinating services* for children at risk, the Ministry of Children and Equality has initiated a pilot project in 15 municipalities, which is being conducted in cooperation with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities. An evaluation of the project started in 2009.
- In 2008 a committee was appointed by the Ministry of Children and Equality to *improve basic education for personnel in the child welfare services*. The terms of reference included assessing existing education programmes and identifying future knowledge needs. The results were published in April 2009 in Norwegian Official Report 2009:8, and a consultation round is being held on the committee's recommendations.
- In 2009, the Ministry of Children and Equality has *published written guides* on the following themes:
 - "Talk to me – guide on talking to children in the child welfare services".
 - Guide on following up parents whose children have been placed in foster homes or institutions.
 - "In the best interests of the child – co-operation between day care institutions and the child welfare services".

Pilot project for lowering the voting age to 16 years during the local elections in 2011

The question of lowering the voting age has been discussed on several occasions, and was again raised in Report No. 33 (2007–2008) to the Storting, *A Strong Local Democracy*. In this white paper the Government proposed lowering the voting age to 16 years at the local elections in 2011 as a pilot project. The aim is to encourage young people to take an active part in their local community and strengthen their political participation and commitment. The Storting has approved the proposal.

PART III**Data and statistics****1. Budget allocations in the areas of education and health**

Table 1.				
Allocations to the education of children and youth from central government (in NOK 1000) - Ministry of Education and Research				
		Accounts 2007	Accounts 2008	Budget 2009
Primary and secondary education				
Funds for Sami primary and secondary schools	Ch. 222	119 008	122 858	124 572
Measures in secondary education – operating expenses for examinations	Ch. 225, item 01	125 251	131 409	136 690
Grants for Sami language teaching in primary and secondary education	Ch. 225, item 63	41 998	44 527	47 505
Grants for children and youth in state asylum reception centers [1]	Ch. 225, item 64	59 200	59 794	188 379
Grants for school camping	Ch. 225, item 66	34 821	34 460	38 926
Grants for Finnish language teaching	Ch. 225, item 67	7 856	7 333	8 973
Quality development in primary and secondary education	Ch. 226	1 024 388	960 699	1 020 039
Grants to private schools [2]	Ch. 228	2 268 851	2 477 206	2 582 197
Total		3 681 373	3 838 286	4 147 281
Kindergartens				

Grants for kindergartens for Sami children	Ch. 231, item 50	11 870	12 380	12 925
Operating grants for kindergartens	Ch. 231, item 60	13 735 461	15 899 618	18 120 880
Investment grants and loans	Ch. 231, item 61	266 173	228 882	173 000
Grants for measures for children with disabilities in kindergartens	Ch. 231, item 62	762 675	794 769	829 674
Grants for measures to improve language proficiency among linguistic minority children	Ch. 231, item 63	102 523	106 752	111 529
Grants for temporary premises	Ch. 231, item 64	21 707	39 400	33 000
Funding for kindergartens	Ch. 231, item 65	3 130 144	4 009 779	4 938 731
Total		18 030 553	21 091 580	24 219 739

Norwegian State Educational Loan Fund

Grants to pupils in ordinary upper secondary education, provided by the State Educational Loan Fund[3]	Ch. 2410, item 70	1 242 870	1 244 820	1 268 742
Other grants to pupils provided by the State Educational Loan Fund[4]	Ch. 2410, item 71	19 114	34 901	35 664
Total		1 261 984	1 279 721	1 304 406
Total		22 973 910	26 209 587	29 671 426

1 From 2009 there are two grant schemes for children and youth in state asylum reception centres.

2 Approximately NOK 1 billion goes to private upper secondary schools.

3 Estimated figures.

4 Estimated figures.

Table 1 provides an overview of allocations from the central government budget for 2007-2009 to children and youth in the area of education. The appropriations have increased, especially those to early childhood education/kindergartens.

The counties and municipalities have the operating responsibility for primary and secondary schools. The total operating costs for primary and lower secondary schools amounted to approximately NOK 56 billion in 2008, and for upper secondary schools the figure was approximately NOK 26 billion. The expenditures have remained relatively stable over the last few years, in terms of both total resources and resources per pupil.

Table 2.					
Allocations in the area of health to children and youth from central government (in NOK 1000) – Ministry of Health and Care Services					
		Accounts 2007	Accounts 2008	Budget 2009	Budget 2010
School fruit scheme (action plan for a better diet)	Chp. 711, item 74	28 521	16 047	16 753	17 289
Prevention of abortions/unwanted pregnancies	Chp. 762, item 73	24 994	24 510	25 128	28 512
Children as care-takers/ next of kin	Chp. 781, item 79	0	0	0	21 000

2. Numbers of children in detention

Table 3. New imprisonments															
Age	2007			2008			2009 (01.01 - 30.9)								
	On remand	Sentence d	Total	On remand	Sentence d	Total	Female			Male			M & F		
	On remand	Sentence d	Total	On remand	Sentence d	Total	On remand	Sentence d	Total	On remand	Sentence d	Total	On remand	Sentence d	Total
15 yrs	3	0	3	1		1	0	0	0	9	1	10	9	1	10
16 yrs	9	1	10	16	6	22	2	0	2	17	0	17	19	0	19
17 yrs	31	10	41	34	18	52	1	1	2	36	11	47	37	12	49
Sum	43	11	54	51	24	75	3	1	4	62	12	74	65	13	78

Table 4. In prison, 29 October 2009

Age	On remand	Foreign national	Sentence	Offence
15	On remand	Foreign national		
16	On remand	Foreign national		
16	Sentenced	Not known at time of writing		
17	On remand	Foreign national		
17	On remand	Foreign national		
17	On remand	Norwegian		
17	On remand	Foreign national		
17	On remand	Foreign national		
17	On remand	Not known at time of writing		
17	Sentenced	Not known at time of writing		
17	Sentenced	Foreign national	7 months	Theft
17	Sentenced	Foreign national	1 year	Robbery with violence
17	Sentenced	Foreign national	9 months	Narcotics, fraud
17	Sentenced	Foreign national	1 year	Theft, threats, fraud

Table 5. Historical perspective											
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
15 yrs	11	18	10	6	8	8	3	4	3	3	1
16 yrs	31	45	27	34	34	15	21	10	14	10	22
17 yrs	76	98	96	95	89	55	54	52	49	41	52
Sum	118	161	133	135	131	78	78	66	66	54	75

We were unable to cross-reference new imprisonments of children by offence or sentence, and therefore show three tables that provide as much information as possible.

Table 3 shows new imprisonments of under-18s for 2007, 2008 and the first nine months of 2009 according to age and grounds for imprisonment. The age shown is that at the time of imprisonment.

Table 4 shows that there were 14 children in prison on 29 October 2009. The Correctional Services do not register ethnic origin, only nationality. Of the foreign nationals in the table two were from Eastern Europe and the rest from Africa or Asia.

Table 5. The increase in the numbers of new imprisonments should be seen in a longer historical perspective. Table 5 therefore shows the long-term trend in new imprisonments.

3. Substance abuse by children and young people

Table 6.

Percentage of young people in Norway aged 15–20 years who say that they have at some time used different drugs 1990-2008

	Cannabis	«Glue Sniffing»	Amphetamine and similar substances	Cocaine or "crack"	LSD	Ecstasy	GHB	Heroin and similar substances	Injected drugs	Total number
1990	8,0	8,3	1,2	0,5	..	..	..	0,5	0,3	2 901
1991	8,3	7,6	0,9	0,3	..	..	..	0,5	0,2	3 105
1992	9,0	6,3	1,0	0,3	..	..	..	0,9	0,4	2 897
1993	8,6	6,6	1,2	0,3	..	..	..	0,8	0,6	2 658
1994	8,7	6,5	1,1	0,3	0,4	0,3	..	0,6	0,3	2 469
1995	9,9	6,6	1,6	0,4	1,3	0,9	..	0,8	0,4	2 263
1996	12,3	6,2	2,2	0,5	0,8	1,7	..	0,6	0,3	2 043
1997	13,4	6,6	2,5	1,0	0,9	1,8	..	0,7	0,3	1 971
1998	18,0	5,1	3,7	1,5	1,6	2,6	..	0,7	1,4	1 636
1999	17,8	6,8	4,1	2,1	1,6	2,3	..	1,5	1,1	1 771
2000	18,8	6,7	3,9	2,5	1,8	3,0	..	0,6	1,6	1 706
2001	16,9	5,4	4,6	1,6	1,1	3,0	1,1	0,8	1,0	1 727
2002	14,8	5,4	3,4	1,5	0,8	2,7	0,6	0,4	0,7	1 636
2003	17,0	4,9	4,6	3,2	0,8	3,2	0,8	0,9	0,8	1 789
2004	13,4	6,4	3,5	1,8	0,6	1,9	0,6	0,8	0,6	1 654
2005	15,0	5,5	4,1	2,4	1,1	2,0	1,0	0,9	1,0	1 743
2006	13,1	5,6	3,1	2,2	0,7	1,7	0,8	0,6	0,4	1 571
2007	11,0	5,5	3,2	2,4	0,6	1,8	0,6	0,6	0,6	3 248
2008	10,5	5,1	2,2	1,9	0,3	1,4	0,7	0,4	0,2	2 675

Source: Norwegian Institute for Alcohol and Drug Research

On 1 September 2008 a new statutory provision entered into force, which gives children and youth under the age of 23 suffering from mental illness or substance abuse the right to an assessment of their need for specialist health care within 10 working days of referral, and the

right to receive treatment within 65 working days after the right to the necessary health care has formally been granted.

The Escalation Plan for Mental Health (1999–2008) has improved the capacity and accessibility of health services for the whole Norwegian population, including children and youth. The quantitative targets of the plan have been achieved, and approximately 5% per year of the child and youth population now receives specialist health care.

The data on drug use among young people presented in the table below are based on annual questionnaire surveys sent by post to a representative sample of young Norwegians aged 15–20 years. Participation in the surveys was voluntary, and the responses were confidential and treated anonymously. However, the response rate declined (from about 70% in the mid-1990s to about 40% in 2007–2008), which has resulted in some uncertainty as regards the reliability of the estimates (http://www.sirus.no/files/pub/464/Rusmidler_i_Norge_2008_ENG.pdf).

4. Children involved in sexual exploitation – figures not available.

5. Norwegian nationals involved in sexual exploitation of children – figures not available.

6. Disappearance of children from reception centres

Table 7. Disappeared children – with no known address as of November 2009

	2007	2 008	2 009
UASC ¹	19	24	41
Children accompanied by care takers	85	62	55

Eighty per cent of the cases of UASC who disappeared in 2009 have been dealt with in accordance with the Dublin II Regulation. The majority of UASC who have disappeared during the last two years come from Algeria, Iraq and Somalia.

There is no obvious pattern in the country of origin as regards the children who are accompanied by care takers when they disappear.

Paragraph 459 of Norway's fourth periodic report describes the appointment of a working group to study UASC disappearances from reception centres and suggest appropriate measures to deal with the problem. The group's report was presented in April 2008, and emphasised among other things the need to improve routines for individual follow-up at reception centres and warning procedures in the event of a disappearance. To follow up the report, a team has been attached to

¹ Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

the reception centres for accommodating UASC during the registration period that will seek to identify possible trafficking victims at an early stage in order to prevent disappearances.

Unaccompanied minors may be given leave of absence while staying at an ordinary reception centre. They are required to provide the name of a reference person and the reception centre is responsible for checking the person's suitability. Applications for leave of absence are accepted or rejected by the regional office of the immigration authorities supervising the reception centre.
