

AFGHANS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NORWAY A pilot project

Funded by Aga-Khan Foundation, UK

Øystein Lund Johannesen
Gunhild Odden
Oleksandr Ryndyk
Audhild Steinnes

SIK-rapport 2013:2



Senter for interkulturell kommunikasjon
Centre for Intercultural Communication
Centre pour la Communication Interculturelle



Senter for Interkulturell Kommunikasjon

Misjonsmarka 12, 4024 Stavanger, Norway

P.O. Box 226, 4001 Stavanger, Norway

Phone (+47) 51 51 62 74 / E-mail: sik@sik.no

Homepage: <http://www.sik.no>

ISBN: 978-82-7721-124-4	Title: Afghans and early childhood education in Norway. A pilot report.
ISSN: 1500-1474	Authors : Øystein Lund Johannessen, Gunhild Odden, Oleksandr Ryndyk, Audhild Steinnes
Project number: 285183	Editor : Centre for Intercultural Communication (SIK)
Completion date: May 2013	Publisher: Misjonshøgskolens forlag

Abstract

In January 2010, 10 475 Afghans were officially living in Norway. The Afghans thus constitute the 18th largest immigrant community in Norway. The Afghan immigration being recent, a large majority of Norwegian-born Afghan children are in preschool age. In May 2011 Aga Khan Foundation in the UK (AKF) and Centre for Intercultural Communication (SIK) in Norway, agreed to work together to share and develop new knowledge and improve professional practice within the field of early childhood education, and in particular to focus on the encounter between early childhood education in Norway and Afghan parents and children. A pilot project was launched, with the aim of defining project goals, single out research questions and propose an appropriate methodological approach for a later main research and development project within this field. The main research questions for the pilot project were:

- What are the experiences of the Afghan community and kindergarten personnel concerning Afghan children and early childhood education in Norway?
- What kind of literature exists on the topic?
- What are the main socio-demographic characteristics of the Afghans in Norway?

The encounter between kindergarten personnel and Afghan parents, language and mother-tongue related issues and the situation of Afghan mothers on maternity leave emerged as the three themes to focus on when it comes to further work. Low proficiency in Norwegian as a second language among the Afghan parents combined with an inadequate access to interpreters and / or bilingual personnel was clearly regarded as an obstacle for good communication between kindergarten and the parents about the child's wellbeing, learning and development. The pilot project also revealed low degree of kindergarten attendance by particularly the youngest Afghan children in the communities visited. These tendencies and findings should be further investigated in a future main project.

Key words: Afghans, Refugees, Early childhood education, Integration politics and practices, Norwegian Kindergarten Act, National Curriculum Plan for kindergartens, Second language learning, Mother Tongue learning, Norwegian as a second language, Parenting in minority context, Professional cultural awareness.

Table of contents

Preface	5
1 Introduction	7
2 Immigration in Norway	11
2.1 Historical and political development of the immigration field in Norway.....	11
2.1.1 Post War period.....	11
2.1.2 Increase in labour immigration after 1968 and the 1975 temporary stop on immigration.....	11
2.1.3 Family-related migration in the 1970s and 1980s.....	13
2.1.4 “The new immigration” of the New Millennium.....	14
2.2 Changing immigration and integration policies since the 70’ies: an overview of concepts, perspectives and political ideas	17
2.2.1 Models of integration	17
2.2.2 The municipality's obligations	21
2.2.3 Immigrant groups	23
3 Early childhood education in Norway	25
3.1 Context and legal framework	25
4 Research questions and methods	29
4.1 Research questions	29
4.2 Methods	29
4.2.1 Literature review	29
4.2.2 Statistics	29
4.2.3 Qualitative interviews	30
4.2.4 Workshop	31
5 Afghan immigration to Norway	33
5.1.1 History and relevant data.....	33

5.1.2	A majority of refugees and asylum seekers	35
5.1.3	Where are Afghans settled?.....	36
5.1.4	Afghans in reception centres for asylum seekers	38
5.1.5	Dale in Sandnes: the largest reception centre for asylum seekers.....	39
5.2	Conclusion.....	40
6	Literature review	41
6.1	Official publications – issues addressed.....	41
6.1.1	Marriage and ties of loyalty	43
6.1.2	Language training and work qualification	43
6.1.3	Political and religious organization.....	43
6.2	Publications from research institutions (reports) – issues addressed	45
6.3	Other publications – issues addressed	50
6.3.1	The situation in centres for asylum seekers	50
6.3.2	Diasporas and Norwegian foreign policy.....	50
6.3.3	Afghan non-accompanied minors	50
6.3.4	Afghan families	51
6.4	Conclusion.....	52
7	The Afghan community in Southern Rogaland	53
7.1	Non-Afghan Organizations working with Afghans.....	53
7.1.1	Selvhjelp for innvandrere og flyktninger (SEIF)	53
7.1.2	Kristent interkulturelt arbeid (KIA)	53
7.1.3	The organizations’ contact with the Afghan community.....	53
7.2	Afghan organizations in Rogaland	55
7.2.1	Andishe Sabz.....	56
7.2.2	Afghansk forening.....	57
7.2.3	Afghansk sosial-kulturelle forening i Rogaland.....	57
7.2.4	Afghansk kvinnegruppe	58

7.2.5	Afghansk bistandsorganisasjon	58
7.3	Conclusion	59
8	Kindergartens with Afghan children in two municipalities in Rogaland – an overview	61
8.1	The kindergartens in the municipality of Havlandet	61
8.2	The kindergartens in the municipality of Stavanger.....	62
8.3	How the kindergartens cope with socio-cultural differences	66
8.3.1	Language training and social skills	66
8.3.2	Working with and valuing difference.....	68
8.3.3	Working with parents – parenting and secondary socialization.....	69
8.3.4	Integrated, but still with language challenges	70
9	Afghan families and their experiences with Norwegian kindergartens	73
9.1	The Afghan families interviewed: main characteristics	73
9.2	From Kabul to Hillevåg: different kindergartens, different experiences.....	74
9.2.1	Who took care of the children before leaving for Europe?	74
9.2.2	Experiences from other European countries	74
9.2.3	At the reception centre	75
9.2.4	While being “settled”	76
9.3	General thoughts on the Norwegian kindergarten.....	78
9.3.1	General thoughts on Norway.....	78
9.3.2	Thoughts on cultural differences.....	79
9.3.3	Thoughts on mother tongue education	83
9.3.4	Other aspects which are found challenging.....	85
10	The encounter with Afghan families as experienced by the kindergarten personnel	87
10.1	The experiences of the kindergarten personnel	87

10.1.1	Language and social skills.....	87
10.1.2	Other issues	90
10.1.3	General remarks from the Johannes Introduction Centre.....	94
10.2	Discussion.....	95
10.2.1	A need for more cultural awareness?	95
10.2.2	More mother tongue support	95
10.2.3	Vulnerability of the Afghan refugees	96
10.2.4	Conflicts and cultural differences	96
11	Workshop for presenting and discussing preliminary findings	99
11.1	What came up?	99
12	Conclusion	101
13	Bibliography	103
14	Websites	106
15	Annex: Interview guides	107
15.1	Interview guide 1 – Afghan families	107
15.2	Interview guide 2 – Kindergarten personnel	109
15.3	Interview guide 3 – Key informants from humanitarian/charity/social institutions	111
15.4	Interview guide 4 – Key informants from the Afghan community	112
15.5	Interview guide 5 - Administrative personnel	113

Preface

In May 2011 representatives from the Aga Khan Foundation in the UK (AKF) and Centre for Intercultural Communication (SIK) met in Stavanger to discuss the possibility of working together to share and develop new knowledge and improve professional practice within the field of early childhood education, and in particular to focus on the encounter between early childhood education in Norway and Afghan parents and children. During the visit in Stavanger, the representatives of AKF also met with other potential partner organizations in this region and had conversations with, among others, leaders at Johannes Educational Centre (JLS), researchers at the University of Stavanger (UiS) and the director of the School of Mission and Theology in Stavanger (MHS).

The outcome of these conversations was an agreement between SIK and Aga Khan Foundation in the UK to engage in a pilot project together with the aim of defining project goals, single out research questions and propose an appropriate methodological approach for a later main research and development project within this field. The shared aspiration was that through this collaborative work, the experience of Afghan heritage children and their families being participants in the Norwegian kindergarten is improved as a result of the identification of any barriers and obstacles and practical solutions developed and tested. The common understanding was that this is likely to involve equipping the early years workforce with skills, modes of work or techniques for working with Afghan heritage children and their families specifically. It was expected that this will have relevance for working with other migrant heritage children as well. A key principle was that the identification of barriers and solutions was to be grounded in the experiences and preferences of Afghan families and not imposed or presumed.

As the pilot project now has come to a conclusion, SIK has the pleasure of presenting this report on the work done and new knowledge and insights reached.

With this final, published document from the pilot project we want to express our thanks to the Aga Khan Foundation for their invitation to cooperate with them and for their kind funding of this research. It has been a great pleasure for us to carry out the work and particularly to collaborate so closely with Director Anne Harrop throughout the various stages of the project. We are very grateful for all the important information and all the good ideas and perspectives she has shared with us during the whole process.

The situation of the Afghan children and parents encountering the Norwegian early age education system has been a very interesting field of research for SIK and we would certainly like to continue this work and develop it further as a field of research and development in close cooperation with Aga Khan Foundation. However, concerning this report, the thoughts, views and research results presented here, as well as attributions to informants and respondents, remains the full responsibility of the authors and SIK as publishing institution.

We would also like to express our gratitude to all the Afghan families and all the kindergarten personnel and administrative staff who have been so kind to share their views and experiences with us in visits, interviews and seminar. Likewise we want to thank the representatives of the Norwegian and Afghan organizations who work with and for the Afghan community in our region. In addition to the great social, cultural and humanitarian work they carry out on a regular and largely voluntary basis among Afghan families, they have been a great help to us in our project both as informants and as gate-openers into the Afghan exile community. Thank you so much for your trust, kindness and hospitality and for the time you have spent with us in interviews, meetings and conversations!

During the last two months of the pilot project, our fellow researcher Sigurd Haus at SIK has played an important role in the process of preparing the original report made for restricted circulation only, to this open access publication in the SIK report series. We are most thankful for his important and time-consuming work. Finally we want to thank our colleagues and co-authors Oleksandr Ryndyk and Audhild Steinnes for their most valued contributions both as authors of subsection 2.1 (Ryndyk) and subsection 7.1 (Steinnes) and in carrying out the fieldwork.

Please note that in order to protect our sources, we have chosen to replace most of the informants' real names with fictitious ones and also to change characteristics of children and parents referred to, names of kindergartens, local communities etc.

SIK, May 2013

Øystein Lund Johannessen

Gunhild Odden

1 Introduction

If we didn't try to teach our children our language, our religion, our ideas about the good life, our values norms about right and wrong, they would never get the opportunity to choose between our ways as Afghans and some of the dominant ways of the Norwegian society when they grow up, would they? So therefore we have made this association for our children to experience and learn our culture (Afghan father).

This comment from an Afghan father, we think, goes right to the core of the issue of socialization and integration in a new country.

When Afghans refugees cross the border to Norway they come to a society which in very many respects is different from the one they left behind. One of the characteristics they very soon will become aware of is the presence and influence of public services and institutions in almost every aspect of their lives – first when they get introduced to the immigration authorities and later when they eventually get their residence permit and get settled in a local community.

The kindergarten is one of these state institutions that Afghan parents and children soon may get acquainted with – many during the period of applying for asylum when they stay in one of the regional reception centres somewhere in Norway. Although sometimes the kindergartens there are not of the same kind as the ones they will meet later when permanently settled, they will be more or less based on the same idea – a place to meet other children, to play and learn under the direction and surveillance of professional pedagogues who are specialized in early childhood pedagogy.

Over the years, SIK researchers have been working with many different groups of professionals in different public sectors within the Norwegian welfare state. But it was first in 2009 when the MIKS¹ project started up in collaboration with the University of Stavanger and Johannes Educational Centre that we got the opportunity to work with early childhood pedagogues and kindergarten personnel over a longer period of time.²

This experience and the newly developed professional relationship with the pedagogues and mother tongue assistants at Johannes introduction centre for children of immigrants and refugees (*Johannes introduction kindergarten, JIK*), turned out to be very valuable when we a

¹ MIKS is the acronym for *Mangfold, inkludering og kulturelt samspill* (English: *Diversity, inclusion and cultural interaction*)

² For more information concerning this project, see Haus (2001) and the project's webpage <http://www.sik.no/project?66>

few months later were contacted by the Aga Khan Foundation in UK about a possible collaboration about early childhood education in a minority – majority context. The introduction centre for pre-school children at Johannes Educational Centre has been an important contact and collaborator in this project from the very beginning. The early childhood pedagogues who work there not only know the kindergartens in Stavanger well, they are also working on a daily basis with parents and children of foreign backgrounds, often from the very first months of their new life in Norway. The pedagogues all have further education within the fields of multicultural education, mother tongue and second language learning or other relevant specializations, and they are well acquainted with the most recent developments within the field of early childhood and multicultural education on the national level. In addition they work in close cooperation with the kindergarten administration in Stavanger about policy development in the field of mother tongue and second language learning and extra support for bilingual children in early childhood.

We wanted to mention this local and immediate context for starting to work on this project about Afghans and early childhood education, just to give the reader an idea about the depths and the widths of the professional field we connect to when we start looking into the (assumed) cultural encounter between kindergarten professionals and Afghans. Firstly, as already mentioned, the field has become quite professionalized over the last decades. The politics of a systematic monitoring of every child's linguistic, intellectual and social development and the new principles of early intervention in child care, also leads to an increased focus on the situation of bilingual children and children with ethnic minority backgrounds. Since going to kindergarten from the age of one has become a right for all residents (New kindergarten act, Ministry of education 2005), and consequently a very high percentage of children growing up in Norway today will have this experience, more and more children of minority backgrounds will also find their way to this educational institution.

The importance of the kindergarten as a place for language development, stimulating all kinds of learning, socialization and networking has particularly been mentioned in connection with ethnic minorities, their integration and second language acquisition.

To establish a good platform and a common base for transmission of values, norms and ways of being together and interacting while staying in the kindergarten, is probably more difficult than it used to be just a few generations ago. Although the national curricula and standards set for teaching and learning in kindergartens never became as explicitly confessional as in primary and secondary school until a few years ago, the majority culture as a somewhat

secularized form of Norwegian Christian culture, was hardly questioned as a common value platform and common reference for most of its activities. Today this is different, and the kindergarten as well as primary and secondary school have adapted to a multicultural and multi faith social reality. In a state kindergarten today, the personnel together with the parent representatives have to create their pedagogical platform in a way that includes both humanist-ethicists, atheists, Christians and Muslims of different traditions, as well as members of other religious communities. It is in this rather complex situation we have met the Afghan families and the pedagogical personnel - to talk about their experience with the encounter and their thoughts about upbringing and socialization, and learning within the context of a state-owned or state-financed pedagogical institution.

The general aim of the pilot project was to carry out a mapping and review of current knowledge and experience concerning Afghans and education in Norway, with a particular focus on the encounter between Afghan children and families and the early childhood educational system in the south-western part of Norway. A more specific goal was to identify the experiences and needs of Afghan children, their families and the Afghan communities in relation to early years education and primary schools in the area selected for investigation - regions, municipalities, local communities, catchments areas etc. Finally, the project aimed at capturing the knowledge and views of institutions and professionals providing early years services, such as multifunctional educational centres, kindergartens, primary schools and local administrations.

The way we proceeded was to carry out interviews with Afghan heritage families, early years workforce and others working with Afghans, while focusing on their current experiences, understandings and presumptions.

Doing this, we also investigated and evaluated the possibilities to develop a participatory research project focusing on Afghan children and early years education in Norway and to identify potential other programmes to be considered.

Based on the knowledge gained in the pilot project, which is documented in this report, our plan is to develop a research project following an action research or similar research design appropriate to the task at hand. The aim of this new project will mainly be to develop strategies and materials to overcome barriers and obstacles in access to early years services through dialogue between Afghan heritage parents and early childhood professionals.

This report falls in three main parts, where the first contains chapters that deal with the broader context for the encounter between Afghan children, parents and the kindergarten, including chapters about the immigration and integration policies and the legal framework for early age education in the public sector. The second part presents the findings from our empirical research in the Afghan community in the region of southern Rogaland and with kindergarten personnel and administrative personnel in selected municipalities. The third and final part of the report contains the conclusions and recommendations for further work and as such sums up the pilot project.

2 Immigration in Norway

2.1 Historical and political development of the immigration field in Norway

In this section we aim at showing how the economic situation and, consequently, public discourse in Norway have influenced immigration patterns, immigration policy, and immigrants integration in Norway after the end of the World War II until today.

2.1.1 Post War period

During the first half of the 20th century the share of foreign-born population in Norway had been constantly declining before it began to increase again after 1950 (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli, 2008: 178³). There were 46 542 foreign-born persons in the country in 1950, around 60 000 in 1960 and 75 738 in 1970. Statistically speaking, immigration to Norway during the first two decades after the end of the World War II can be regarded as insignificant. Compared to other Western European economies which attracted millions of immigrant “guest workers,” Norway seemed to be largely unaffected by these labour movements.

While insignificant in terms of immigration numbers, the post-war period in Norway distinctly shaped the country’s ideological framework of its immigration system of the years to come. Thus, it placed Norway on the Western side of the Cold War world divide and opened its economy for foreign capital and immigrant labour.

2.1.2 Increase in labour immigration after 1968 and the 1975 temporary stop on immigration

The year 1968 marked an important change, as for the first time after many decades Norway became a net-immigration country. Post-war growth in Europe, and in Norway in particular, created a huge demand for extra labour. The number of work permits issued to foreigners in Norway increased on average from 5 000 to 9 000 with just 25 applications being turned down per year from 1960 to 1967 (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli, 2008 : 188). In 1969, with an approval from LO (The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions), Parliament discussed the first white paper on the labour market policy, establishing free immigration to Norway. Despite the favourable market conjuncture, it seemed that not so many guest workers wished

³ Here and after, if not indicated otherwise, references are made to Brochmann, Grete and Kjeldstadli, Knut (2008), *A history of immigration: the case of Norway 900-2000*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.

to come to Norway. The great majority of those who came to Norway constituted citizens of other OECD countries, with Danes and Finns dominating the inflow. In addition, around 3 000 from Southern Europe (from Yugoslavia, Italy, and Spain) and about 2 000 from developing countries in Asia, Latin America, and Africa lived in Norway by 1970 (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli, 2008 : 189). In Norway the labour migrants were expected to stay only temporarily as “guest labourers” or “foreign workers” (Olwig, 2011 : 183). Therefore very little debate about their integration into the major society took place.

At the end of 1960s the labour demand in other European countries, formerly more attractive for labour migrants, was declining and immigration policies became tighter. Instead, Norway had just discovered its rich oil reserves, and impressive amounts of capital and human expertise were to be invested in this new growing sector. As a result, Norway experienced the effect of changing migration patterns on the continent with an increasing inflow of labour migrants from non-OECD countries, with Pakistan on the top of the list (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008: 193). Thus, 260 Turks, 434 Moroccans and 212 migrants from India and Pakistan constituted 40 per cent of all immigrants from developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America living and working in Norway in 1970.

The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Union expressed its concerns about possible social dumping in a range of industries, as foreign workers could be exploited and paid less by some employers. It demanded that foreign workers should have the same salary as Norwegians, be entitled to language training, and must have prearranged work contracts before having residence permits issued (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008: 194). Other preoccupying issues were poor living conditions, low education and lack of proficiency in Norwegian language among foreign workers.

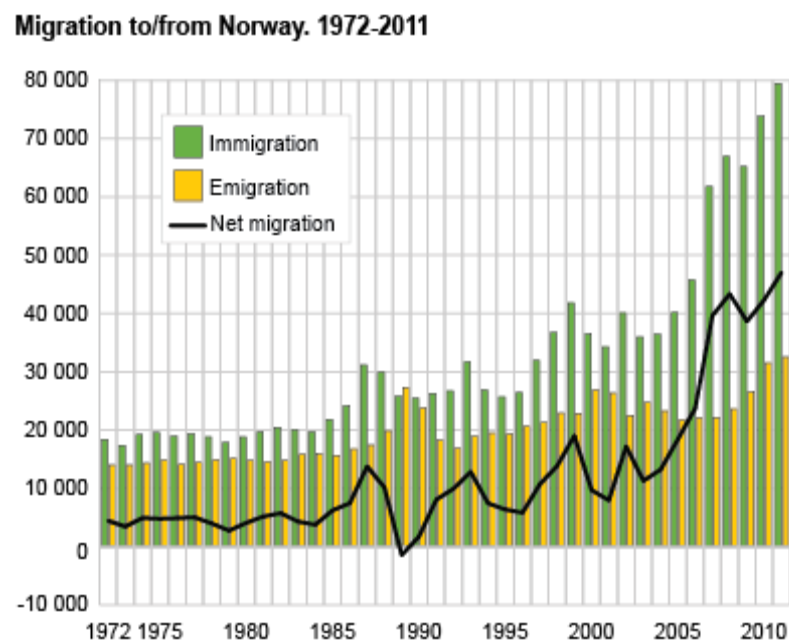
The migration situation in other Western European economies, especially in Denmark and Sweden, greatly influenced the public discourse on immigration in Norway. Thus, concerns about “flooding” Norway with unskilled low-educated foreign workers arose when Denmark started to introduce some restrictions for its immigration policy already in 1969. Secondly, from 1 January 1970 a prearranged contract became mandatory in Denmark, and Norway followed suit the same year. Finally, Denmark introduced a full immigration stop from 5 November 1970, intensifying the anxieties of the Norwegian population and media that the “worst and least educated” foreign workers would leave Denmark for Norway (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008: 196). The debates on restrictions culminated in February 1975 when

Parliament endorsed the stop to the temporary immigration (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008: 200).

2.1.3 Family-related migration in the 1970s and 1980s

It is believed that already in 1975 the widely used expression “the foreign worker problem” was associated among the wider Norwegian society with “the Pakistani problem” since they significantly outnumbered other foreign workers with background in developing countries (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008: 203).

Despite the “full” immigration stop in 1975, immigration to Norway did not stop since dispensations worked as “holes in the fence”.



Source: © Statistics Norway

Along with labour immigrants, which now had to meet a range of restrictive requirements (same salary level and working conditions, minimum contract duration of one year, sufficient literacy), entries on family grounds were on the rise. Many of those single foreign male workers who had come before the 1975 immigration stop now aimed at bringing their families to Norway. Based on human rights grounds, family members of refugees and foreigners married to Norwegians were also granted the right to immigrate and settle with their families in Norway (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008: 206). Furthermore, in addition to actual family reunifications the right of “family reunification” also meant new family establishments, in cases when a resident wanted to marry a foreign person after having settled in Norway. This

opened a door for further family immigration to Norway. After a while, a series of new restrictions were imposed on family immigration as well. It included introductions of visas for the most concerned countries, requirements for sufficient income and appropriate housing conditions for persons aiming at bringing their families etc.

By the mid-1990s the share of immigrants in Norwegian populations increased to 5.1% with two areas – Oslo and parts of Finnmark up in the north – having the highest shares – between 10% and 16% (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008: 245).

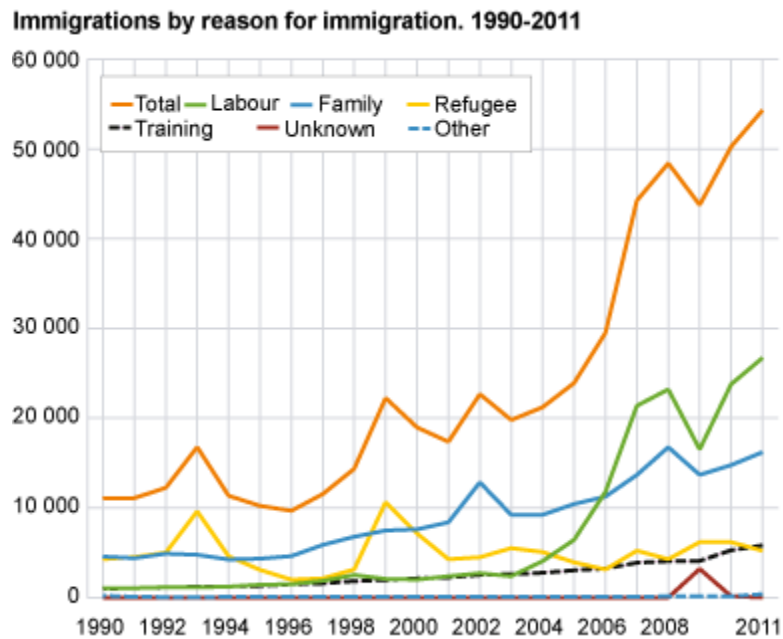
2.1.4 “The new immigration” of the New Millennium

By the late 1990s it was realized that the Norwegian economy was in great need of additional labour supply. For the first time after the 1975 “full stop” on immigration, immigrants began to be perceived as possible contributors to the welfare system, and not just consumers of it. Public discourse on immigration had become more positive (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008: 275).

This change of “mood” can be accounted for by two factors. Firstly, the boosting Norwegian economy of the late 1990s created higher demand for labour that could not be satisfied by higher labour market participation rates among women and youth. Secondly, political parties finally realized that immigrants constituted a considerable share of the electorate, especially in the Oslo area. As a result, clearly overrepresented, eight politicians with immigrant background, seven of whom were Pakistanis, were elected to the City Council of Oslo in the local elections of 2011 (Brochmann and Kjeldstadli 2008: 276). In addition, concerns over negative structural changes in the demographic composition of the Norwegian population further contributed to a more positive perspective on immigrants, especially labour immigrants in demand.

Hence, labour migration was on the rise from the beginning of the New Millennium. Following the EU enlargement in CEE in 2004, labour immigration skyrocketed with Polish labour migrants dominating the flows. Thus, in 2006 immigration from Poland (7 401) for the first time outnumbered⁴ the Swedish (5 206) and was almost twice as big as the total immigration from the whole of Africa (7 401 vs. 3 746). Since then Poland has been the major country sending migrants to Norway.

⁴ SSB: http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/02/20/innvutv_en/tab-2012-05-11-03-en.html



Source: © Statistics Norway, 2012

The global financial and economic crisis of 2008-2009 clearly left a mark on the labour immigration to Norway, as the country's construction industry experienced a slowdown. But it did not change it radically: after a relative decrease in the number of new arrivals in 2008 and 2009, labour migration has again been on the rise from 2010 and onwards. For instance, in 2011 the flow of migration from Poland outnumbered the inflow of all immigrants coming from Asia (12 615 vs. 12 502). In terms of immigrants stock, Polish citizens have been the biggest immigrant community in Norway since 2009. As of 1 January 2012, there were 66 639 Polish citizens living in Norway, accounting for 16.4% of all foreign citizens residing in the country⁵. What the Crisis in Europe actually did, was to redirect many of the continent's labour flows to the better-off Scandinavian economies, Norway became the main destination.

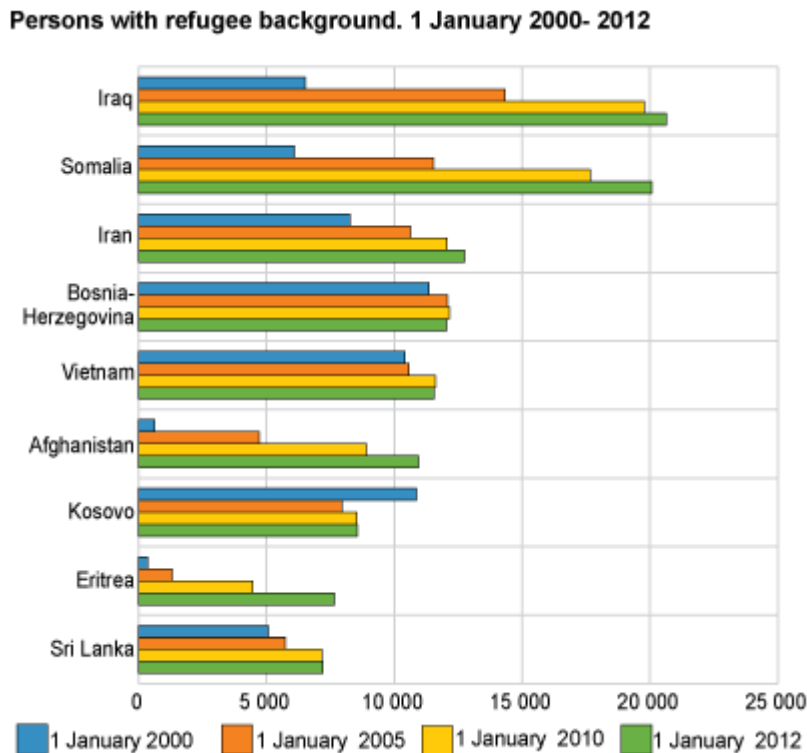
With regard to the humanitarian immigrants, a total of 163 500 persons with a refugee background⁶ were living in Norway as of 1 January 2012. This constituted about 30% of all immigrants living in the country⁷. Interestingly, 27% of them lived in Oslo county and 63% held Norwegian citizenship. In 2011, as well as in 2010, persons with a refugee background from Eritrea, Somalia and Afghanistan showed the strongest growth. Nevertheless, the two

⁵ SSB: http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/01/10/folkemengde_en/tab-2012-03-14-33-en.html

⁶ The definition "person with a refugee background" refers to persons resident in Norway who have come to Norway because of flight (incl. family). Children born in Norway to persons with a refugee background are not included.

⁷ SSB: http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/02/01/10/flyktninger_en/

biggest groups of persons with a refugee background were Iraqis (20 600 or 12.6% of all) and Somalis (20 100 or 12.3% of all)⁸.

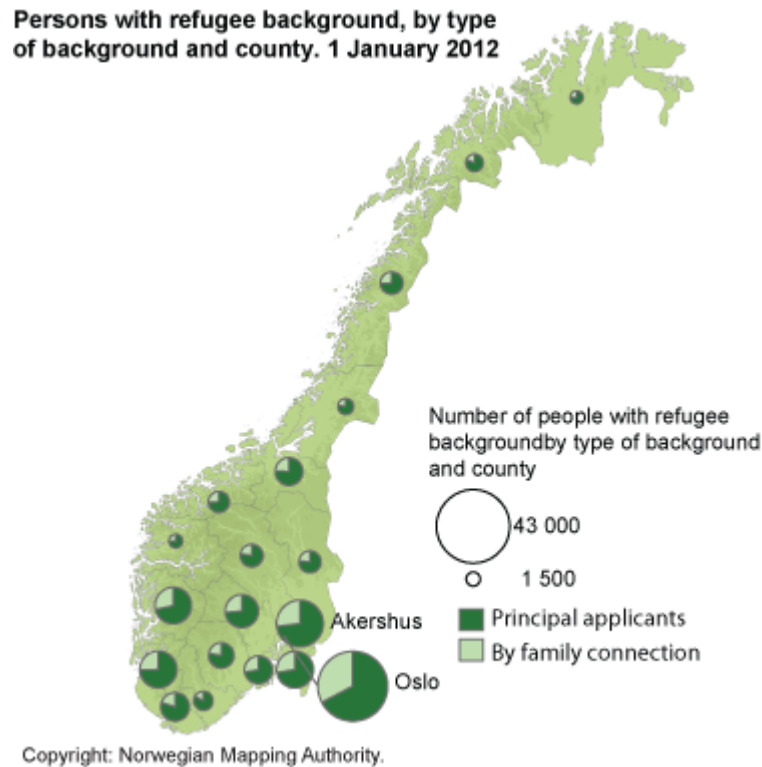


Source: © Statistics Norway, 2012

With respect to asylum seekers and refugees, it is commonly accepted that Norwegian policies have become stricter. More forced returns have taken place in the last years. When compared to 2010, there were 1000 less immigrants⁹ who came to Norway in 2011 due to flight (5221 in 2011 vs. 6172 in 2010). It might be accounted for by Norway's tighter refugee admission policies and stricter border control both at the immediate borders and at the diplomatic missions abroad (refusals at the embassies, consulates etc.).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ SSB: http://www.ssb.no/vis/english/subjects/02/01/10/innvgrunn_en/main.html



Source: © Statistics Norway, 2012

By 1 January 2012, people with immigrant background¹⁰ constituted 655 000 persons or 13.1% of Norway's population. They are represented in all municipalities throughout the country, but Oslo holds the largest proportion with 23% of all. The majority of immigrants come from Poland, Sweden, Germany, and Lithuania¹¹.

2.2 Changing immigration and integration policies since the 70'ies: an overview of concepts, perspectives and political ideas

A country may relate to immigrants in different ways. In this subsection we shortly discuss some aspects of the Norwegian immigration policy and how it has changed over time.

2.2.1 Models of integration

The relationship between majority and minority in a society can range from full equality to a strong suppression and can be described in many ways. Often one distinguishes between

¹⁰ I migrants and Norwegian-born persons with immigrant parents

¹¹ SSB: http://www.ssb.no/english/subjects/00/00/10/innvandring_en/

assimilation, segregation and integration as three main forms of such relationships. These concepts, together with the concept of equality, have been key concepts in Norwegian immigration debate over the years.

If assimilation is the preferred type of relationship – as seen either from the perspective of the minority group or the authorities – one will seek to achieve that immigrants become as similar as possible to the majority population and the minority culture is lost or ceases to be different in most aspects from the dominant or majority culture. Segregation means separation between groups, and minorities will usually have little contact with the majority culture. If integration is the goal, one will seek to achieve that immigrants as a group retain their culture while each individual member continues to be respected and recognized as individual citizens with full rights and obligations to participate on an equal basis in the society.

The relationship between the majority and the minority can also be described as different forms of pluralism (Burtonwood 1986; Crittenden 1992, ref in NOU 1995:12). The most oppressive form of pluralism is apartheid pluralism. It is characterized by segregation. Underground pluralism develops in a political landscape of intolerant, hard assimilation and discrimination, while individual pluralism (limited pluralism) develops in a political situation characterized by a softer form of assimilation. Where there is group pluralism (full pluralism) the majority and minorities live together on equal terms with equal rights and opportunities for participation and access to public resources.

When it is claimed that the Norwegian policy is characterized by equality, this must not be interpreted as a policy aiming at assimilation, and neither apartheid pluralism nor underground pluralism are considered an option as official Norwegian policy. Consequently, only individual pluralism and group pluralism are being discussed. In the discussion about education in the plural society in the government report NOU 1995:12, *Education in a multicultural Norway*, it was concluded that only group pluralism is a navigable route to follow in the education sector. This conclusion was in line with the commitment to integration that had already been expressed since the beginning of the 1970s, including in NOU 1973:17, *Immigration*. In that government report integration was defined as follows:

Integration is a much weaker form of incorporation in society than assimilation. With integration the committee understands that a person coming from another country to live in Norway will be recognized as a functional part of society without necessarily being similar to the community members at large. He may retain his national identity, his own language, his close links with the home country and to some extent his homeland's customs and way of

life. He can stay in the country without wanting to settle here for good, and he may wish that his children will return to his home country. Nevertheless, he may be a functional part of society and find his place in it (NOU 1973: 17).

This understanding of the integration concept came to govern both the thinking and the public discourse on immigration for decades. For example, we can recognize it as a more collectively oriented understanding presented in NOU 1986:8 *Refugees' adaptation to the Norwegian society*:

Integration on the other hand [i.e. unlike assimilation - our note] usually means that a "foreign" group become a functional part of the host society, but without losing its cultural or ethnic identity.

By and large a group plural model like this has dominated the Norwegian immigration policy over the last decades. As a result, strengthening of the community spirit of minority groups has been emphasized. In the 2000's the Norwegian immigration policy *changed*: with its white paper "*Diversity through inclusion and participation. Responsibility and freedom*", the government presented a clearer individual perspective of integration and integration policies than previously. Here a greater emphasis was put on the individual's ability to make independent choices and the right to choose his or her way of life and to think alternatively and independently of the dominant thinking in society, or for that matter, of a strong guidance from ones minority community. In that sense, this white paper can be said to promote an individual perspective on diversity, but without completely abolishing the group pluralist ideal that clearly was promoted in the late 70's and throughout the 80's [White paper 74 (1979-80), "*About immigrants in Norway*" and NOU 1986: 8, "*Refugees' adaptation to the Norwegian society.*"]

White paper no. 49 (2003-2004) distinguishes between "integration policy and a policy of diversity through inclusion and participation", and where "integration policy" from now on shall apply to people who *have* immigrated, and to the prerequisites for immigrants to be introduced and included in the new society and for being capable of supporting themselves in the greatest possible degree. In that sense it is "...no longer appropriate to refer to children and young people who have grown up in Norway as 'integrated or not', as if they are foreigners who have recently immigrated and are to become incorporated into the new society" [White paper No. 49 (2003-2004), p 12]. The white paper instead introduces the concepts inclusion and participation as central to a broader diversity policy. From the outset, it includes:

....everyone in the society, majority as well as minority, newcomers as well as more established immigrants. The goal is to provide all citizens, regardless of background, religion or origin, equal opportunities to make independent choices for how they want to organize their lives" (op.cit.).

It is interesting to note how the new integration policy retrieves the term inclusion from pedagogy and particularly from special education in order to promote and give legitimacy to a more distinct individual perspective in government integration politics and practice. This is in accordance with an accepted practice in the Norwegian pedagogical discourse to distinguish between a more traditional integration perspective and a newer, more radical inclusion perspective. While the integration term in the Norwegian educational discourse tends to emphasize adaptation and adjustment of the individual learners prerequisites, and preferably by compensating for differences in relation to the majority norm, the inclusion term gives a stronger emphasis on adjusting environmental and system factors so as to allow for a wider range of individual differences (Engen and Kulbrandstad 2004: 271).

The Stoltenberg Government's action plan for 2007 (Appendix to Proposition to Parliament no. 1, 2006-2007) takes the white paper no. 49 (2003-2004) as its point of departure the principle of equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all citizens regardless of ethnic background, gender, religion, sexual orientation or physical ability. But it also emphasizes that the policy in this area shall be based on the fundamental values of equality, solidarity, justice and an equal and just distribution. This can be seen as moderating the individual pluralism perspective promoted in white paper nr. 49. In practical politics, nonetheless, the objective of facilitating immigrants' possibility to as quickly as possible be able to contribute with their resources on the labour market and in society was continued. The Introduction program for new immigrants and the "right and obligation to learn Norwegian" continued to be a key tool in the integration policy.

Further, a fast and good settlement of refugees in a municipality and a local community is also given a high priority. The action plan also looks at four areas considered to be crucial to success in the inclusion work. These are work, upbringing, education and language, equality and participation. In the process of coining a policy for these four main themes within the various policy areas, seven different ministries were involved, and the action plan has now been cycled in four budget periods since 2007. For each period, different areas and topics have been given a particular emphasis, specifying measures and criteria for achievement.

It is also worth mentioning that the main tool employed by Norwegian authorities to promote immigrants integration has been a universal, extensive introduction programme¹² that is compulsory to refugees if they wish to receive financial support. The new law defining the framework for an introduction programme and Norwegian language training for newly arrived immigrants (the Introduction Act) was introduced in 2003. Only refugees and immigrants accepted on humanitarian terms according to international agreements are entitled to this programme. Other categories of migrants (labour, asylum seekers etc.) are not entitled to participate free of cost. An exception is people married to Norwegian citizens who do qualify for state-sponsored language training. According to Karen F. Olwig, a common experience has been that the Norwegian welfare system has been “seeking to shape these population groups – socially, culturally, physically and psychologically – according to Scandinavian norms” (Olwig 2011 : 185). Olwig concludes that the Scandinavian welfare system, and the Norwegian in particular, has been lacking an understanding of the meaning a family may have for individual refugees, and this deficiency has sometimes been causing serious barriers for successful immigrants integration (Olwig 2011 : 193).

2.2.2 The municipality's obligations

It is the public servant working in any of the above mentioned service sectors in the municipality who encounter immigrants and who interacts with them in everyday life situations. Much of the policy towards immigrants is about offering measures that will eventually qualify them for work. Since most labour migrants already are working, they are not in the same need for qualifying measures as refugees and other groups of migrants (St. Meld. Nr. 18, 2007-2008)¹³, and there are no special arrangements for labour migrants. On the other hand, like the rest of the population, they are subject to general arrangements, such as health care, schools and kindergartens (*ibid.*). Services like these are to a great extent offered by municipalities. Local authorities will also have to relate to immigration and inclusion in other areas, such as infrastructure planning, housing arrangements and development of new residential areas and the like.

Previously, the municipalities' responsibility for immigrants was regulated by the Social Care Act (1964) and the Social Services Act (1991). Compared with other countries, the field of social service in Norway is characterized by local autonomy, extensive options for

¹² <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-20030704-080-eng.pdf>

¹³ White paper no. 18, 2007-2008, Ministry of Labour and Inclusion

intervention on the part of the social worker, and payment of social benefits highly influenced by professional judgment (Hove, 2005, cited in Djuve 2011). This gives each municipality and public servant a great influence over design, application and extension of the services given, and opens up for a great variation between municipalities in terms of the integration efforts they actually make (Djuve 2011).

The law on the introduction program and language learning for immigrants (already mentioned in 2.1.1) was enacted in 2002 (Lov om introduksjonsordningen 2003)¹⁴. This law represented standardization of the local integration efforts, and to such an extent that it was characterized as a reform of the whole Norwegian integration policy (Rundskriv H-20/05)¹⁵. Paradoxically enough, one might say, since standardization coincided with the political debate going more in the direction of individual pluralism. Implementation of the law meant big changes for the municipalities, and therefore several pilot projects were conducted before it was affected. The pilots revealed many implementation problems. The municipalities and the state agencies did for example work differently, with the consequence that there were significant cooperation problems (Djuve et al 2001). There was also limited access to relevant expertise and other resources, the anchoring in the local political institutions varied from municipality to municipality, and many officials in the field were sceptical (ibid.).

The act requires all municipalities to offer newly arrived immigrants an introduction program. For the immigrants, the introductory program is both a right and an obligation. They shall have an offer within three months after settlement, they get an “introduction benefit” for participating and they shall have a contact person in the community to ensure follow-up. Invalid absence may be penalized financially. The program will a) provide basic skills in Norwegian, b) provide basic insight into Norwegian society and c) prepare for participation in work life (§ 4). The program shall be full time for two years, and it could be extended to three years if there are special reasons for doing so. The educational needs and relevant measures for each participant shall be documented in an individual plan. Whether the program shall be given for three years and what is considered necessary and appropriate measures, are questions that must be considered in each case. Thus, there is room for professional judgment

¹⁴ Act 2003-07-04 no 80: Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskoppl ring for nyankomne innvandrere (introduksjonsloven). (“Act on the Introductory program and learning of Norwegian as a second language for newly arrived immigrants”).

¹⁵ (Circular H -20/05 to “Act on the Introductory program and learning of Norwegian as a second language for newly arrived immigrants”).

in the integration work, and this gives reasons to expect differences in the way integration as a public task is being practiced from municipality to municipality.

Roughly speaking, in the Norwegian immigration discourse, public sector is the key player. It is the government's representatives in municipalities and communities with their personnel and their professional groups which emerge as the active part in the process where immigrants, refugees and other foreigners with legal residence in Norway are being actively incorporated into society. Those who are to be integrated are in turn objects of government efforts. They have constituted a more passive recipient side, and have rarely been described as a subject – an autonomous, rational and competent actor with his or her own strategy for inclusion. This applies regardless of whether the immigrants described are ethnically and linguistically defined groups, interest groups such as refugee associations, political liberation organizations or religious communities, different types of family and kinship groups or more seldom; individuals.

Such representations hardly provide an adequate picture of the Norwegian plural reality, and the immigrants themselves and the people working with integration will always see a far more complex picture. Integration and participation comprises a great variety of choices. They may be conscious as well as unconscious, long-term strategic as well as spontaneous and situation-specific, and they may be carried out by all types of players at all levels. We may therefore ask whether and to what extent laws and policies manage to incorporate this diversity or whether they in fact presuppose a specific and rather rare type of (passive) receivers.

2.2.3 Immigrant groups

In the public debate, we often distinguish between labour migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These terms give some indication about the background and reason for coming to live in Norway. They are, however, rather big categories that reveal very little about the variety of immigrant groups. This diversity is partly presented in the statement of who is covered by the introductory program. From the outset, the introduction program targeted refugees who had obtained political asylum, persons with residence on humanitarian grounds, people with collective protection for a limited period of time and family members reunified with people in all these groups. In the summer of 2011, a re-enactment opened up for the municipalities to offer the introductory program also to immigrants or children of immigrants who have been victims of abuse in family relationships, for immigrant who have been forced to marry and for immigrants who after a divorce or broken partnership have got unreasonable

difficulties in returning to their home country because of the social and cultural conditions there.

Rights and responsibilities vary according to the formal status one has. It is reasonable to assume that the same applies to the need for services, meaning that they will vary according to both the status and working conditions. An important question is whether the services are adapted to the many different immigrant groups. Is the Norwegian integration policy flexible enough to address this great variety? Norway has traditionally been a homogenous society, and greater diversity in the population can be a challenge when the welfare state is being developed and redesigned to cope with this greater diversity. It is therefore relevant to ask the question what services are needed and how to ensure that services are utilized in the best possible way. This report sums up the findings on how the Afghans and particularly Afghan parents have experienced the encounter with early age education in Norway. We think the results of the research contribute to our knowledge about both the functioning and functionality of the immigration and integration services.

3 Early childhood education in Norway

This section will briefly identify some of the main characteristics of early childhood education in Norway, focusing specifically on the legal framework of it.

3.1 Context and legal framework

The Kindergarten Act - Act no. 64 of June 2005¹⁶ relating to Kindertartens was enacted on the first of January 2006. Since then all parent with a permanent stay in Norway have the right to a place in a kindergarten for their children under school age and from the year they turn one year (children who turn one year at latest by the 31 of August the year they apply for a place).

Kindertartens shall provide children under compulsory school age with good opportunities for development and activity in close understanding and collaboration with the children's homes. The kindertartens shall assist in giving the children an upbringing that accords with Christian values.

Owners of private kindertartens may in their statutes prescribe that the second paragraph shall not apply. Private kindertartens and kindertartens owned or run by parishes of the Norwegian State Church may incorporate in their statutes special provisions in regard to ideological aims.

To guarantee a minimum quality of the kindergarten as a pedagogical institution there are circulars from the Ministry of Education that specify the minimum personnel per department or group of children. For children aged 0 - 3 a group is set up with a maximum of nine children and three personnel of which one must have a higher education certificate as Early childhood pedagogue (Bachelor level) or equivalent. For children aged 3-6 a group is set up with a maximum of 18 children and with the same requirement for personnel. If one or more of the children have an individual special decision regarding the right to special needs education, this normally leads to a higher number of professional staff in the department.

A Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindertartens passed through the parliament in March 2006. The framework plan provides guidelines on the values, content and tasks of kindertartens.¹⁷ All kindertartens shall base their activities on the values established in the Kindergarten Act, and on the international conventions to which Norway is a signatory,

¹⁶ <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/doc/laws/Acts/kindergarten-act.html?id=115281>

¹⁷ <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/documents/legislation/regulations/2011/framework-plan-for-the-content-and-tasks.html?id=631906>

including the ILO's Convention no. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The aim of the framework plan is to give head teachers of kindergartens, pedagogical leaders and other staff a binding framework for the planning, implementation and assessment of the activities of kindergartens. The framework plan also provides information to parents, owners and supervisory authorities. The framework plan therefore aims at:

- Personnel at kindergartens, as a planning, documentation and assessment tool
- Parents/guardians, to provide an insight into the activities of kindergartens, and to allow participation and involvement in decision-making in accordance with Section 4 of the Kindergarten Act
- Owners of kindergartens, who can set out guidelines for local adaptations to the framework plan (Section 2), and who are responsible for individual kindergartens having the necessary frameworks
- Municipal authorities, who are responsible for monitoring whether kindergartens within their municipalities provide adequate pedagogical activities in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations (Section 16).

Regarding ethnic minorities in kindergartens, § 2 says:

The kindergarten shall take into consideration the child's age, level of functioning, gender, social, ethnic and cultural background, herein Sámi children's language and culture. (Kindergarten Act, Section 2, Content of kindergartens)

And in the Framework Plan, in section 2.4, it says:

Early experiences with peers are of great importance to children's ability to interact well, and this makes kindergartens important arenas for social development, learning, and the building of friendships. All children in kindergartens, regardless of age, gender, ethnic background and ability level must be given equal opportunities to participate in meaningful activities with their peer groups. The formation in kindergartens aims to ensure that children develop independence, as well as confidence in themselves as individuals and in their personal and cultural identities.

The Framework Plan also says that:

It is important that minority children are understood and get the opportunity to express themselves: Kindergartens must support them in their use of their mother tongue, whilst working actively to promote their Norwegian language skills. (section 2, 5)

In the government report 2010:7¹⁸, *Mangfold og mestring* (diversity and mastering – our translation) with the subtitle *multilingual children, adolescents and adults in the educational system* (our translation), one can read that to improve the comprehension- and ensure the skills of language among minority children, a separate state grant is given to municipalities ("Grants to improve the language understanding among minority language children in preschool"). The grant is a supplement to the municipality's own funds. The arrangement is awarded based on the number of minority language children who attend kindergarten. This arrangement is intended to help municipalities and owners of private kindergarten to be able to provide children from linguistic minorities a good and stimulating day care. The grant scheme is used both to finance bilingual assistants and Norwegian "language pedagogues" in the kindergarten, in addition to various language stimulating material. One has also made an effort to train more preschool teachers of multilingual background. Bilingual assistants employed on *earmarked* funds from the grant constituted in 2010 one percent of kindergarten staff on a national basis, according to the report from that same year.

Each municipality is supposed to adapt their special arrangements in this field to local needs and conditions. As a consequence the measures that are actually taken will vary between municipalities and kindergartens within the same region and nationally.

As can be seen in the above citations from the Framework plan for kindergartens and the government report, children from ethnic and linguistic minority backgrounds are both "seen" and included in the general guidelines for kindergarten personnel which focus on each individual child as a unique human being with its individual characteristics and needs and as a full member of a peer group which should be respected and included.

From this point of departure arises the need for a professional competence among kindergarten personnel which enable them to work with and value difference in a broad meaning of the term so that children with different backgrounds along many different dimensions (language, ethnicity, philosophy of life, disabilities, socio-economic background, household types etc.) are included in the group while developing self-esteem and individuality. And as the number of minority children in kindergartens has increased substantially in recent years, the focus on multicultural work and multilingual development has become particularly important.

¹⁸ <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/10797590/PDFS/NOU201020100007000DDDPDFS.pdf>

4 Research questions and methods

4.1 Research questions

The main research question for the pilot project can be summarized as follows: **what are the experiences of the Afghan community and kindergarten personnel concerning Afghan children and early childhood education in Norway?**

The pilot project also aimed at 1) undertaking a literature review in order to **identify what kind of literature exist on the topic**, and to 2) draw a quantitative picture of the Afghan community in order to answer the following: **what are the main socio-demographic characteristics of the Afghans in Norway?** The following section will describe how we methodologically proceeded.

4.2 Methods

4.2.1 Literature review

Concerning the literature review, we have tried to identify all literature dealing specifically with Afghans in Norway. Internet sources were useful. Some relevant sources were suggested to us by helpful colleagues but were not available online (i.e. master thesis on young Afghan asylum seekers). We are aware that we might not have been able to identify all the existing literature on the subject.

4.2.2 Statistics

In order to draw a quantitative picture of the main socio-demographic characteristics of the Afghans living in Norway we have mainly used available statistics from Statistic Norway (SSB) and the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). Most of the data presented was found online. For smaller scale data (i.e. how many Afghan children aged 0-6 do live in Stavanger and Havlandet¹⁹), we contacted SSB directly as such information is not available online. We have consistently tried to use the latest data available throughout. A third source is the municipalities of Stavanger and Havlandet who gave us the number of Afghan children in each of their public kindergarten.

¹⁹ Havlandet is a fictitious name that we have chosen to use for anonymity reasons.

4.2.3 Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews have been conducted with different groups of informants. These may be categorized as a) Non-Afghan organizations working with Afghans, b) Afghan organizations in Rogaland, c) Afghan families and d) kindergarten personnel. An adapted interview guide was elaborated for each category.

a) Non-Afghan organizations working with Afghans

In order to get a general picture on the Afghan community in Rogaland, and their specific needs, two non-Afghan organizations were interviewed: SEIF, *Selvhjelp for innvandrere og flyktninger* (Self-help for immigrants and refugees) and KIA, *Kristent interkulturelt arbeid* (Christian intercultural work).

b) Afghan organizations in Rogaland

We have spoken to all the five identified Afghans association in the region. These are: 1) *Andishe Sabz*, 2) *Afghansk forening*, 3) *Afghansk sosial-kulturelle forening*, 4) *Afghansk kvinnegruppe* og 5) *Afghansk bistandsorganisasjon*. Some of the representatives for these organizations were met within the framework of an informal conversation where the pilot project and the organization's work were the topics. Other were interviewed in a more formal way with an interview guide and a tape recorder (and thus also interviewed, when relevant, as "Afghan families").

c) Afghan families

We thought that the Afghan organizations would help us to recruit other Afghan informants willing to tell us about their history and their experiences as parents in Norway. However, they were not the door openers we had hoped they would be. Thus, Afghan families were contacted through other channels such as our personnel networks, non-Afghan organizations and kindergarten personnel. Only one family did not want to be interviewed. We do believe that in this specific case, too many people between SIK and the family were involved (we did not ask the family ourselves). When negotiating an interview directly with the families, generally by phone, we experienced that they were excited about the project and more than willing to tell us their story and their experiences.

10 families were interviewed. Nine²⁰ of these interviews were recorded on tape and eight²¹ fully transcribed. Most of the interviews with the families took place in their homes, which

²⁰ One family did not want to do a formal interview, but just an informal conversation.

²¹ One interview was, due to technical problems, was unfortunately deleted before we got to transcribe it.

additionally, gave us the possibility to observe how Afghan families in Norway live, decorate their homes, dress at home, eat, etc. All the interviews were conducted in Norwegian. Some Afghan men translated when their wife did not speak Norwegian. When the data was analyzed it was classified by themes.

d) Kindergarten personnel

Kindergarten personnel from eight different kindergartens in two different municipalities were interviewed. All kindergarten had or had recently had Afghan children.

4.2.4 Workshop

As part of the methodological design, a seminar was organized in order to 1) present preliminary findings and 2) work out a framework for a research project. Representatives from organizations within the Afghan community, early childhood education institutions and other institutions and organizations who work with the Afghan community were invited to participate.

5 Afghan immigration to Norway

In this subsection we sum up the main findings of existing statistics on the Afghan community in Norway. Two written reports and the information available on the website of *Statistics Norway* and the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration* have been used. The statistics presented in this document are from year 2008 to year 2012. We have consequently tried to use the latest data available.

5.1.1 History and relevant data

Afghan immigration in Norway is a recent phenomenon. Until year 2000, the Afghan community was hardly existent. Then, from the year 2001 – a year corresponding to the fall of Taliban – the number of Afghans in Norway started to increase markedly with an average number of new arrivals per year ranging from 800 to 1247.

Table 1: Number of Afghans immigration to Norway (1966 – 2010, annual average for each 5 years period)

Period	1966 - 1970	1971 - 1975	1976 - 1980	1981 - 1985	1986 - 1990	1991 - 1995	1996 - 2000	2001 - 2005	2006 - 2010
Annual average	-	-3	1	1	52	16	105	800	813

Source: ssb.no

Table 2: Number of Afghans immigration to Norway (2003 – 2010, annual numbers)

Period	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Annual average	1 184	625	700	494	475	656	1 191	1 247	nn

Source: ssb.no

In 2008, the average length of stay in Norway for the Afghans was 4, 5 years. That is the same average as for the Polish. These two communities are indeed those with the shortest period of residence in Norway.

As many of the Afghans in Norway are refugees with short length of stay, several of them take part in the so called *Introduction program for newly arrived refugees*²² (IPR). In 2007, 19% of the Afghan immigrants participated in the program.

Numbers from 2008 indicate that a majority of the Afghans in Norway are men (58%). SSB explains this by the tendency of men migrating alone, with an eventual family left back home. Due to the short length of stay in Norway, many of these men have not yet reunited with their family. The Afghans in Norway are young: over 80% are under 40 years and about 50% under 25 years. One notes particularly that among the Norwegian-born Afghan children, 8 out of 10 are under six years (target age in this study). A high proportion of Afghans live in so-called large households: 49% of them live in households of five persons or more²³. 17% live alone and 45% in households with 2-4 persons. 60% of those aged between 20 and 45 years are married (SBB, 2008).

Furthermore one may note that there are fewer Afghans in the workforce than the average for immigrants, which is due to a particularly low proportion of women. However, men from Afghanistan stand out with a particularly high proportion of the workforce, especially considering that they have come as refugees relatively recently. Other newly arrived refugees (from Iraq, Somalia and Kosovo) are far from having such a high labour market participation. In a comparative report on 15 immigrant communities in Norway, immigrants from Afghanistan represent the group with the greatest inequality between women and men when it comes to employment. While 73% of Afghan men were employed in 2008, that was the situation for only 32% of the Afghan women²⁴ (SBB, 2008).

²² The aim of the *Introduction program for newly arrived refugees* [Introduksjonsordningen for nyankomne flyktninger] is to “contribute to an easier and faster integration of newly arrived refugees into the Norwegian Society”. (Vatne Pedersen, 2009: 38, traduced from Norwegian by G. Odden). All Norwegian municipalities who settle [bosetter] refugees are committed to offer the Introduction program. The duration of the program is up to two years. The participation is financially supported by the Norwegian State and taxable (ibid.).

²³ This is similar to the situation of those from Somalia, Irak or Kosovos. Among the Pakistani, the proportion is higher (57%).

²⁴ It is important to mention that those who take part in the Introduction program are not registered as employed or unemployed. Thus, the numbers appear as lower than the actual situation.

In January 2010, 10 475 Afghans were officially living in Norway. The Afghans thus constitute the 18th largest immigrant community in Norway²⁵.

5.1.2 A majority of refugees and asylum seekers

The majority of Afghans in Norway are refugees²⁶. Among the 9 110 Afghans living in Norway in 2009, 6 078 were refugees. Among the 3 014 who had come to the country via family reunification, 2 805 reunified with a refugee. Only 9 Afghans had come for labour reasons, 6 for training and 3 for “other” reasons (Henriksen *et al.*, 2011: 43).

Prior to the refugee status, the Afghans are registered as asylum seekers (except for the UNHCR resettled refugees). In 2010, 979 Afghans - including 376 unaccompanied minors - applied for asylum in Norway. Only the Eritreans (1711) and the Somali (1397) submitted a higher number of applications for asylum. In 2009, the Afghans constituted the largest group of asylum seekers with 3 871 demands. Among these, 1719 were unaccompanied minors.

2009 represents indeed a spike when it comes to asylum applications in Norway (total number, number of Afghans and number of unaccompanied Afghan minors seeking for asylum). In 2010 the numbers declined considerably. This decline may be explained by the introduction, at this period, of a stricter asylum policy, especially regarding unaccompanied minors: 1) minors are no longer exempted from the Dublin agreement concerning an eventual return to another European country (except from Greece), 2) minors aged 16 and more can be granted a limited and temporary residency permit (obligation to leave the country when turning 18). Other factors may also explain this decline, such as the situation in other European countries as well the one of the countries bordering the departure countries.

²⁵ The largest communities are those from (decreasing order): Poland (52 125), Sweden (31 193), Pakistan (31 061), Iraq (26374), Somalia (25 496), Germany (22 859), Vietnam (20 100), Denmark (19 298), Iran (16 321), Turkey (15 998), (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Russia (14 873), Sri Lanka (13 772), Philippines (13 447), United Kingdom (12 843), Kosovo (12 719) and Thailand (12 268).

²⁶ According to SSB, a refugee is “a person who, according to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration’s register of refugees, have refugee status and have been granted a residence permit in Norway” (www.ssb.no). Consequently, we understand that the number of Afghans who are asylum seekers, and living in reception centres for asylum seekers, is not included in this number (as well as in several other statistics).

Table 3: Total number of Afghans seeking asylum in Norway (2001 – 2010)

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
603	786	2 032	1 059	466	224	234	1 363	3 871	979

Source: udi.no

Table 4: Number of unaccompanied Afghan minors seeking asylum in Norway (2001 – 2010)

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
41	144	306	141	46	60	86	579	1719	376

Source: udi.no

In 2010, about 41% of the Afghan asylum seekers did get a positive outcome of their application and were granted a Norwegian residence permit²⁷. The same year, more or less 50 Afghans without the right to stay in Norway returned voluntarily to Afghanistan.

Some Afghans do also come to Norway as *resettled refugees*. In 2010, Norway received about 150 Afghans from refugee camps in Iran (udi.no).

5.1.3 Where are Afghans settled?

It has not been possible to obtain the numbers of Afghans living in each municipality in Norway. However, a report called *Immigrants in Norwegian municipalities. Demography, living conditions and participation in the workforce*²⁸ (Vatne Pedersen, 2009) gives us an idea of the Afghans settlement patterns.

The report is based on numbers from 2008 and a sample of 244 municipalities (out of 430). At that time, 8 012 Afghans were living in Norway. Among these, 1 915 were living in the municipality of Oslo. That is to say that 1 out of 4 lived in the capital. In second position comes Skedsmo (382), followed by Bærum (375), Trondheim (352), Drammen (325),

²⁷ That is a lower acceptance than the previous year (approximately 50%). One can further note that in 2010, approximately 80% of the Somali and the Eritreans did obtain refugee status.

²⁸ Norwegian title: Innvandrere i norske kommuner. Demografi, levekår og deltakelse i arbeidsstyrken

Kristiansand (178), Bergen (167), Stavanger (131) and Sandnes (112). Since Stavanger and Sandnes are neighbouring municipalities, it is relevant to sum these two numbers (243). We also know from contact with local Afghan organizations and key informants that there are at least 50 Afghans living in the Jaeren region south of Sandnes. This makes the southern part of Rogaland one of the bigger Afghan communities in the country.

Table 5: Number of Afghans living in Norway. By municipalities (2008)

Municipality	Number of Afghans²⁹
Oslo	1 915
Skedsmo	382
Bærum	375
Trondheim	352
Drammen	325
Kristiansand	178
Bergen	167
Stavanger	131
Sandnes	112
Arendal	105
Kongsberg	101
Øvre Eiker	101
Melhus	98
Bodø	93
Asker	89
Stokke	86
Lørenskog	85
Nedre Eiker	83
Rana	75
Skien	74
Total	8 012

Source: ssb.no

²⁹ Immigrants and Norwegian-born persons with immigrant parents.

The report further underlines that in 2008, there were Afghans living in 211 of the country's 430 municipalities.

When one look at the settlement patterns in terms of regions, one observes that among the 1 417 Afghans who settled somewhere in Norway in 2010, 408 of them settled in Northern Norway, 217 in Agder and Rogaland, and 189 in Oslo and Akerhus. That is to say that among those who have just settled, generally after obtaining refugee status and, thus being part of the Introduction Program, or through family reunification, they are a little more numerous in Agder and Rogaland than in Oslo and Akerhus.

The settlement patterns of the Afghans needs to be linked to the government's settlement policy. Refugees settle through agreements between the state and selected local authorities. Their settlement patterns are therefore different (and more spread) than if they were to find accommodation themselves. The government's goal of settling refugees all over the country has as consequence that in many municipalities there are few Afghans.

Table 6: Settlement of Afghans in Norway year 2010

Total	Oslo and Akershus	Hedmark and Oppland	South Eastern Norway	Agder and Rogaland	Western Norway	Trøndelag	Northern Norway
1 417	189	168	168	217	160	107	408

Source: ssb.no

5.1.4 Afghans in reception centres for asylum seekers

In recent years, there has been an important number of Afghans living in Norwegian reception centres for asylum seekers, especially from 2008-2009.

Table 7: Afghans in reception centres. 2005 – 2012

2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
999	478	398	1391	3997	3833	2793	2384

Source: udi.no

In January 2012, 15 832 individuals were living in Norwegian reception centres for asylum seekers. Among these, 2 384 were Afghans. Only the Somali were more numerous (2677).

3 798 children were in January 2012 living in such centres. 686 of them were Afghans. Afghan children represent in fact the largest group of children living in Norwegian reception centres for asylum seekers. Russian children, Iraqi children, Eritrean children and stateless children are to be found in the following positions.

Table 8: Foreigners living in reception centres. 10 largest national groups (January 2012).

Country	Total number	Children	0 – 5 yrs	6 – 10 yrs	11 – 17 yrs
Somalia	2677	308	198	45	65
Afghanistan	2384	686	239	164	283
Eritrea	1940	352	195	76	81
Iraq	1277	352	161	104	87
Ethiopia	1214	195	132	29	34
Russia	1055	496	281	127	88
Iran	1022	189	70	52	67
Stateless	750	212	103	62	47
Syria	366	123	59	38	26
Nigeria	289	121	90	22	9

Source: udi.no

5.1.5 Dale in Sandnes: the largest reception centre for asylum seekers

In January 2012, there were 112 registered reception centres for asylum seekers in Norway. Dale mottakssenter, located in the municipality of Sandnes, is by far the largest centre. 342 individuals were in January living here (of whom 19 were unaccompanied minors and 20 stayed at the “reinforced department”³⁰).

³⁰ Forsterket avdeling.

Table 9: Number of asylum seekers by reception centres. 10 largest reception centres (January 2012).

Reception centre	Number
Dale	343
Trondheim	289
Haslemoen - transitt	278
Hvalsmoen - transitt	257
Sunndal	227
Refstad Ankomsttransitt	225
Kristiansand	214
Oscarsgate	213
Stavanger	196
Tromsø	189

Source: udi.no

5.2 Conclusion

The Afghan immigration being recent, a large majority of Norwegian-born Afghan children are in preschool age. Additionally, Afghan children are in majority in reception centres for asylum seekers (and are being offered a place in local or centre-based kindergartens). Furthermore, the region of Rogaland hosts the country's largest centre for asylum seekers, and receives a considerable number of newly resettled Afghans. The number of Afghans in Stavanger and Sandnes is also if not particularly high, significant compared to most regions / municipalities except Oslo.

6 Literature review

The aim of this literature review is to present identified literature dealing with Afghans in Norway. It became evident, at an early stage of the mapping process, that there are hardly any publications dealing specifically with Afghan families and/or early childhood education. This review consequently includes all the documents we have identified and that we consider, in some way, relevant for our understanding of the situation of Afghans in Norway.

The documents have been divided into three sections: a) official publications, b) publications from the research institutions (mainly reports) and c) other publications. The last section deals with the following themes: the situation in centres for asylum seekers, Diasporas and Norwegian foreign policy, Afghan unaccompanied minors and Afghan families.

6.1 Official publications – issues addressed

It seems that it is the official bodies who publish the most detailed documents when it comes to Afghan immigration in Norway. This may be explained by the fact that this immigration is recent. This observation is also in line with the government's desire to a) regulate migration orderly and b) integrate those who are granted with a residential permit rapidly. In other words: official bodies adjust rapidly to new flows through, in some cases, new policies and fact-based publications. On the other side, academia traditionally needs more time before publishing in-depth knowledge on a “new” phenomenon.

In addition to the quantitative data discussed in the previous section, an example of an official publication of relevance is the report of the Directorate of immigration (UDI) and The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre (Landinfo) named “Country knowledge and integration: Afghanistan” (*Integreringsrettet landkunnskap om Afghanistan*) (Jensen *et al*). This report deals with themes considered as relevant for the comprehension of the (difficulties of the) integration processes of Afghans in Norway: geography of Afghanistan, ethnic groups, languages, religion and culture, Afghan women, the wars and conflicts in the recent decades (since the 1980'ies), Afghanistan today, exile and migration and main characteristics of Afghans in Norway. The report is the first of its kind and is aimed at municipal employees who work with the settlement and integration of Afghan refugees in Norway.

Several sections dealing specifically with Afghans in Norway are of interest. Firstly, the report tells us that all the four main ethnic groups are represented (Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks). In the processes of settling Afghan refugees, ethnic background has not been

considered. According to the report, no conflict related to the fact that different ethnic groups are co-living has been reported. However, we believe that it is possible that such conflicts do exist and that they take different forms (no contact, tense contact...) The report underlines that there is no statistics available on ethnic background *versus* settlement of Afghans, but the Pashtuns and Hazaras are estimated to be the largest two groups in Norway.

As already mentioned, the Afghan community is young, with a predominance of men. The report gives additional information: some of the resettled UNHCR refugees have come as extended families with multiple generations, while some of the women have come as asylum seekers. It is not stated whether these women have come alone or with a husband/family member. Concerning the non-accompanied Afghan minors, an interesting observation is addressed: many of these young boys live in collective housing arrangements (bokollektiv) and some of them organize together with other Afghan families following an extended household pattern. This statement is based on a study on Afghans in two municipalities in North-western Norway. The study was published in 2003, but further details are not given, which unfortunately makes it difficult to find the original publication.

Further, the report states that in a long-term integration perspective, the young boys' and unaccompanied men's relations to their family are important:

Regardless of whether the family is in Afghanistan or in a third country, Afghans in Norway are important contributors to the households and large families they are included in. These households probably financed the initial escape and will therefore, at a later stage, expect financial contributions, family reunification and/or marriage in return. Although refugees are physically in Norway, they are still part of and play an important role within the household at home or in an eventual transit country. The relationship with the extended family will affect the refugees' adaptation strategies in Norway. The refugees may get in a situation of cross-pressures wherein they must consider family needs in the home country up against their own economic adaptation in Norway (UDI, Landinfo)³¹.

This statement is not unique to the Afghans; it is also relevant for other transnational families. The report further identifies three main challenges when it comes to the integration of Afghans in Norway, the first one being related to the above quotation: 1) marriage and ties of loyalty, 2) language training and work qualification and 3) political and religious organization.

³¹ Translated from Norwegian by G. Odden.

6.1.1 Marriage and ties of loyalty

The report states that many of the young Afghans in Norway marry women back in Afghanistan, Pakistan or Iran. Marriages in Afghanistan or within the Diaspora may be arranged, and integration-challenges may be related to the “new” Afghan families. The role and the influence of the elder family members, even when back in Afghanistan or in other countries, is underlined. Some cases have been identified where girls have reported forced marriages or use of violence or threats when involved in relationships with boys without the family’s permission. The reports consider this as a growing problem as more and more Afghans in Norway will get married.

6.1.2 Language training and work qualification

The report identifies the fact that both Dari and Pashtu are official languages in Afghanistan as a possible problem concerning mother tongue education in Norway: it is problematic if, in school, Afghan children are offered language training in Pashtu when they are Dari speakers and vice-versa. A similar situation has been observed among Pakistani children (offered training in Urdu when Punjabi is their mother tongue).

Concerning work qualification, the document stresses the fact that many Afghans are craftsmen (without any formal education). Consequently it is considered to be difficult to map the actual qualifications of the person and, subsequently, establish an adjusted plan of training/work. Taking into consideration the high number of Afghan men employed (e.g. numbers presented in the previous section), we do not consider this aspect a major problem. However, it might be one for the women (but then the related aspects are different from those mentioned here).

6.1.3 Political and religious organization

According to the report, Sunni Muslims from Afghanistan (mainly Pashtuns and Tajiks) in Norway have associations with immigrants from Pakistan and the Middle East. As a consequence few religious communities for Afghans alone have been established. The same statement is true for ethnic based political organization. However, this report seems to have been published around year 2006³², and the situation may have changed since then. Otherwise, the report identifies the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee

³² We have contacted Landinfo in order to get the exact year of the publication (it is not stated in the report itself). They *estimate* it to be around year 2006.

(Afghanistankomiteen) and Afghan Youth (Afghansk ungdomsutvalg) as important Norwegian organizations of charity, involving more and more Afghans. The organization Afghan Youth was, by the way, created as a result of the initiative of 17 young Afghan refugees in Norway. This organization was also mentioned by key informants.

In its academic bibliography, the report does not refer to any Norwegian references (i.e. Afghans in Norway).

The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Centre has several other publications related to Afghanistan available on their website (www.landinfo.no). All of them relate to the Afghan context, and are aimed at Norwegian immigration authorities. Among these publications, one may find documents focusing on specific categories of people (women, “dancing boys”, ex-militaries, political active students, people with specific health problems...), the situation in a specific area for example (Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan, security in Kabul...) or other elements and practices (use of official documents, marriage, divorce...) These documents may be used when decisions related to the refugee status are made.

“Country knowledge and integration: Afghanistan”, is the only identified official document dealing specifically with Afghans - and no other group - in Norway. But it is the context in Afghanistan that is stressed, while the actual situation of the Afghans in Norway is, by far, secondary. Other documents tend to be more comparative, including several groups of migrants (and especially refugees).

Among these comparative documents, we can mention the “Monitor for the introduction program” (*Monitor for introduksjonsordningen*), (Enes 2012), which summarizes the outcomes of the latest cohort of the program (whether it has been accomplished or interrupted). The Afghans being so numerous within this course, they are often referred to in the document. It is of interest to note that in the 2009 cohort (the latest one), the Afghans represented the 4th largest group who, at a time, left the program (once again, whether it has been accomplished or not). Among these, 64% were women (highest proportion among all the groups). The report states that many women leave the program for maternity leave, and then reintegrate at a later stage. Looking at the situation of the Afghans after they quit the program, almost 80% of the men were employed or enrolled within education. Together with the Eritreans this is the highest proportion, of all groups. 36% of Afghan women were in a similar situation. Only women from Somalia and the Palestinian area had a lower rate of participation in work life /education among women who quit the program in 2009.

It is of interest to note that Stavanger is placed in a second position, after Bærum, when it comes to the rate of participation of former program participants in work/education (all nationalities included): 61% (88% for Bærum)³³. This may be explained by the general situation of work possibilities in the region, but also by other structural factors, as well as individual ones (see Rambøll 2011).

Although the percentage of work/education among Afghan women is low, the tendency is that more and more of them get involved in employment or education after some time: Among those who quit the program in 2007, only 36% were working / studying in 2008, while in 2010 the percentage was 49. This change is the highest one among all nationalities.

The official publications are above all *descriptions* based on *quantitative data*. As such they do not, or only to a limited degree, analyse or criticize the system they are part of.

6.2 Publications from research institutions (reports) – issues addressed

In the publications from the research institutions, there is more room for a critical analysis of the Norwegian immigration policies; what works and what does not.

The only identified report dealing *exclusively* with Afghans in Norway is the report from Christian Michelsens institute called *Return with Dignity, Return to what? Review of the Voluntary Return Programme to Afghanistan* (Strand 2008).

Even if this report deals with the return aspect, several of the themes are of interest, like for example “The decision to leave” chapter (pp. 17-20) and “The stay in Norway” chapter (pp. 21-23). We find that aspects dealing more specifically with the decision to leave may also be of interest (why does one want to leave Norway?). One notes that the general conclusion of the report is that the Programme fails: a majority of the returned Afghans want to get out of the country again (feature article BT, 1. September 2008).

An ongoing project dealing with return has also been identified (PRIO-project). Here it is the *eventual return*, or *the holiday return*, which is stressed. The study deals with return migration from Norway and the United Kingdom. A researcher from the University of Sussex has been undertaking fieldwork on Afghans in Norway (February-April 2012). We consider this project as particularly relevant for our pilot project: How does a prospected return affect

³³ Oslo: 49%, Bergen 46%. Fredrikstad has the lowest number: 42%. Other municipalities in Rogaland are not mentioned.

the integration processes? Or the fact that one goes to Afghanistan one or several times a year? The project, "Possibilities and Realities of Return Migration", PREMIG, is presented as follows at PRIO's website:

PREMIG is a large-scale research project that explores return migration from Norway and the United Kingdom. The project is premised on the idea that the possibility of return - not just actual return - is an important phenomenon. Many immigrants in Europe are considering returning to their country of origin. In most cases, return is a future option rather than a short-term plan. The possibility of return can nevertheless be important in its own right: experiences of marginalization can stimulate plans for return. Furthermore, the prospect of return might lessen commitment to integration. The possibility of return can also be central to migrants' transnational relationships with people in their country of origin. Return migration has many faces: for some migrants it is a dream that they hope to realize. Others live in fear of being returned against their will. PREMIG takes a broad approach and aims to cover the diverse aspects of return migration (<http://www.prio.no/Research-and-Publications/PREMIG/About/>).

As for the official publication, those from the Research Institutions tend to be comparative, giving more or less attention to the Afghans.

Concerning the Introduction Program, we will mention the study of Djuve *et al.* (2011) on women in the program with low education and high care responsibilities.

Djuve's study deals specifically with the case of women from Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia (those with lowest participation within the workforce). Based on quantitative data, but also qualitative interviews with key informants (health workers, teachers, counsellors....) and women from these countries in ten Norwegian municipalities, the report gives room to individual perceptions, an aspect which is absent in the above mentioned publications. Eight Afghan women have been interviewed (and 66 key informants). The report shows that Afghan women often take more than two years to complete the program: the program is often interrupted by births or sometimes health problems. Among the 135 Afghan women who started the program in 2009, 62% of them were still enrolled in it in 2011 while 5% were working, 7% under so called measures (tiltak), 4% in primary school, 8% in high school, 1,5% in higher education, 1,5% under social help (sosialhjelp), 3% as "not job seekers" and 8% in other categories (moved, health problems etc.). The Afghan women are by far those who have the highest number of transitions from the Introduction program to education. According to the report, a high desire to study and have a profession is also expressed in the interviews with the Afghan women. On the other hand, the report states that for some of these women, their starting point in terms of education is so low that one cannot expect them to start working (they did not in their home country either) or studying, at least not within a short

time perspective. In this context, one tries to stimulate the women's participation within the Norwegian society through other channels than work or education. Other measures may be related to health promotion. Additionally, measures related to children and family are slightly more common among women from Somalia, Iraq and Afghanistan than among participants from other countries. These will be mentioned later.

The second part of the report stresses the situation of these women as mothers and wives. That is to say that these women "do have a life outside the Introduction Program, which will affect the progress and the experience of it" (p. 51)³⁴. Many informants (key informants and the women themselves) stress the fact that they have *two* jobs (introduction program and the one at home). Of the aspects dealt with here, we can conclude that:

- The women say that knowing some Norwegian, even basic Norwegian, and having some knowledge of Norwegian society (samfunnskunnskap) is helpful while following up their children.
- Reading and writing skills are highly appreciated among the women, and once they have finished the program, a school environment is often preferred to a work environment (one learns more and "feels safer")
- Language training (språkpraksis) in a work environment during the program is less common among the women than among the men: it is more difficult to find a suitable place for them, often because of family duties (picking up kids in the kindergarten for example)³⁵.
- Among those who get language training in a work environment, this is often an environment of health and care related work. However, for some of these women it will be difficult to obtain a job related to these sectors due to higher and higher demands for documented language skills (like "Norwegian language test, level 2"). Among those who are offered a job within health and social care, they are often asked to work at late evenings or night, which is, once again, difficult to combine with family life.

Some municipalities offer courses that are not directly meant to prepare these women for work. These may be family related like sessions of family counselling or mother and children

³⁴ Translated by G. Odden.

³⁵ It is also maintained that in order to get family reunification, the men *are* expected to have a full time job and being able to support their family, and do, thus, not always have the possibility to be flexible.

groups. Other courses offered are sewing courses or courses dealing with health issues, household economy etc. As the report puts is:

Some of these courses are primarily designed for network-building and to establish confidence-building arenas. Sewing courses and mother-child groups are examples here. The direct link to the Norwegian labour market is thin, but in several of the municipalities we visited, it is claimed that such programs have a beneficial effect for these women. "These courses create a smooth transition for the people", argues one person in a municipality, "Many are "on the edge" mentally speaking, but this can be a great path to get accustomed to school life. Besides it creates relationships between the women (p. 57)³⁶.

Gendered activities might, still according to the report, offer an environment where the women can talk about sensitive topics such as health, parenting in Norway, gender relations and family planning. "These measures are perceived as very valuable, both by program counsellors, teachers and participants, but nonetheless they contribute to a general picture of difference when it comes to men's and women's induction program" (p. 57)³⁷.

The report gives a detailed description on how the persons responsible for the program try to adjust to the women's situation. They let them leave earlier because they feel tired due to the family situation, because they have to pick up the children etc. Maternity leave is also stressed. The women who came through family reunification may have waited several years before they got the opportunity to have children and they get pregnant soon after arriving. Maternity leave in Norway has a long duration (10 months for these women), and one consequence may be that the women's participation in the Introductory program is interrupted for a long time and sometimes also several times). Many of the women do not reintegrate in the program after 10 months of maternity leave since children under 1 year are generally not accepted in the kindergartens, and since the kindergartens generally accept new kids only in August (children born in September have to wait 2 years for example). Some municipalities therefore try to keep in contact with these women, even if they are not officially part of the program: it is thought that such contact make the return to the program easier. Some municipalities call and visit the women on a regular basis. Other pay bus tickets and day care (Kindergarten or 'park') for older children in order to make it easier for the women on maternity leave to "get around", maintain and build networks. The so called "open kindergartens" are also mentioned. Some municipalities have good experiences with these

³⁷ Translated by G. Odden

open kindergartens. One municipality has experimented with different types of mother-child groups with Norwegian courses in the open kindergarten, but concludes: "They are not able to concentrate when the kids are around. We need to develop activities that are not so related to conventional teaching. Baby singing and other activities mother and child can do together may be appropriate in this respect"³⁸ (p. 61)³⁹. For our study, aspects related to maternity leave/introduction program/open kindergartens may be relevant concerning the women's relationship with regular kindergartens. For example one may ask the following: Does frequenting an open kindergarten (mother and child together) during maternity leave facilitate a transmission of the children to a regular kindergarten on a later stage?

The report shows that some program counsellors and teachers say that they find it unsatisfactory that the "lack of transition to regular employment or education" is interpreted as "lack of achievement" for this group. They argue that women may have had a qualitatively good program that has prepared them to participate in society and fulfil parenting within the Norwegian society in a much better way than they would have been able to without the program. One informant says (quoted and translated from the report): "I wish there was a box to fill out called "qualified to take care of her family and to help her children towards an education" (p. 90). A second informant says:

She feels she has done a good job with their children – that they go to school, kindergarten and are well-adjusted. That she and her family have a network – from their own country and from here. They usually get networks via their children and I say to them "use them". And she feels that she is on the right track. If she is to start in a full time job, and that the rest works, that would be great, - but the important thing is that she feels she has succeeded. Coming out in a full-time job - and the other things work – that is even better. But the important thing is that they have achieved something (p. 90).

To conclude on this report from Djuve et al. (2011) on Afghan, Iraqi and Somali women within the introduction program with low education and high care responsibilities: The report stresses relevant and interesting factors concerning the situation of immigrant women with small children in Norway. However, aspects dealing specifically with the perception and experience of these women concerning the Norwegian kindergartens is missing. The first aim of this publication, written by Fafo and IFS for IMDI, is to try to understand why so many of these women do not transit from the introduction program to a work or education situation.

³⁸ Translated by G. Odden

³⁹ See page 64 for paternity leave among immigrants and some aspects of eventual consequences/benefits.

On the basis of this we may ask whether there is a link between working/studying and non-working/non-studying women and having children in kindergarten?

6.3 Other publications – issues addressed

6.3.1 The situation in centres for asylum seekers

A lot of literature deals with asylum seekers centres (e.g. Valenta and Thorshaug, 2011a; Valenta and Thorshaug, 2011b). Some publications stress the situation of the children in these centres (e.g. Berg, 2006; Lauritzen, 2007; Lauritsen, 2009). Literature dealing only with the Afghans in these centres has not been identified. However, as for other publications, Afghans might be mentioned in a comparative perspective. Valenta and Thorshaug (2011b) have for instance been interviewing migrants, and among them Afghans, whose asylum applications have been rejected.

6.3.2 Diasporas and Norwegian foreign policy

When searching on the internet for literature dealing with Afghan immigration in Norway, a very large number of the documents that appear, deal with Norwegian foreign policy and the Norwegian presence in Afghanistan. One article (Godzimirski, 2011) deals specifically with the relationship between migrant communities in Norway (Diasporas) and their influence on Norwegian foreign policy. However, while the Polish, Pakistani, North-Caucasian, Kurds and Tamils are specifically mentioned, the Afghans are not.

6.3.3 Afghan non-accompanied minors

As mentioned in the section dealing with available statistics, a large number of Afghan non-accompanied minors have come to Norway over the last years, and especially in 2009. This aspect has been quite visible in the media. Public institutions have published different material on the topic, like UNHCR's report *Trees only move in the wind. A study of unaccompanied Afghan children in Europe* (2010). The latter is based on interviews with 150 young boys in six European countries, among them Norway (11 boys interviewed). The following aspects from the report are of particular interest:

- Among the boys interviewed in Norway, most of them were Hazara (although the Hazara represent only 9% of the total number of Afghans)
- All Afghan children do not apply for asylum. In other words: they might be more numerous than official statistic says. This is an important aspect, valid also for adults.

Vidar Strøm (2011) has written a Master's thesis focusing on Afghan unaccompanied children in Norway. The thesis concentrates exclusively on children from the ethnic group Hazara. Strøm tries to understand why these children left Afghanistan in the first place, how the journey was organized and how these stories affect the way these young boys are received by the Norwegian child welfare services. Based on qualitative interviews with five minor migrants, the author stresses the experience and the understanding of the migrant situation as expressed by the children themselves. Strøm summarizes his study as follows:

The study illustrates the complex circumstances that resulted in the minors leaving their country. Reasons such as war, conflict and poverty occurring within social structures with an accept for mobilization, became prevalent. The study further illustrates the multitude of problems the minors have experienced through their life span, and how these difficulties have been met with resilience. The study found that the majority of the adolescents came to Norway as a result of series of random events that in the end led them to their final destination. After living in Norway for 2 to 4 years, the minors appear to be well functioning. However, not feeling like they are completely a part of the Norwegian society (pp. 5).

6.3.4 Afghan families

The Afghan family is scarcely visible in the literature. It may be referred to, but is rarely discussed in depth.

In an article called "betrayal of immigrant woman" (Sviket mot minoritetskvinnene), published in *Samtiden*⁴⁰ (2006), Iffit Qureshi, journalist in Norway, focuses on the discrimination of immigrants when encountering employees within public services and the Media's "demonization" of immigrant groups (p. 6). As a former employee at the immigration section at NAV (Aetat at that time), the author tells, among others, the story of an Afghan family who came with five children to Norway; their problems and their experiences of the encounter with public services. Their children were bullied in the municipality where they were first settled by the authorities. Therefore the family decided to move to Oslo - "for the sake of the children". As a consequence, they lost all their economic rights (which according to the regulations shall be the consequence if one leaves the "settlement municipality" during the five year settlement period). Being former professors at the University in Kabul, they were told that a University career in Norway was not realistic. She got a job at Fretex and earned NOK 12 000,- pr month. He remained unemployed ("we do not want to employ a Taliban" he was told) and became aggressive due to low self-esteem. An officer at the refugee office encouraged the woman to leave her husband. She responded

⁴⁰ "Samtiden" is a Norwegian journal of cultural and social debates.

that a divorce was not the solution for her family, but a job for her husband was. The officer got angry and told her that she did not want to help her anymore. The author says: “Within the Norwegian system “Rahela” [the Afghan wife and mother] is seen as an individual, not as a part of a family” (p. 7). The article has the merit, even if it is not an academic publication, of highlighting the situation and problems some Afghan families may meet in Norway.

As for the Afghan families and their experiences with the Norwegian kindergarten, or the kindergarten’s experience with the Afghans, we have not identified any literature dealing specifically with this. However, it is important to mention that there is a lot of literature dealing with *diversity* in the kindergarten, but as often, the Afghan community is not given specific attention. One specific book caught our attention: “Stories from a Muslim kindergarten in Norway” (2011). Nevertheless, non-Afghan children seem to attend this kindergarten (Afghan languages are not identified as languages represented in the kindergarten).

6.4 Conclusion

The aim of this preliminary literature study was to identify existing documents and literature dealing with Afghans in Norway. A general conclusion would be that very few studies deal solely with the Afghan community. Often, the Afghans are referred to in studies dealing with several other nationalities. The Afghan return migration and the Afghan non-accompanied minor asylum seekers constitute an exception.

The identified studies often stress the Norwegian asylum structure (centres for asylum seekers, introduction program, return of refused asylum seekers). In other words: written information relevant for the evaluation and development of Norwegian migration policies is in the majority and it is often written or financed by Norwegian official bodies.

We can conclude that there is an important lack of in-depth knowledge, and especially qualitative knowledge, on the Afghan community, and that literature dealing with Afghan families and early childhood education is almost non-existent.

7 The Afghan community in Southern Rogaland

This section will give a brief overview of the Afghan community in Rogaland. The results are based on interviews with both Afghan and non-Afghan organizations in the region.

7.1 Non-Afghan Organizations working with Afghans

Two NGO's were interviewed in order to tell us about their contact and experience with the Afghan community in Southern-Rogaland: 1) *SEIF, Selvhjelp for innvandrere og flyktninger* (Self-help for immigrants and refugees) and 2) *KIA, Kristent interkulturelt arbeid* (Christian intercultural working). These two organizations will be presented in the following lines.

7.1.1 Selvhjelp for innvandrere og flyktninger (SEIF)

SEIF is a voluntary and independent organization, established in 1986. SEIF is located in Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim, Ålesund, Kristiansand and Stavanger. The office in Stavanger was established in 2008. SEIF provides information, refers to the correct authority and helps with problem solving. Their aim is to help new citizens in Norway to find their way in the society and acquire enough information to that they can solve their own problems (translated from www.seif.no).

7.1.2 Kristent interkulturelt arbeid (KIA)

KIA is the largest national organization working in the field of immigration (figures from IMDi). KIA was established in 1974 and is thus the oldest organization working with immigrants and refugees. It is an independent ecumenical and diaconal organization. KIA's "law" explains how they want to meet fellow human beings: with equality, care and friendship. Their slogan is "A warmer Norway!" The vision is a more multi-cultural community in church and in the society as a whole. We are all influenced by simple media coverage, they say; KIA is working to improve attitudes towards immigrants and to bring out facts. The uniqueness of KIA is according to themselves that they are working to make all of their gatherings have at least 50% Norwegians. They say that is how they create integration in practice (translated from www.kianorge.no).

7.1.3 The organizations' contact with the Afghan community

In the following we give a summary of KIA and SEIFs' contact with Afghans and their general knowledge about this group.

When asked what contact they have with the Afghan community, both organizations answered that most of their contact with Afghans is with young male asylum seekers. SEIF in Rogaland has not been in contact with any Afghan women during the last year, and KIA in Rogaland has only had contact with one or two Afghan women in the last year. SEIF is almost exclusively in contact with young male Hazaras. KIA says they are in contact with all ethnicities (Hazaras, Tadjiks, Pashtuns).

Both SEIF and KIA will try to meet needs that the public system doesn't cover and is thus for many an important supplement to public services.

The young Afghan men will come to the office of SEIF because they have had a negative answer to their application for asylum and they will ask SEIF for help and advice for the appeal verdict. Afghans will also ask SEIF for advice in for example matters of visa application and family reunion. Other Afghans have asked for assistance because they want to move to another asylum centre, telling they have converted from Islam to Christianity and they are being harassed (by other Afghans and minorities) for this. Some Afghans will ask for help to get medical treatment. SEIF said they had Afghans coming to ask for services in their office every week.

KIA offers Norwegian courses, which are very popular, also amongst Afghans. They will try to help young Afghans with whatever need they present. The day before the interview an Afghan boy came to their office, wanting them to help him learn math. In addition to homework assistance for school children, they are also organizing social gatherings both in their office and in the asylum centres, such as multicultural dinners, movie nights for younger groups, hiking (turmarsj: "vi går for fellesskap") etc. KIA estimates that they have probably been in contact with 50 Afghans in the last 2-3 years.

7.1.3.1 The organization's general knowledge of the Afghan community

Neither SEIF, nor KIA knew exactly how many Afghans there are in the region, but one of them says: "There are Afghans all over the place. There must be several hundred".

When asked what *capabilities* Afghans has to offer, their general impressions seemed to be that Afghans are eager to learn Norwegian, that they present themselves with a positive attitude, that they are helpful and that they show respect to the Norwegian system. One of the informants emphasized that those who manage to get a job seem to be getting along very well.

As we asked the two NGO's to reflect on their encounter with the Afghan community versus other minority communities, one of the informants told us:

My impression is that these [Afghans] are people who are easy to deal with and that they are generally organized and reliable. They will ... They are moving forward. They will set goals and climb away. That is not to say that it's easy by any means, but they are not the kind of type that sits down with their hands in their lap.

When asked what their impression is of what *difficulties* the Afghans face, we were told that many face problems due to the fact that they have no birth certificate:

In the bureaucratic system, many people who have trouble proving who they are. Identity problems are a chronic problem because in Norway Afghan documents have a bad reputation and are rarely taken into account. So that is a problem they often face.

Informants from both organizations showed concern for the situation of Afghan women. One informant talked about her impression that the majority of Afghan women do not have a lot of education from Afghanistan: She said it is "...because of the Taliban. You [they] would not teach girls to read and write. It was not good". The informant's impression is that women's struggle for survival in Afghanistan is tough:

I have the impression that there are lots and lots of difficult backgrounds amongst women who come. They have lived through a lot ... I cannot go into details about it, but it is my impression that ... They have not been respected as women in the sense that they have neither been able to exercise a profession out there [outside of the home- our note] or that they have had the opportunity to flourish.

Another informant who explained her concern for the Afghan women, also admitted lack of knowledge about their situation:

It seems they come from a very macho society...a very machoistick society; like gender roles and who does what and what is acceptable. (...) But since we only have men coming to our office, we get no insight into the family situations... If there is violence or what's the situation really like for women. We know little about that.

When we asked whether they had ever dealt with concerns related to Afghan children and preschool, none of them had dealt directly with such concerns.

7.2 Afghan organizations in Rogaland

Five Afghan associations have been identified: 1) *Andishe Sabz*, 2) *Afghansk forening*, 3) *Afghansk sosial-kulturelle forening*, 4) *Afghansk kvinnegruppe* og 5) *Afghansk*

bistandsorganisasjon. Representatives from all five organizations have been contacted. The five organizations will be presented in the following lines.

7.2.1 Andishe Sabz

Afghansk kulturell forening i Rogaland, Andishe Sabz (Afghan cultural association in Rogaland, AS) is a non-profit, politically neutral, social, cultural and independent association based on democratic principles and voluntary participation. AS is a cultural association for Afghans living in Rogaland. The goal is to support and strengthen cultural values and transmit them to future generations. AS focus on a value oriented integration perspective and see to it that the members are being taken care of by the public institutions. AS was established after conversations and discussions between engaged Afghans. They have decided to found Andishe Sabz. (translated from the web-site of Andishe Sabz: <http://andishesabz.no/side6.html>).

Our contact person in the organization who has the position of “leader” (although there is a “leader of the board” as well) says in an interview that the organisation is open for all Afghans regardless of ethnic or religious background and belonging. They work for a unified Afghan cultural association in Rogaland, although he admits there is a long way to go before this becomes reality. So far almost all members are Tajiks, and other Afghans also describe the association as predominantly Tajik.

Celebration of Afghan New Year

On Saturday March 24, 2012, Andishe Sabz celebrated the Afghan New Year for its members. Two SIK researchers were present. The celebration started at 5 o'clock and ended at 9.30. The celebration was held in Dari.

The hired local place did not offer the possibility to cook a hot meal (as one usually tend to do), therefore Afghans cakes and other snacks and fruit were served. Around 50 Afghans were present. The two SIK researchers were the only Norwegians.

All the organized activities which took place during the evening may be categorized as “party games”. Some did include persons of all ages (“mystical questions”, guessing games...), but the majority of them were meant for the children (Musical chairs, blowing up balloons in the fastest way, moving M&Ms with a straw...)

“We wanted to do this for the children” one of the responsible in the organizations says. *“I choose Norwegian games because the kids are used to them: they grow up here and might have seen them in the kindergarten or at school”* the women in charge of the organizing of the children’s games explains. *“But we do have one of the games we had at the party in Afghanistan too: the one where you jump in burlap sacks”*. All the children who participated in a game were awarded sweets or money. The winners of the games for the teens or the adults were awarded money. The money was put in white envelopes.

Only members of the organization attended the celebration. Those members of other organizations, or Afghans not being members of such organizations, attended other celebrations. Some did actually attend other parties the same night in order to satisfy different Afghan networks.

7.2.2 Afghansk forening

Afghansk forening (Afghan association) is an association for all Afghans in Norway. The organization was founded in 2008 and has today about 40 members: The association is a non-profit organization and all activities are voluntarily work. They have a board of five persons: The goal, according to the web-site is to bring together sports, culture and youth organizations from the whole country. (<http://afghanskforening.com>). The association holds that national activities like festivals and sports tournaments are unbeatable measures to create a national understanding, and that everyone should have the opportunity to participate. A representative of the organization, who functions as its contact person externally towards the Norwegian society, said in an interview that the organization is open for all Afghans, but that in practice all the members were Pashtuns.

7.2.3 Afghansk sosial-kulturelle forening i Rogaland

Afghansk sosial-kulturelle forening i Rogaland (Afghan socio-cultural association of Rogaland – ASKFR) was also established in 2008 after “... long conversations and discussions between engaged Afghans in Rogaland” (<http://askfr.blogfa.com>). Around 40 men met to discuss, and decided to establish ASKFR. The association was founded with unanimous vote. They elected a board in a fully democratic way.

In an interview with the leader and the responsible for cultural activities, they described their association as mainly a cultural association with the aim of supporting the members in their efforts to bring up their children in a way that gives them knowledge about their cultural heritage, to respect their background and be proud of it.

Currently, ASKFR organize Dari classes for children and young people every Sunday. They also organize sport activities such as football and volleyball, and they are trying to organize swimming activities for the women in the organization, “..but it is hard to find a place to do it”, the leader says. In addition, they are organizing events such as New Years’ celebrations and Eid celebrations twice a year. At the moment they have 120 members, according to the leader of the organization. The organization is open for all, but to date the majority of the members are Hazara’s.

7.2.4 Afghansk kvinnegruppe

The *Afghansk kvinnegruppe* is an Afghan women's group who meet in Stavanger once a month. The group was created in 2009. For the last three years, the group has been meeting at International House. However, due to a recent restructuring of the *International House*, the group now meets in different places (generally community centres). This is an aspect that the group contact person finds very difficult:

It takes a lot of time; I need to call around every month to find a local, to get the keys, to give back the keys, it is a lot of work. I have asked if someone else could be interested in taking over but no, nobody. But at least these women tell me that they are really grateful to me for the job I do (Group contact person).

When the Afghan Women's group meets, they bring with them their girls (all ages) and boys (up to 10 years old). They speak about all kind of topics, and exchange different kinds of experiences. For some women, the group is an important place for socialization: "*some of the women do not work and are alone the whole day*", says the group contact. The group is open for all Afghan ethnicities. However, the Tajiks are by far the most numerous ones.

A few days after the interview with the contact person of the group, the group was to meet in her house: her husband had just finished the renovation of the house they had bought. She expected 40 Afghan women and children to come. The women are of "*all ages*" she said, and some of them have "*stayed in Stavanger for 25-35 years*". She herself came to the city through family reunification in 2002.

7.2.5 Afghansk bistandsorganisasjon

Afghansk bistandsorganisasjon (Afghan aid organization) has been registered since 2005 and consists of 20-25 registered members. According to the leader, they send invitations to all Afghans in the region when they have events: "*Those who have time they come, for they know that we are only a development organization*", says the contact person of the group.

The aim of the organization is development aid to Afghanistan. Currently they are focusing on a project aiming at resuscitation training in schools in Afghanistan. They have also collected some computers that they want to give to schools in Kabul. *Afghansk bistandsorganisasjon* have been organizing meetings, seminars and stands. In addition they have also organized cultural events:

We organized an Eid-celebration where we invited everyone, not just Afghans. All came. There were around 70 or 80 people. And then we've organized an international

fashion show. We initiated the event, but it was an international show. Everyone came with their own international costumes (Contact person).

7.3 Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that non-Afghan organizations' contact with the Afghan community is for the most part related to asylum seekers, and especially young men whose application has been rejected. As for the Afghans who are settled, they seem to have organized themselves in ethnic based associations. The activities of these differ, but they all stress their Afghan identity, meaning the importance of maintaining their national culture in exile and to transmit it to the next generation.

8 Kindergartens with Afghan children in two municipalities in Rogaland – an overview

8.1 The kindergartens in the municipality of Havlandet

For anonymity reasons the first municipality of our study, which have only a few Afghan children in their kindergartens, is called “Havlandet” in this report. There are about 20 kindergartens in Havlandet. Most of them have children whose parents speak another mother tongue than Norwegian. There are a total of about 80 children in kindergartens in the municipality who are registered as bilingual or having Norwegian as their second language. According to numbers given by the kindergarten office, the total number of children in kindergartens is about 1 200.

At present there are eight Afghan children in kindergartens in Havlandet. Four of them are in Havnehaugen kindergarten⁴¹, two in Granlia and two in Fjell kindergarten. Like for the other children whose parents (or one of the parents) have a foreign language as their mother tongue, the Afghan parents have been offered a place for their child in a kindergarten as near as possible to where they live. This is to say that the kindergarten administration employs the “neighbourhood principle” as first criterion when they distribute the applicants between the 20 kindergartens in the municipality. This principle also applies to the children who come from minority language backgrounds. However, the fact that most of the Afghan children - and the Somali children as well - are concentrated in the kindergartens nearest to the municipality centre, also reflects the housing policy of the refugee unit in the municipality. When they provide housing for families who are enrolled in the Introduction Program for Refugees (IPR) in apartments, they try to find an apartment close to the administrative centre where the public services are located and where public transport is more frequent and better developed.

When Granlia kindergarten opened in 1995, it was given the special task to provide early childhood education for all the children with refugee or immigrant backgrounds in the municipality. The opening of the kindergarten coincided with settlement of the first group of Somalis who came to Havlandet, and Granlia was therefore allocated a bilingual trainer in a full time position as extra personnel. The director and other personnel also were encouraged

⁴¹ As mentioned earlier, the names of all the kindergartens in this report have been changed for anonymity reasons.

to follow in-service training courses in migration, multicultural awareness, intercultural communication and second language learning.

However, the overall demographic situation in Havlandet in terms of cultural and linguistic diversity has changed a lot in the last five to ten years. The population is growing rapidly, new residential areas are popping up in several places in the municipality and this means – like the overview above indicates clearly – that the children who come from minority / bilingual language backgrounds now live all over the municipality. This is not least caused by the rapidly increasing labour migration from the Schengen area in the last few years, and particularly from Eastern Europe.

Partly as a consequence of these developments, the politicians in Havlandet decided to change the way they work with linguistic diversity in the kindergartens. A few years ago, they decided to employ a consultant at the kindergarten office with special responsibility for the learning conditions and integration of minority children. This implies that part of the integration grants that would otherwise be managed by the manager at each kindergarten, was reallocated from employing bilingual assistants in smaller posts in a few selected kindergartens to assigning a central advisory and facilitating body; The mother tongue consultant (morsmålskonsulent) is employed full time and has the overall administrative responsibility for the field. The consultant allocates the total bilingual assistant work force to the kindergartens, departments or individual child who has the most urgent need. The consultant also takes care of the initial training of- and is the HR leader of the bilingual assistants, in addition to providing information and initiate measures aimed at parents. Further the mother tongue consultant is responsible for the development of the professional competence of the early childhood pedagogues in the field of migration pedagogy and second language learning.

8.2 The kindergartens in the municipality of Stavanger

As of 2012 there are 134 kindergartens in Stavanger of which 76 are owned and run by the local government and 53 are private. A majority of them have children whose parents speak another mother tongue than Norwegian. In the kindergarten year 2011/2012 there were a total of 117 children in the Stavanger kindergartens who were registered as “in need of mother tongue or NASL (Norwegian as a second language) support”. A total of 429 children who are currently in kindergarten in the municipality once were registered as having such need or

being bilingual. According to numbers given by the kindergarten administration, there were 7 774 children in kindergartens in Stavanger in the school year 2011- 2012. Like in Havlandet, some kindergartens have a considerably higher number and also a higher percentage of children whose parents have a foreign mother tongue. But also like in Havlandet, this category of children is provided a place in a kindergarten in their neighbourhood as long as there is capacity. Consequently there are children from minority language backgrounds in most kindergarten in the city.

Table no 7.2.1: Afghan children in kindergartens, Stavanger

Kindergarten	Afghan children	Afghan Children 0-3	Afghan Children 3-6
Johannes:	3	2	1
Åsen:	2	1	1
Vika:	1	-	1
Sletten:	1	-	1
Bakken:	2	1	1
TOTAL STAVANGER	9	4	5

As the above table shows and according to the kindergarten administration in Stavanger, there are nine Afghan children coming to kindergarten in Stavanger in the kindergarten year August 2011 – June 2012. This seems to be a rather low number compared to the total number of Afghan children in “preschool age” who are currently registered as living in Stavanger. Table no. 7.2.2 and 7.2.3 below shows the last statistical data available on Afghans and Afghan children living in the Municipality of Stavanger as of January 2012. We also have included the data for Havlandet as they may serve as an interesting comparison and contrast for our discussion.

Table no 7.2.2: Total population in Stavanger and Havlandet municipalities Jan 2012 registered as Afghans (SSB 2012)

Municipality	Age group 0 – 5 yrs	Age group 6 -12 yrs	Age group 13 -15 yrs	Age group 16-19 yrs	Age group 20-64 yrs
Stavanger	38	24	9	31	108
Havlandet	10	10	5	4	27

Table 7.2.3: Total number of children in Stavanger and Havlandet municipalities Jan 2012 registered as Afghans (Source: SSB 2012)

Municip.	Age gr. 0 yrs	Age gr. 1 yrs	Age gr. 2 yrs	Age gr. 3 yrs	Age gr. 4 yrs	Age gr. 5 yrs	Age gr. 6 yrs	TOTAL
Stavanger	11*	9	4	3	4	7	4	42
Havlandet	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10 **

* Number stipulated from sum of children 1- 4 subtracted from total no in age group 0-5.

** SSB don't have data for each age group living in Havlandet

The seemingly very low number of Afghan children coming to kindergartens in Stavanger municipality – only nine out of 31 in kindergarten age (1-6 years) which is less than one third, is disputed by the personnel at Johannes Educational Centre. However, as the municipal statistics are based on registers of mother tongue and since bilingual children no longer are applied for by the refugee and immigration office, these figures may be inaccurate. Some parents may not want to tick off in the foreign mother tongue cell when they apply since this no longer will influence their chances to get a place for their child in the kindergarten they prefer. When asked to stipulate a number of Afghan children in kindergartens in Stavanger based on their knowledge and impressions, they suggested around 15. In either case the figures must be regarded to be low.

Table 7.2.4: Total number of Afghan children in Stavanger and Havlandet municipalities coming to kindergarten or not during kindergarten year 2011-2012 (Source Kindergarten administration, Municipalities of Stavanger and Havlandet.

Municipality	Havlandet		Stavanger		TOTAL
	"0 – 3 år"	"4 – 6 år"	"0 – 3 år"	"4 – 6 år"	
Staying home	1 (?)	1 (?)	16	15	33
Coming to Kindergarten	4	4	4	5	17

Table no. 7.2.4 above shows that there is no statistical evidence that Afghan children tend to be sent to kindergarten when they reach the age of three. However, more accurate statistics on kindergarten participation may have confirmed what the impression of kindergarten personnel interviewed was.

In the municipality of Stavanger, they have organized a team of bilingual assistants at the Preschool Department of Johannes Educational Centre (JLS – in Norwegian "Johannes Læringscenter")⁴². They are at the disposal of kindergartens in Stavanger who have bilingual children who according to their professional judgment are in the need of extra language training and other language related measures. As of today the team consists of 25 assistants who represent 22 different languages. Normally kindergartens are assigned a half day per week with an assistant in each language they apply for a delimited period of time. The assistants carry out their work in the kindergartens according to a fixed work schedule. Multilanguage assistants are an important resource for the kindergartens. Their work is primarily language development (mother tongue), dissemination of information about cultural difference among minority children and children with an ethnic Norwegian background, as well as facilitating the contact between homes and kindergartens. Parents may, in cooperation with the kindergarten apply for multilingual assistant for their children.

At Johannes Educational Centre they have an Introduction kindergarten (JIK) where they offer places to children of parents who are participating in the Introduction program, and also

⁴² The following information about JLS has been found and translated from their webpage: (<http://www.minbarnehage.no/minskole/johannesf/pilot.nsf/vArt?Opennavigator&u=Basen%20for%20flerspr%C3%A5klige%20assisterter>)

children of asylum seekers attending Norwegian language courses. When there is capacity, the kindergarten also provides places for other target groups. After approximately one year in the Introduction kindergarten (JIK), the children will be transferred to the local kindergarten nearest to their home.

The kindergarten at Johannes Educational Centre is appointed as one of NAFO's (National Centre for Multicultural Education) *focus kindergartens*. This implies that they are among a few selected kindergartens that have been given the task of sharing their expertise in one or several disciplines like second language and mother tongue training, family learning, multicultural work in the kindergarten etc. with other kindergartens in their county and also in the country at large. In this way they contribute to NAFO's competence enhancement projects. Kindergartens in Stavanger may also contact them for advice and guidance. Johannes Introduction kindergarten has in recent years specialized their expertise in the areas of family work and language learning. At least two times annually they invite the pedagogical leaders and other contact persons in their collaborating kindergartens in the municipality of Stavanger to come to the centre to exchange experiences. The resource team offers courses in relevant topics.

8.3 How the kindergartens cope with socio-cultural differences

8.3.1 Language training and social skills

All the leaders interviewed had a clear vision of their tasks, obligations and what they were aiming at, pedagogically speaking, and could easily follow a logic from an overarching theoretical level to practical activities in each of the kindergarten's departments. In all the kindergartens, a thorough, systematic job had been done with annual plans reflecting national and local (municipal) steering documents such as the Kindergarten Act, the Framework Plan for Kindergartens, The Municipal Action Plan, vision document and slogans. The annual plans were all accessible on their websites for parents and others to consult whenever they want to. The websites also have special pages for each department, and this made it easy to follow the general and overarching principles all the way down to their manifestations as activities, routines that take place each week through the year as well as working rules that are supposed to "colour" the activities.

When reflecting over the relevant passages in the steering documents such as the National Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2006),

the Quality plan for the Kindergartens 2011-2015 (Stavanger 2011, Havlandet kommune 2011 - 2014) and the Strategy plan and annual plans of their own kindergarten, what repeatedly was highlighted was the right of each child to feel included in the community of children and adults in the kindergarten, to be seen and valued as unique individuals and to experience that their background and their parents' wishes for their upbringing is fully respected. These statements were presented spontaneously and clearly in all the interviews, as exemplified in this quote from the director of Granlia Kindergarten:

Our pedagogical platform starts with the slogan "A safe start in creative diversity". For us this means to be good caring professionals. This among other things implies to work continuously and hard on our role as adult role models. As I have explained to you, our physical environment here is geared towards creative play. Diversity for us means to look upon our environment here as a reflection of the society around us, and we carry with us the basic perception that human diversity is an enrichment for this society. In our work we take as a point of departure that our national governments as well as our local authorities view diversity as valuable and a positive contribution to society. Our job is to see to it that every child is included and to equip every child with the skills and knowledge they need to grow into society and to manage their everyday lives (Director).

Apart from these reflections and statements regarding inclusion, respect and valuing of individual differences, there was a remarkable similarity in the interviews regarding how to work with the children to fulfil these values and goals. Firstly, very much seems to converge into a strong emphasis on language development and systematic work to improve the language skills of all the children, regardless of linguistic background and present knowledge. The governing principle, in all the kindergartens was to take each child's level as the point of departure and work systematically function by function and category by category to improve the child's language skills towards the highest possible level before they leave for school. All the directors and pedagogical leaders told us about their department's participation over the last few years in language strengthening projects and programs to improve the children's language⁴³. This systematic emphasis and work with language in all situations and activities during the day had proved to be beneficiary for all the children, but not least for those who come from a minority language background. But secondly, and not less emphasized by the directors and pedagogical leaders, was the importance of facilitating the development of the children's social skills. One director even regarded the children's mastering of the social codes governing how for instance to make contact with other children, invite others to play

⁴³ "Språkløftet" (with Borghild Børresen), "Språktiltaket" (with Jørgen Frost & Annette Lønnegaard)

and present a wish to play with children in a play group already established, as even more important than the linguistic skills as such.

8.3.2 Working with and valuing difference

Although not explicitly said or clearly visible, it seems to be a slight but notable difference between two of the ordinary kindergartens and the Johannes Early Childhood Introduction Centre on one hand and the other four kindergartens on the other in terms of whether differences are commented and worked with when they appear and are made explicit or whether they are more systematically worked with and valued in the everyday life of the department. In the latter environment the dominant message is that

We are all different and all of us come from different backgrounds – maybe your grandparents don't come from another country, but they live in a small coastal community in the north of Norway, in fact almost two thousand kilometres away from here. Your grandparents speak a strange dialect and don't use the internet and they are different from the grandparents of Fatima who lives near Ankara and whom she speaks with on SKYPE every week.

However, all the kindergartens mentioned the annual UN week in October, the birthday of each child and national and religious festivals of importance for different groups among the children as natural occasions for highlighting and valuing the different backgrounds, experiences, cultural knowledge and differences in style and values of the children whatever these backgrounds are.

Apart from the awareness of a valuing of differences in background, experiences, knowledge and personal styles between the children and between the parents, one should not assume that all differences in values, norms, convictions and styles are easy to harmonize or appreciate when it comes to everyday life in the kindergarten. The Norwegian kindergarten cultures, although they differ, all tend to hold and express some values and norms quite strongly. Among these are gender equality and a strong under-communication of differences in social prestige in the sense that we talk and interact in public spaces as if everybody is equal and “we are all the same”. Parents who grew up in societies where men and women live very different lives and are separated from early age, and where differences in social prestige is strongly played out and important in public communication (ideas about caste, class or family hierarchies for instance), may have a hard time in accepting the dominant culture in any Norwegian kindergarten. These cultural differences together with religiously based differences in gender roles, dress code, food taboos etc, may sometimes create quite difficult situations in the kindergarten. Research has shown that to handle such disagreements in a

professional – that is in a conscious, value and goal-guided and informed - way and to manage to maintain a friendly and respectful tone and relationship despite these deeper disagreements when negotiating practical solutions, demands a lot of experience and training.

The interviews in the kindergartens of this pilot project, and also the interviews with Afghan parents, showed that this type of “intercultural brokerage” situations had occurred between Afghan parents and kindergarten professionals. We will get back to these situations. We find them interesting because they point to the professional competence of inclusion and valuing of difference, but also of how to handle situations where the outcome must be to learn ways to “agree to disagree” or finding ways of interaction and cooperation that manage to deal with not only differences but real disagreements and seemingly “incompatible” values. We suspect there is a lot more need for learning and professional development in this area in the years to come, both in early age education and in other professional public service fields, and we hope to show that the Afghan – Norwegian professional encounter may reveal more information about the needs in the field in ways that bring more clarity.

8.3.3 Working with parents – parenting and secondary socialization

When it comes to working with the parents on the issue of child rearing and child development, some of the kindergartens mentioned ICDP (Hundeide, 2008) as a program they worked with now or were acquainted with (this included JIK, Åsen, Havglint and Sletten kindergartens). Some of the pedagogical leaders also mentioned Mother-and-child-groups as a model they knew and had experienced good results from. The pedagogical leader at Sletten kindergarten had worked four years in a Mother-and-child-group. She underscores that this project which was initiated by a social worker, was directed towards all mothers and children in the neighbourhood, but particularly those who did not have a full time place in the kindergarten for their child. They used Hundeide’s ICDP-program.

The Family learning program combines the emphasis on language learning, the parent-child relationship and awareness on the issue of childrearing in a new and unfamiliar socio-cultural setting.⁴⁴ The idea is that the parents’ experience and knowledge – including knowledge of their mother tongue - is acknowledged as an important resource for learning. To establish practical and familiar situations where the child and the parents are together – such as making food, handicraft activities and playing – while learning for instance Norwegian as a second

⁴⁴ The Clare family learning project, 2000 <http://www.clarefamilylearning.org/programmes>, Aamodt, Sigrun and Hauge, An-Magritt (Eds) (2008): *Familielæring, og andre modeller innenfor flerkulturell opplæring*.

language for both, will improve the language learning output while at the same time the background, mother tongue and cultural identity of the child is valued and acknowledged. In addition to this, the parents are recognized as an important pedagogical resource for their child. The family learning program has been tried out at Johannes Early Childhood Introduction Centre (JIK) and the experience has been reviewed as very rewarding and promising for further development (Haus 2011).

8.3.4 Integrated, but still with language challenges

The issue of language learning seems by far to be the most professionally challenging part of working with ethnic minorities, bilingual children and their parents in the kindergartens.

Concerning the children, everything seems all right as long as the child does not have any particular problems like a difficult home situation, a condition that call for special needs education or for instance a traumatic experiences in the past which has caused a post-traumatic stress syndrome. Although the kindergarten personnel seem to have less information about the child's home situation and background than compared to the ethnic majority children, they seem well prepared and confident when they start to work with the bilingual children, regardless of their level of second language skills and their age when they start. The general experience seems to be that these children learn Norwegian as a second language quickly and soon reach the level where they understand most messages and can communicate both with personnel and other children.

Their preoccupation in these "normal cases" is when the children start their kindergarten life late (that is when they are three years old and elder), their Norwegian is often still rather shallow and their categories few when they reach the last year in kindergarten. Then they have problems in grasping the subject matter that today's kindergarten emphasize so much more than before and which is specified in the Framework Plan for Kindergartens. The result may be that although they get well integrated, learn a lot of important social skills, get friends and collect a lot of good experiences, they may still lag behind the majority children in language skills and subject knowledge. This may not be a problem at all as long as they are in the kindergarten, but will fall back on them strongly when they start school at the age of six.

This potential problem also seems to be the reason why all the kindergartens systematically apply for mother tongue assistance for the bilingual children. It is difficult to have a sufficiently specific assessment of the child's mother tongue skills without the assistance of a mother tongue assistant. Also there is good evidence that the mother tongue level of the child

is important for the learning of Norwegian. Therefore the assistance of the mother tongue teacher is regarded so valuable.

Then there is the issue of the quality of the communication with the parents. The quality of this communication and the need for a good flow of information of course becomes a critical issue in cases when there are special problems of a social, psychological or physical character. Then the normal routine is that the parents have the role of intermediary between the kindergarten and the different special services and institutions that are involved in helping the child and the family. Of course it is a well-known issue in these cases that the capacity and also good will of the parents to play this role of intermediary may vary quite a lot. Sometimes the problem or part of it may be that the parents do not communicate well with each other, and this is not a problem primarily in the ethnic minority group. But if this is not the problem, then the problem of the second language skills of the parents certainly is in many cases. The interviews also reflect the problem of a much lower level of general education among refugee parents than the average level in Norway. This also was the case for Afghans and for Afghan mothers particularly. It makes it even more difficult to play the role of intermediary between professional institutions and the kindergarten efficiently.

9 Afghan families and their experiences with Norwegian kindergartens

This section will stress the Afghan families' experience with the Norwegian kindergarten. Ten families have been interviewed. Two families were represented by the mother, four were represented by the father and four families were represented by both the mother and the father. All the interviews were conducted in Norwegian.

9.1 The Afghan families interviewed: main characteristics

The families interviewed come from different part of Afghanistan (Kabul, North, South-East). Four families define themselves as Hazaras, four as Tajiks, one as Dari ("but not Tajik") and one as a being part of a "small ethnic which is not well known". This family consequently uses to say they are Tajiks. In another family the husband's father was Tajik and his mother Pashtun and he himself is now married to a Pashtun woman. Both Sunni and Shia Muslims are represented. In one family, the husband is Sunni and the wife Shia.

The respondents all came to Norway between 2000 and 2009. Five mothers came via family reunification, the rest of the informants came as asylum seekers after a long, exhausting and dangerous journey, generally through Iran, Turkey, Greece, Italy, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Denmark and Sweden. Some children did also come via this route. One came through Iran, Turkmenistan and Russia. Several respondents lived in the neighbouring countries Iran or Pakistan before leaving for Europe. One family had previously been living in Ukraine and another one in Denmark. Except for the five mothers who came through family reunification, two families say that Norway was the country they considered as their final destination. The others tell this destination came up as a possible final destination *en route*.

Currently, nine families have been granted refugee status, while one family has got a negative answer to their demand for asylum. This family currently lives in a reception centre for asylum seekers in Stavanger. The others families live in Stavanger. Six families own a house or a flat, one is living in a municipal house, while one is renting a flat.

The educational level from Afghanistan of the informants is variable: some have never been to school while others have a university degree from Afghanistan. Several have been studying or are currently studying in Norway (Norwegian courses or other courses). None of the informants may be categorized as unemployed (voluntary or not). Those who work are

engaged within different sectors (Fretex, reception Centre for asylum seekers, counseling, employed in the community, private construction company.)

All the families have one or several children with the project's target group (0-9). The number of children in each family varies from one to four.

9.2 From Kabul to Hillevåg: different kindergartens, different experiences

This part aims at identifying, in a chronological manner, the different kind of child care and educational systems the Afghan parents have experienced.

9.2.1 Who took care of the children before leaving for Europe?

Several children were born in Afghanistan or in Iran. Here, the children were mainly looked after by their mother and other members of the family. None of the children attended a kindergarten, which may be explained by the current Afghan situation. As one mother tells, while she attended a kindergarten herself when she was a little girl (“kindergarten is not a new concept to Afghans”), the country's conflicts have forced many of these to close or they have been destroyed. That is to say that even if she wanted to send her children to the kindergarten, the context did not allow her to do so. Other families say that they had never heard of kindergartens before coming to Norway, or that they had heard of it, but that is was something that existed only in very big cities.

Some children (all boys) did attend school in Afghanistan, but only a couple of years (and then they left). For those who had children in Iran, their situation as undocumented migrants did not allow them to attend school. However, on mother says that the schooling of her children was very important to her. To find a school that would accept her boy, she hired a taxi and visited a very large number of schools asking if they could receive her son. She managed to find a school, but underlines that you need a lot of courage and money (hire a taxi) to succeed in finding a school for an Afghan child in Iran.

9.2.2 Experiences from other European countries

The family who stayed in Ukraine before moving to Norway experienced that as undocumented, their kids did not have the possibility to attend kindergarten or school. Without any illusion of one day obtaining legal documents in this country, they decided to move to Norway which was a country the father already knew. He had already asked for

asylum here twice, but both requests had been rejected. However, as a family their demand was accepted. Contrary to the situation in Ukraine, his oldest son, then aged 9, started school soon after the family arrived. It seems that the possibility of schooling for the children in Norway (even as asylum seekers) was one of the aspects that made the family leave Ukraine for Norway.

The family who stayed in Denmark before they came to Norway had two of their children in a so called “asylum school” in Denmark. When they came to Norway, the parents were overwhelmed to discover that their kids could now, even as asylum seekers attend a Norwegian school with Norwegian children. They were also happy to discover the level of the teaching. The kids were then aged 7 and 9. The mother tells:

In Denmark, the kids were not mixed with the ethnic Danish kids, that was wrong. They did not learn much, but when they started in Norway they did. In Norway they had real teaching, but in Denmark there was a lot of drawing and not much theory and that was sad, it was not real schooling. In Norway they got extra help from the teachers to learn Norwegian, they were in a normal Norwegian class. So when I compare it to the Danish system, I prefer the Norwegian one: asylum kids have the same rights as the Norwegian kids, there is no discrimination (Afghan mother).

It seems that those who can compare their experience of the Norwegian educational system to another system (Iranian, Ukrainian, Danish) tend to prefer, and appreciate, the Norwegian one, both in terms of quality and, specifically, rights.

9.2.3 At the reception centre

Several families have experienced living in reception centres with small children. Norwegian law stipulates that children of asylum seekers are to be offered “suitable activities” of at least three hours per day (Monday-Friday) when aged 2- 6. For those aged 0-2, the reception centres are to provide “some kind of child care, giving the parents the opportunity to participate in Norwegian classes and information meetings” (NOU, 2010:7).

To meet these requirements, some reception centres have so called “children bases” (barnebaser) while others buy places in kindergartens outside the reception centre (open kindergarten or local kindergarten).

The fact that the children need to be accompanied, and the limits this implies, could stress some. But it also involves positive aspects. Being an asylum seeker implies an everyday life without much meaningful activity. As the above mentioned Afghan parent puts it:

When I go to the open kindergarten with my daughter I have something to do. When she will start in a normal kindergarten next year I am a little bit worried of what I will fill my days with (Afghan parent).

For this parent, accompanying the daughter to the kindergarten has been something positive and meaningful, for the daughter and for the parent. Going to such an institution may also facilitate the transition to a local kindergarten.

Local kindergarten

While Norwegian law stipulates that all children aged one or more have the right to a place in a kindergarten, children aged from 1⁴⁵-3 and living in a reception centre do not have this right.

A father says the following concerning the right of these children:

The Child Welfare services said to us that all children do have the same rights, that foreign children have the same rights as Norwegians children. It is not true. Norwegian kids get a place in the kindergarten when they are two, my daughter gets one when she is four. That is not to have the same rights (Afghan father).

Families with special needs

When a family is being categorized as one with “special needs”, a place in a local kindergarten may be offered to children under 5 years old. The family who lives in a reception centre in Stavanger finds themselves in such a situation (the mother is sick and not capable of taking care of the child). Their three year old girl will start in a local kindergarten in August. According to the parents, it was by the help from the Child Welfare Services (barnevernet) that it was decided that the three year old girl was to be offered a place. The mother tells:

It is thanks to the Child Welfare Services that our daughter will start in a kindergarten even if she is not 5 years old. They pushed the reception centre. If they hadn't been pushing, she would not have been given a place. Someone external, a doctor or something, have to push to make things happen at the reception centre. They [at the reception centre] do their job, what they have to do, but nothing more (Afghan mother).

9.2.4 While being “settled”

When the outcome of the application for asylum is positive, the families are being “settled” (bosatt). While the parents generally attend the Introduction Program, the children will start going in a kindergarten or school.

⁴⁵ A child is to be offered a place in a kindergarten no later than in august one year after he was born. That is to say that some start when they are 1 year (those born in august), while others start when they are one year and 11 months (those born in September). In some cases, a child can start sooner, depending on availabilities and priorities. The youngest Afghan child identified in this study started when she was six months old.

In Stavanger, newly arrived children will attend Johannes Early Childhood Introduction Centre called the “introduction kindergarten” (innføringsbarnehagen) or the “introduction school” (innføringskolen, 1-7. grade), both at Johannes Educational Centre (Johannes Læringscenter). Johannes Educational Centre is also the place where the parents will follow the Introduction Program for refugees (IPR). This gives the family the possibility to be in the same area during their very first months in the city. This situation is unique for the region.

Johannes Educational Centre (Johannes Læringscenter)

Several of the informants have or have had their children in the Johannes Early Childhood Introduction Centre) at Johannes Educational Centre. Their experiences with the place are somehow different. One father stresses that the offer was “good, but nothing more”. More particularly he thinks that, at the time his son attended this kindergarten (in 2005), there was a lack of employees compared to the number of children. “I experienced it as hectic” he says. “There was no place or room to talk with the employees, we brought the kids, we ran, we picked them up, we just had a few conversations with the employees during the time spent there”. The father stresses that his opinion of Johannes is the result of a comparison with other kindergartens the family has been introduced to on later stages of their migration history. Besides, it took place seven years ago when the Johannes Early Childhood Introduction Centre still was quite “new”.

The two Afghan families who currently have children in the Johannes Early Childhood Introduction Centre do only have positive things to say about it. Contrary to the Afghan father referred to above, they experience that the employees have a lot of time to speak with the parents. An Afghan mother tells that when her son was to start in the kindergarten when he was 11 months, the employees made a lot of efforts in order to make this new situation as easy as possible for both her and her child. An Afghan father also explains how they were received in the very first beginning and that an interpreter was there in order to facilitate the conversation, which he appreciated. This father currently attends, with his Afghan wife, the family learning classes at Johannes:

I have attended family learning classes for 6 months now. It is really good because the employees know the families, and they talk about Norwegian culture, and we cook. Men from my country do not know how to cook, but here [in Norway] the men help out, and now I know how to make a cake and that is very good. Actually we learn a lot of things. The other day we took the bus into the city centre and they showed us where we can buy clothes for the children, how to take the bus, where we can relax and organize a barbeque. And the contact with the children [is good]. We sit here [at Johannes] and learn to talk Norwegian with the children and we read

books with the children. We know that the children like that we read books for them, so now I sometimes go to the library in order to get books I can read for my children (Afghan father).

9.3 General thoughts on the Norwegian kindergarten

This third part stresses more specifically the families' thoughts on cultural and linguistic differences, and how these are dealt with within the Norwegian kindergartens.

9.3.1 General thoughts on Norway

Concerning the informants' thoughts of Norway as a host country, these are mainly positive. When asked about what he liked about living in Norway, a father answers as follows:

The freedom you have in the country and the democracy we have here. And if you go on the right path, you get success here in Norway. If you choose the right path and right channels, then you can live a good and decent life here in Norway. It's just like The American Dream (Afghan father).

Several of the Afghans are rather reluctant when asked if they can specify something "negative" about living in Norway and point out that they are thankful to the Norwegian state for receiving them. One father explained "*We want to show respect to the Norwegian society. Everyone in the kindergarten is being nice to us*". The reluctance to identify "negative" aspects may be explained by a) the Norwegian nationality of the researchers conducting the interviews (not wanting to criticize the interlocutor's country) and b) the context the informants come from and the long and difficult asylum procedure they have been through (war, persecutions, no access to education etc.). When asked to talk more specifically about their thoughts on the Norwegian kindergarten, a similar attitude is found (not wanting to criticize), but some aspects are identified as to have an improvement potential, specifically the mother tongue education. We will get back to that below.

One Afghan mother mentions that she finds the functioning of the Child welfare services "strange" and says that she knows a family from Pakistan, being Hazaras as herself, whose children were taken away from them which she cannot understand. One of the men interviewed also mentions the Child welfare service when reflecting on life in Norway:

There are quite many who are struggling with their kids. [...]. We who are Muslims and with other cultural backgrounds, we think it's very good that we have the Child welfare services. My wife also keeps saying that it is all right that we have it. But sometimes I see that for instance Somalians are involved in the Child welfare service and that people from the Child welfare service think... I think they sometimes get it wrong, because they lack the competence. If you say to the child: "Come here, I'll kill you!" - Norwegians never say that. But in immigrant families that is something one

can say. That's the kind of misunderstandings that we have. Sometimes things like that happens (Afghan father).

He suggests that in addition to raising the competence, the Child welfare service should pay more attention to giving the parents the help they need:

The other thing that is very important is that the Child welfare service should sometimes think a little different and pay more attention to giving parents the help that they need [...] instead of spending so much money on children ending up in institutions (Afghan father).

Some of the informants also share some experiences on everyday racism. A woman says she does feel somehow discriminated by older Norwegian ladies when walking on the street: “*I have seen elderly ladies leaving when I show up, maybe they do not like refugees*” (Afghan mother). One of the men tells us he once owned an apartment he wanted to rent out. He got a phone call from a person being interested, but then the person suddenly started commenting on the man's accent. When the Afghan man explained he was from Afghanistan, the other person responded: “*No, I don't want to rent your apartment. Go back [to Afghanistan]!*” But, adds the informant: “*Racism exists in every society. There is less [racism] in Norway than in Germany – perhaps also less than in England. But it exists everywhere*” (Afghan father).

The same man says that integration is not about being 100% Norwegian:

It will be wrong for me, for my children that they become 100% Norwegian. [...] One must be concerned with taking the positives from both cultures. [...] If I'm being completely Norwegian, I am still not accepted in Norwegian society as really Norwegian, nor will I be accepted in the Afghan community.

He explains that he thinks it is important to keep his own identity and at the same time function well in the Norwegian society.

9.3.2 Thoughts on cultural differences

The Afghan context versus the Norwegian context

The fact that there is, compared to the Afghan context, hardly any difference between men and women in Norway is mentioned by several informants. One man says that in contrast to the Norwegian society a lot of the Afghan women are analphabets. He says that amongst the women who come directly from Afghanistan, very few choose to study to get an education here in Norway after the Introduction program for newly arrived refugees. He believes that only four or five Afghan women in the region go to university. Besides their background being analphabets, having children also makes it difficult to choose education. But those who

have grown up here, will go to the university. Another man says that his wife, already having studied at university level in Afghanistan, intends to study here, when their child starts kindergarten. But, he says: *“She will never work 100%. You either have to choose the career or the children”*.

One father says that in Afghanistan, the children *“stay with their mother the whole day and when they are to start school they do not want to go”*, while in Norway the situation is very different, which he finds good. One mother, who attended an Afghan kindergarten herself, explains the difference between the Norwegian and the Afghan kindergarten as follows:

Before, there were several kindergartens in Afghanistan. Now the country has been destroyed so it is not like that anymore, but Afghans used to have kindergartens so they are used to them, or have heard of them. Myself, when I was a little girl, I attended one because my mom was working in a sewing factory, and I remember that I liked going there, but the routines were different [from what they are here]. For example, we slept after lunch, and the lunch was hot, and the activities took place before lunch, and it was warm so no bread with “pålegg”⁴⁶, but like a dinner, and then we slept and then we watched TV or a theatre or something like that. You started when you were maybe two years old, and you started school at 6 or 7. Seven was obligatory (Afghan mother).

An Afghan father says that the educational system in Afghanistan is more traditional than the Norwegian one. He further tells that the challenges faced when being introduced to the Norwegian educational system were mainly related to the Norwegian language and typically Norwegian concepts such as “go for a walk” (gå på tur) or “pølsepinne” (a wooden stick you use to hold the hotdog when you grill it over the campfires). This father, with a university degree from Afghanistan, says that he did his best to get knowledge about the Norwegian society at the reception centre for asylum seekers:

If you are interested, you try to explore some things, you read things I order to get to know how your new society works. Then you get a picture on how the educational system is for example. I also attended several meetings when at the reception centre, so when the children started (school), there were no big surprises. But there were a lot of new things, and challenges related to these, such as which clothes or shoes to put on, or “go for a walk” with “pølsepinne”. We went to the foodstore to buy a “pølsepinne”, and we looked and looked for it. Finally, someone working there told us that “you don’t buy a “pølsepinne”, you just go to the forest and take a wooden stick to put your sausage on”. So I want to say that we have been making a lot of mistakes, related to the language and such things. It has been embarrassing, but we have been laughing and we have learned from it (Afghan father).

⁴⁶ What you put on the bread in Norway, i.e. cheese or jam

Cultural and religious understanding in the kindergarten

It seems that there are important differences concerning the kindergartens' way of celebrating, or not celebrating cultural or religious celebrations⁴⁷. One mother tells that in her daughter's kindergarten they celebrate Eid (end of Ramadan). As far as she knows, it is the employees who took the initiative to do so. She also tells that the employees have asked her if she has Afghan books and toys that she can bring to the kindergarten. However, she tells me that she did not have such things and that, besides, she finds that *"toys are the same all over the world and that nowadays, Afghan toys are not different from European ones"*.⁴⁸

A father living in Sandnes tells that it is unimaginable to celebrate Eid, or other Afghan traditions, in the kindergarten two of his four daughters attend: *"it is not possible to have these celebrations in the kindergarten because there are Norwegian rules, and in Afghanistan there are Afghan rules and in Norway there are Norwegian rules, so that would be difficult"*. He explains these difficulties by the fact that there is only one Afghan family in the kindergarten. In a general manner, he does not seem to expect the kindergarten to have "non-Norwegian" celebrations, books or toys. In fact, he hopes that if his daughters get a mother tongue assistant (they have just applied for one), she will assume that part by *"bringing Afghan books"*.

An Afghan mother who has been working in a kindergarten herself tells that for the Norwegian National Day, the non-Norwegian children are asked to draw their flag together with the Norwegian one, and that they sometimes *"cook international food or dress with different national costumes"* etc. She explains this by the fact that multicultural differences are to be taken into account through official regulations (rammeplan) of Norwegian kindergartens. She does, however, believe that there are dissimilarities between the different kindergartens and thinks those located close to the city centres, with a larger amount of foreign children, have more cultural activities than those located in the countryside.

One Afghan father says he has the impression that "there is not much cultural books, toys or celebrations" in his children's kindergarten. However, he thinks that they often go to the

⁴⁷ Johannes will not be dealt with in this section, but as we do know, this structure does highly take into account such differences.

⁴⁸ As one of the authors of this report now has her own daughter in this specific kindergarten, the research team have more contextual knowledge about it. This kindergarten does in fact have a clearly expressed focus on "Diversity and Community" (Mangfold og fellesskap).

library and get such books there. When asked if there could be a larger focus on cultural diversity, he answers that:

It could be a strength, it can enrich us and... yes, as parents we are concerned about transferring the values of our country to our children, that they preserve these values. But we as parents are not able to do that on our own, so it would be good if it was something that is included in the everyday life of the schools and the kindergartens (Afghan father).

One father, when talking about his children, is worried that: *“If the children don’t get a good education in their own culture and religious values, there is a risk that they might end up not being included amongst the Norwegians, nor amongst Afghans”*. He also fears that the children might end up being confused about values and end up breaking up with their parents in their adolescence – as one sometimes sees happening in immigrant families. He has a girl in school and points out that for him it is important to know the details about the religious teaching, so that he can correct what she has been taught in school. He explains that he wants his kids to have a good understanding of the religious values in Islam from early childhood on. He is afraid the children might be confused when facing other values in the society; he doesn’t want his daughter to get *confused* about which religion and which values are right.

When speaking of his daughter in school, he gives several examples from his encounter with the school: *“Our experience is that they do not show enough consideration [for other cultural values]”*. To exemplify this he talks about how he doesn’t want male employees to follow his little daughter to the toilet. Nor does he want his daughter to take part in activities such as swimming in the pool in just her panties, also because that includes changing of clothes. He says that although he doesn’t want his daughter to take part in the bathing, he has experienced that the kindergarten personnel has told him *“oh yes sorry, she has been bathing today”*.

The same Afghan father says that there is a lack of competence and understanding of other cultures in the kindergarten of his child, which is a private kindergarten, because they do not have other cultures in that kindergarten, neither amongst the children nor amongst the employees. All are Norwegians. He explains that when it comes to integration he doesn’t think kindergartens show enough consideration for other cultures: *“They do not have much focus on that area. Some kindergartens maybe, but most don’t”*. He says he wishes both the school and the kindergartens would take their values more seriously.

He believes that there are steps that need to be taken when it comes to issues related to integration in the kindergarten. He says that *“...there must be a requirement that the municipality or the public services must be clear and distinct concerning the tasks that our*

society faces". He says they need to be clear and set aside enough funds and make sure there is a continuous focus on this. This father has been living in Norway for quite some time, which might explain why he is more outspoken than the other informants.

Two families stress that it is very important for them that their children do not eat pork. One mother says that the deal with the kindergarten is that their girl eat with other Muslim children

When asking another father if he feels that the employees in the kindergarten respect him, his children and their Afghan culture, he answers as follows:

The immediate answer is yes, that is my opinion, they have shown tolerance, they have shown respect and they have tried to adjust and to take into account who we are, and I think that is very good.

When asked if something could have been better, he replies that:

There is always a potential for improvement, but first and foremost I am very grateful for the effort made by those working in the kindergartens and in the schools. I have had three children in Norwegian kindergarten and school, so I am deeply grateful and I respect the employees in the kindergarten. They do a very good and important job. I could have said that "they could have done this and that better" and so on, but I have the duty to understand the Norwegian system [too], so I would say that there is a potential for improvement from both sides (Afghan father).

9.3.3 Thoughts on mother tongue education

The parents' experiences of mother tongue education differ, depending on where they are in their migratory trajectory. The family who is currently at a reception centre and whose daughter will start in a local kindergarten in August, due to "special needs", did not know about this offer. When the interviewer told them about it, they said that "it would be a good thing if our daughter got such assistance". Another couple, who have had their children (aged 1 and 3) in a local kindergarten for less than a year (before that they stayed at home), tell that the employees in the kindergarten have asked them if they want a mother tongue assistant:

The kids do not have a mother tongue assistant now, but they will maybe get one. Those in the kindergarten have asked me if I want someone to come and talk their mother tongue with them. I said yes because now they speak a lot of Norwegian, and they have forgotten their mother tongue. I do not know when this person will come, or which day, but I think they have sent the application, and that they take care of the rest, they just asked me if I want one. Maybe this will start in August (Afghan father).

Other families who have had their children in school tell that they have, at one point, had mother tongue education for one or several of their children but that they do not have it now

because they are not completely satisfied with how this offer is organized. One mother tells that when she and her boys came to Norway ten years ago, they had mother tongue education. *“I very often asked the boys how it went and what they did, and they always answered me that they had been drawing or things like that. Also, they told me that they had a lot of breaks”* she tells. According to this mother, the mother tongue education has a large potential for improvement. She underlines that this enhancement needs to be qualitative rather than quantitative. She admits the number of hours dedicated to mother tongue education is quite limited, but emphasizes that if they get more hours they might lose important lessons. To this mother, important lessons are lessons within the “harder subjects” like Mathematics, Norwegian and English language, reading and writing. She has finally decided, together with her husband, that they will not apply for a mother tongue assistant for their 3 year old daughter who is in the kindergarten. *“We think that we can take care of the mother tongue education ourselves”* she argues, adding that *“according to me, and that is also the opinion of a lot of other Afghan mothers, there is only one Afghan lady who is qualified to be a mother tongue teacher here in Stavanger”*. This lady, and still according to the mother in question, used to be a teacher in Afghanistan. A feeling that “everybody can be a mother tongue assistant” is in fact expressed by this mother who asks for more severe criterions when recruiting such assistants (like a formal education within the area).

Another family, with experience from both kindergarten and school, also has a quite negative experience of the mother tongue education. This is expressed as follows by the father who has had mother tongue education for two of his children (and whose wife actually is working as a mother tongue teacher), and who, just as the above-mentioned mother, has decided not to ask for one for the youngest one (4 years old and in a kindergarten):

What I can say about the mother tongue education is that it was very shifting and inconsistent and varied a lot in quality and not very well organized. My immediate thought is that the municipality does have a potential for improvement if they are to continue with this offer. We wanted it to be regularly; with a continuity of the progression so that we could see the effect of it, but both the parents and the children lost their motivation to continue, because the whole thing appeared quite silly. It was not a good offer for mother tongue education: one day a teacher came, then she left for maternity leave, a new teacher came but after a very long time, or maybe a teacher didn't come at all, and the whole thing lost its effect. My youngest daughter has never had mother tongue education, the one in the middle had some in the kindergarten and the eldest one some at school (Afghan father).

A third family stresses that newly arrived children should get more than three hours per week of mother tongue education when they start in the Norwegian kindergarten, then the total number can get reduced when the child begin to understand better.

An alternative, or a supplement, to mother tongue education within the official educational system is that of the Afghan Organizations. The organization of the Hazaras offers such training every second Sunday. One father says that his kids follow these courses and that a teacher is paid 5000 NOK a year. *“That is almost doing it for free”* he says.

In a general manner, it seems that it is those who came to Norway recently who are the most “positive” concerning mother tongue education. Among those who have stayed in Norway for several years, one family says that at home they speak a “mix of Norwegian and Persian”, a second says that “mother tongue is less and less used. It is evident that the parents struggle with contradicting strategies in terms of the value of maintaining and developing their children’s mother tongue skills and thereby remember and learn more about their cultural heritage as against the value of learning Norwegian well and thereby strengthening their chances of making a good career and future in Norway. This is a dilemma they probably become more and more conscious about after having lived in Norway for a while. A father reveals the following when asked if he wants to go back to Afghanistan:

Going back to Afghanistan? Oh yes, there is no doubt about that, that is a very strong wish. But now I have very strong ties here too, not to forget the children. They have a whole different identity, and that is a reality that we need to deal with. My oldest will start high school next year (Afghan father).

9.3.4 Other aspects which are found challenging

Economical aspects

At the end of an interview, when the recording tape is off, one father tells that next year he might face financial problems and does not know if he can pay the kindergarten for their two youngest daughters (the two eldest go to school). In fact, while he currently pays half price, the employees in the kindergarten have told him that the rules are to change and that he might need to pay full price next year. He is currently calculating whether he will a) pay for both and tell his wife to continue Norwegian classes (which she does not want herself because she

finds it too difficult) or b) take them out of the kindergarten and “let” the wife stay at home with them and, thus, receive cash benefits⁴⁹ (kontantstøtte).

The cash benefits are also mentioned by other informants as a reason why some Afghan children tend to start late in the kindergarten.

Annual intake and the rule of “admittance in august after turned one”

One family tells in detail of their struggle to find a kindergarten that could accept two of their children. Their story is that the mother had two close children. The consequence of that was that she did not attend the Introduction Program for almost three years. In order not to lose her right to attend these classes, the father did his best to find a kindergarten that could accept both his 3 year old and his 6 months old daughters. The kindergarten where the oldest one was accepted could not accept the youngest one, “and I had to wait over a year event for the eldest one” he says. It was finally with the help of the municipality that he found one for both of them. After hearing their story, one could ask if the municipalities should not have been involved on an earlier stage. While being asked to comment on this, the director of Johannes Introduction kindergarten explains that the municipality has made a decision not to take in children under 11 months since their policy is that kindergartens support the system of parental leave. In cases like this she emphasizes that the professional judgment made takes as the point of departure the best interests of the child. Children at this age are strongly attached to their parents and generally should not be separated from them for longer periods of time.

Do all Afghan children go to kindergarten?

One Afghan father says that “*all Afghan children go to kindergarten*” and that it is the “*Somali children who tend to stay at home*”. One mother says she knows one family where the youngest children stay at home. We have not managed to interview a family with children aged between 1 or 6 and who do not attend kindergarten. However, different numbers indicate that there are Afghan children in the geographical area who do not go to the kindergarten (See chapter 8.2).

⁴⁹ The cash benefit arrangement (enacted in 1998) is a cash grant that is offered to parents of children between the ages of one and two who does not attend a day-care centre that receives public subsidies. This is administrated by NAV, The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration.

10 The encounter with Afghan families as experienced by the kindergarten personnel

In this section we will present the information and reflect on experiences given to us in the interviews with directors and pedagogical leaders from the kindergartens in Stavanger and Havlandet who at present are working with Afghan parents and their children. In the first subsection we present the work with and situation of the Afghan children and their families as experienced in the kindergartens we visited.⁵⁰ In the next subsection we give a summary in the form of the general picture or “what floats to the surface” as common themes and common experiences as well as marked differences between the kindergartens.

10.1 The experiences of the kindergarten personnel

10.1.1 Language and social skills

In one of the kindergartens they have had two families of Afghan background through the last years. One of the families is represented by a boy who will enter primary school this fall and a younger sister who is now three years old. She first came to the kindergarten when she was two. They have noticed that the youngest speaks better Norwegian than the boy aged six did at the same age. Their mother speaks very little Norwegian but the children speak Norwegian with each other in play. The director assesses the boy’s Norwegian as quite good and that he is well equipped for the challenges he will confront in primary school. However, the director during the transition conversation with the school always reminds them to assess the language and to monitor the language learning and concept acquisition of the bilingual children, especially during the first year in primary school. This is because the kindergarten is a rather predictable environment compared to the classroom in terms of what needs to be grasped strictly by spoken words in order to be understood. Therefore the kindergarten may be tricked when they observe and try to assess the children’s linguistic level and development in their ordinary everyday environment. Otherwise the father in a separate interview tells that the parents bilingual and bicultural nurturing policy is to speak their mother tongue with their children at home. They read Afghan books and show Afghan movies on the TV, but the children prefer Norwegian programs. To support their mother tongue and to teach them

⁵⁰ For anonymity reasons the different kindergartens are not mentioned. For the same reasons information about the respondents and the children and their families is changed and spread.

Afghan culture and tradition, they participate in a mother tongue school. The boy and his elder sister practice Norwegian in their main leisure time activity. They have Norwegian friends both in the neighbourhood and in the kindergarten. In the kindergarten the boy and his younger sister play with everybody in their respective groups

For the time being there is one Afghan boy and one girl in another kindergarten. The boy is five now and he has come to the kindergarten since he was one. The director knows the family since quite a long time since the boy's brother used to come to the kindergarten before him. When he came to the department of the elder children at three, his Norwegian was very poor. His mother tongue had developed late also. It had come to the attention of the personnel during a parent call the year before that his mother tongue skills were very poor. Since this was regarded as an issue of great concern, the personnel took steps to get him a mother tongue assistant several hours a week. One year later the situation has changed drastically. When he came to the department of the elder children, his mother tongue was almost average for his age, and soon it turned out that this seemed to affect his second language acquisition positively as well. In any case, during his fourth year in kindergarten, his Norwegian has improved considerably. Now the personnel are focusing a lot on his social skills, particularly functions like how to make contact with other children, take an initiative to be with someone, how to show interest in being part of a play group and be accepted as a legitimate participant in an activity, how to present a point of view or a wish, how to negotiate etc. The boy still has a bit of distance to go before he has the skills considered to be necessary to function well when he starts in first grade next year.

We use a lot of time to observe the children in play. We see a lot this way, it is really not difficult to detect how they function in interplay with others and if a child has a social problem when we observe them over some time in play groups. The social skills are very important. It is more important that these things are in place when they go to primary school than that they can read and write. But of course – these things are more difficult to master if the language is weak.

In yet another kindergarten they have had four children from two Afghan families over the last years. The two Afghan siblings who are now in the kindergarten are two and five years old. The older child is a very clever girl, according to the pedagogical leader, in fact among the cleverest in her department when it comes to Norwegian language and general preparedness for school. They don't know if the girl was born in Norway. But they think she came to this kindergarten while she was still in the youngest age group. The last three years

she has come to this department and it is her last semester in kindergarten before she will go to school. The cooperation with and the relationship with the family, in their view, is good.

In another kindergarten they have a girl that is four years and came to the kindergarten two years ago. And now they assess her Norwegian skills to be satisfactory, her age taken into consideration. The linguistic challenge is bigger when it comes to communicating with the parents. The mother speaks a little English but hardly any Norwegian. The father speaks some Norwegian. The challenge concerns practical information about activities and excursions where the child needs to bring extra clothes or equipment.

A girl in another kindergarten is six years old and is going to primary school this autumn. She first came when she was one year old or so, which means she has been in the kindergarten for 4-5 years. She is a very clever girl. Her Norwegian is very good and so is her social competence – she functions very well in her age group and has made solid friendships in the kindergarten. The girl has “cracked the reading code” as the personnel phrase it.

An Afghan boy in still another kindergarten is four years old. He came to the kindergarten when he was less than one year, and now he has been in the group of the pedagogical leader interviewed for one year. They have applied for a mother tongue assistant for him, but have not yet got a positive answer. They think it is a question of available assistants, since they mean there are good reasons why he should have such help. The extra need, in the case of this boy, can be observed during the once a day “samlingsstund”⁵¹ where all the children in one department unite in a circle to talk about the main topic of the day or the week and to sing and hear a story. The children will also take turns to give individual contributions. Here they see that the Afghan boy lacks many of the concepts in Norwegian that are needed to grasp the meaning of the stories told or conversations held. They try to compensate for what has been assessed as quite weak second language skills by letting him sit with one assistant or pedagogue to read books and have conversations about pictures etc. It would have been very helpful to have a mother tongue assistant once a week, first to assess the strength of his mother tongue, and when assessed to be functional, to use his mother tongue to acquire new, important categories in Norwegian.

One pedagogical leader tells that the social part is still a challenge for another Afghan boy. He needs to learn not to be so physical when he makes contact with other children, to listen and take turns in the proper way and see the other child’s needs. The parents don’t share the

⁵¹ Norwegian term for «circle time»)

personnel's concern in this matter. They tell about his social skills as they are expressed at home in the family and with friends and feel that he is quite considerate and good at sharing when with other children. The pedagogical leader still feel that their concern is well based in observation over hours every day over a long period of time and in different types of setting. However, the fact that the parents hesitate to accept their professional points of view, does not surprise them, since this is something they experience quite often: Although all parents feel it is hard to hear from the kindergarten that their child has a problem, and particularly if they suspect a special diagnosis or a permanent disability of some kind, the Norwegian parents tend to accept the judgments of the pedagogical personnel, at least when it seems well documented in observation. However, the parents of ethnic minority backgrounds, and particularly those who have a short time in Norway, tend to be more sceptical and often deny or trivialize even quite obvious problems. The pedagogical leader thinks this may have to do with a general scepticism towards public institutions that seem to challenge their rights and exclusive responsibility for their own children, and also a fear that with a diagnosis comes shame, social exclusion and in the end a lot of expenses.

10.1.2 Other issues

An Afghan girl of five years has some specific needs. This is a situation that already has brought the family in contact with a lot of different specialists and officials from the health and social services. In that situation, the fact that the parents still struggle with the Norwegian language, has the consequence that the personnel use a lot of time with the family to sort out all the information that is relevant and maybe crucial to know for the personnel in the kindergarten and vice versa – what information from the kindergarten the others institutions need to know. Since the mother has the weakest Norwegian and also has little education from Afghanistan, the father becomes the guarantor for an efficient and precise flow of information between the institutions involved. This concerns the personnel, since they find it important to hear the mother's point of view as well. They would very much like to hear her opinion for example in various matters concerning parenting and upbringing.

In another kindergarten the pedagogical leader says that the Afghans are a group who has some extra challenges. They are inexperienced with a social service and child care system in general and with a socio-pedagogical and socio-psychological support system in particular. So they will react negatively and actively oppose any attempt to receive this kind of help. A psychologist for my child means that my child is "insane". When the personnel inform them that they think their child needs this kind of professional help, they will need a week to think

the matter over. Often they will come back and say “no thank you”. The end of it may be that we must send a so-called message of concern to the municipal child care authorities. One problem here which tends to aggravate the situation has to do with the general lack of “bureaucratic competence” of all newly arrived refugees. They have no experience what so ever of a public well-functioning professional social and health care system. And they cannot comprehend the difference between the child care authorities and the pedagogical - psychological service of the educational system. So the policy of the kindergarten is to play with open cards and be transparent in all their professional thinking and action. They are prepared to go many rounds with the parents before they involve the child care authorities without the parents’ consent.

The professional concern for a child’s wellbeing may be based on different kinds of observations. The child may have problems with regulation in interplay with other children and may show aggressive behaviour or lack of adequate ways of making contact with other children or it may be difficult to establish eye contact with the child. One kindergarten has worked with some Afghan families/couples that have arrived at different times in Norway. Sometimes the mother and some or all the children come first, other times the father comes alone first and then is united with his wife and children. In some cases, the father has also come first with one or two of the elder children. When they finally are united here in Rogaland, they may have had a long period of separation with only irregular telephone contact sometimes stretching over several years. In between they may have had one or more aborted attempts to be granted family unification. When these couples and families finally get united, there may be a shorter or longer “honeymoon” phase, but sooner or later they tend to run into problems which are rooted in the fact that they have been separated too long and in between they have changed as persons and in habits and lifestyle. The children who have lived quite a long time here in Norway with for example their mother only, may feel that it is difficult to get a “man they don’t know” into their home and who all of a sudden replace their mother in the role of head of family. They may experience him as an intruder and may have great problems in reciprocating his expressions of love and affection towards them.

The only other group of refugees who may have a similarly complicated, disorderly and confusing refugee history as the Afghans, are the Somalis. This may be the reason why there seems to be a higher rate of special needs cases among these two groups than in other groups. This comes in addition to the situation in both countries of several decades of war and unrest -

in Afghanistan more than 30 years, very weak institutions of public welfare and generally very weak opportunities for education for a great percentage of the population.

One challenge in the relationship with a family has been the general lack of adequate clothing for use outdoors, too small shoes and not enough underwear shifts. The last problem particularly has led the personnel to the assumption that there is a severe economic problem involved, and that this adds to the general problem of language. This assumption is based on their general experience that children of refugees and ethnic minority parents normally are very conscious about proper and good quality dressing for the children. But both the issue that the child brought inappropriate food like biscuits and buns and other unhealthy or else less nutritious food, the issue with the underwear and the fact that the girl still needs napkins at the age of four are issues that demands a higher level of Norwegian or English skills to be addressed in a sufficiently respectful, pedagogical and as such – efficient way when it comes to both the parents and the child's best interests. This has been a problem for one pedagogical leader and the kindergarten the last year. If not so much for the needs of the child in terms of understanding and learning so for the sake of communicating with the parents, the kindergarten experience the need for a mother tongue assistant in the kindergarten.

A challenge in the relationship with another family is that they tend to keep the youngest child at home when the weather is bad. They know the mother doesn't like that they let the youngest sleep outdoors in their baby carriers. They have discussed it with the mother and have suggested that it is possible to sleep indoors if she prefers this. But so far it seems like the mother is still quite sceptical, as she continues to keep her son home when the weather is bad.

Another girl in a kindergarten seems to be anxious when she has been involved in a dispute with other children and the personnel intervene and she is corrected together with others involved. In these situations she may start to cry and the personnel have understood she is afraid of being punished when she comes home. They have decided to continue to follow the established practice in such cases, which is to inform the parents about what have happened during the day and to be very clear about whether they judge the incident to be properly and sufficiently dealt with by the personnel as it occurred or whether there is a need for the parents also to mention it and discuss it with their child at home. They try to be very precise and emphasize that everything has been thoroughly dealt with by the personnel, that such controversies are normal, occur every day and in fact in most cases have a rich potential in them for learning and growth and that there is no need for extra correction at home. But still

they think that there is a problem at home with maybe too much correction and possibly too strong (physical) correction. Over the years there have been a few cases where the kindergarten personnel have instructed parents not to hit their child while also informing them that this is a legal offence in Norway. In most of the incidents these have been parents of refugee or immigrant backgrounds.

Now and then there are incidents which remind the personnel about what they think of as systematic differences in culture between Norway and Afghanistan. The practice to apply makeup on small children below the age of one year is an example from one of the kindergartens. Another is what the personnel in a kindergarten regard as the parents' extraordinary preoccupation with how their child appears in photos. When they know on beforehand that their little girl will be photographed, for instance for the yearly group photo of the children in each department, they will dress her in a wedding gown. The parents disliked it very much when they discovered that their daughter did not appear at her best on the last photo where all the six year olds were dressed up in their "leaving kindergarten uniform". They insisted that the picture was retaken. In the same kindergarten, the Afghan parents are always present at parent meetings together with the other parents and the personnel and in the regular parent calls. They are also very aware that their children always have the right and good quality clothing and equipment. As with other minority speaking parents, communication may be hampered because their second language skills may remain quite superficial in some fields of experience and functional aspects, and this may last long after they started to learn Norwegian. It is therefore very important, they have learnt, to give practical information in a simple, concise and concrete way like: *"On Monday it is planning day in the kindergarten. This means that you cannot bring your child"*.

Some of the kindergartens reported singular cases where Afghan children had showed symptoms of mental harm or disorder. In one kindergarten, apart from the pedagogical job that needed to be done to help another boy develop his mother tongue and second language, there was also an issue about being very silent with the personnel. They had observed that the boy functioned quite well in interplay with other children and to some extent in role-play. But when he became aware that he was being observed by adults, he tended to stop speaking. The personnel used a systematic approach to assess the situation.

10.1.3 General remarks from the Johannes Introduction Centre

A general remark from Johannes Introduction Centre is that it is an advantage for the work with these children and families that the families tend to be in the “honeymoon” phase when they get to know them. They are still in a general thankful and optimistic mode. The kindergarten follow this up by working closely with the parents and do their best to show them how they work with their child and how the normal day is for the child in the kindergarten: They use digital photo and digital video to document the child’s play, learning, communication, states of mood and achievements. They also try to get as much information as possible from the parents about their former life, the experience of migrating, their ideas, expectations and preferences when it comes to child rearing, parenting and so forth. An important element in the pedagogy of the centre is to activate the parents’ cultural competencies and values and to make the child’s mother tongue and heritage visible and a resource in the learning and socialization processes in the kindergarten.

Another remark is that the Afghan parents, together also with parents from other backgrounds, may have an idea about kindergarten as primarily a place for disciplined and “schoolish” learning while JIK will emphasize nearness (intimacy) and coziness (cuddling) and a warm, inclusive and accepting atmosphere. The parents – again Afghans along with parents of other ethnic backgrounds – may also have ideas about gender roles that differ from what is the norm in a Norwegian kindergarten. The personnel are aware of, and trained to handle discussions and negotiations over such matters with the parents.

In all this, the most important qualification for personnel working in this particular kindergarten and in any other for that matter, is to be sensitive in the communication with the parents. It is very important to ask about everything they know may be different between the predominant culture in Norwegian kindergartens and the background and culture of the families. Further it is of the greatest importance to create an atmosphere of safety and confidence and that the kindergarten will support them in their parenting project.

The more we know in terms of general and specific cultural knowledge is of course a good thing and a professional resource, but it can never replace the value of the good, precise and honest questions, because the kindergarten get in contact with new backgrounds all the time and it is impossible to have updated and relevant knowledge about all ethnicities one gets in touch with. So an important message JIK always give during the first meeting with new parents, is that “we will for sure get to misunderstand each other, but we must try to handle misunderstandings humoristically” (Pedagogical leader, JIK).

The point they want to make here, as we interpret the quote, is that they try to avoid being so afraid of making mistakes that they become completely paralyzed. It is important to be prepared that parents will react negatively now and then, and that this must be accepted as normal and something one may learn a lot from professionally.

10.2 Discussion

Above we have described the workplaces of the interviewees as rather multilingual and multicultural environments, particularly those departments headed by the pedagogical leader interviewed and where the Afghan children have their place. In some departments more than 50 % of the children have a minority language background. This underscores that the environment the Afghan children meet on their first day in the kindergarten is a community characterized by diversity along many dimensions – for instance age and therefore both cognitive and social development, gender, mother tongue, socio-economic and socio-cultural background, economical and cultural resources in their home environment etc.

10.2.1 A need for more cultural awareness?

And – as a matter of fact – such a broad or multi-dimensional conception of diversity is also clearly reflected in the way the directors and pedagogical leaders interviewed described the social landscape of their kindergartens. Their clear focus on each child as a unique person with its unique background, resources and potentialities seems to help them to see beneath the more general assumptions about particular categories of children they may have as “preliminary cultural hypothesis” or “first guess hypothesis” – for instance with reference to class, ethnicity or religion.

We are very aware, you know – since we have always had so many bilingual children – and we hardly view them... we almost never think of them that they are from a different country, they are so included.

Well, we view every child as unique. That is really at the forefront of our work. And these things concerning respect – we have a lot of respect for food practices and religion. We never hear any critical remarks about these things. And we do everything we can to meet the parents concerning their preferences and adapt to what they say is important for them (Director).

10.2.2 More mother tongue support

Both in Havlandet and in Stavanger municipalities, the directors and pedagogical leaders interviewed were a bit puzzled about the fact that they so seldom were granted the mother tongue support they applied for. In the cases of the Afghan children, they had partly argued

with the need to have the total linguistic repertoire and skills of the child assessed in order to be able to target the language training better. Such training they judged to be strongly needed for the child: Partly they had also argued that the child's difficult situation socially, psychologically or otherwise made an efficient communication with the parents particularly important. To have a mother tongue assistant available every week would therefore improve the quality of the communication and flow of information a lot.

10.2.3 Vulnerability of the Afghan refugees

The total number of children included in this study are of course too little to build on for assuming any statistical probability about the wellbeing of preschool children in the region. There is a statement, however, from the pedagogical leader at JIK which supports the picture we see from the interviews. She told that over the years she has seen that there is a certain overrepresentation of Afghan children in the category of those who need special attention from the personnel and who also need help from a pedagogical – psychological specialist. While reflecting on this, she mentioned the fact that Afghan families often have a more traumatic refugee history than other groups, that the process of family reunification has tended to be very long and complicated and that their country of origin has been ravaged with war and unrest for more than 30 years. Faced by the situation of the Afghan families and asked specifically about their competence in this field, several of the interviewees said that yes, they would need to know more than they do about post-traumatic stress and other related issues to become more confident as professionals in their work with these families.

10.2.4 Conflicts and cultural differences

The directors and pedagogical leaders interviewed mentioned very few instances of conflict with the Afghan parents. The general picture was that their feedback was very positive and that they normally came back to the same kindergarten with their young children. However, there is a certain tendency bringing their children late to the kindergarten, which worried the pedagogues. They strongly recommend the ethnic minority families to bring their small children early to the kindergarten, because language acquisition, as they reiterate, is a long process that goes all by itself, but only as long as you are exposed to a rich linguistic environment most of the time and preferably in an environment of joyful, exciting and challenging activities.

The only area reported by the pedagogues where one could say there is certain aspect of conflict between what we could call the mainstream kindergarten culture represented by these

kindergartens and the Afghan tradition of child nurturing, are 1) the importance of fresh air and outdoor activities regardless of weather and season, and 2) the gender role issue, that is the Norwegian mainstream code of equal opportunity, equal attention and quite equal activities of boys and girls (at least equal opportunities and free choice of activity for both sexes).

11 Workshop for presenting and discussing preliminary findings

SIK organized a workshop in August 2012 in Stavanger in order to 1) present preliminary findings and 2) work out a framework for a new research project. Representatives from organizations within the Afghan community, early childhood education institutions and other institutions and organizations who work with the Afghan community were invited.

11.1 What came up?

Concerning the kindergartens' work with cultural, religious and linguistic differences, their general values and aims and the issue of integration and inclusion, the workshop and talks afterwards brought up a more nuanced picture than the one that had surfaced in the analysis of the interview data. The interviews revealed a very conscious and systematic way of working with difference in the kindergartens visited, both in terms of valuing of difference and of inclusion on all levels. However, the experience of the resource team at Johannes introduction kindergarten, and the director and advisor at Ytre Tasta resource kindergarten⁵² as they commented in the workshop, was that the general picture of Stavanger is more varied in this respect.

Looking at the general situation in Stavanger, the staff representatives interviewed at Johannes introduction kindergarten emphasized the importance of the general attitude towards the practical valuing and working with difference, as well as the general awareness when it comes to effective inclusion of all children regardless of background and situation. They expressed doubts as to whether the professional ambient towards the plural situation was as positive in Stavanger as we had experienced it to be and presented in the workshop. The Johannes introduction kindergarten staff tends to see awareness as the most critical factor, in fact, more critical than access to mother tongue assistants. This is because they think that although the three hours weekly with a bilingual assistant is a very important resource, the general awareness in the personnel group will have a stronger impact over some time. It is therefore of crucial importance and needs to be a part of the everyday- and overall thinking in the kindergarten.

⁵² Ytre Tasta Kindergarten has been assigned the role of *resource kindergarten* within the field of "Multicultural work" in the municipality of Stavanger. They have an advisor in a 50% position for this task.

The Ytre Tasta resource kindergarten representatives expressed similar points of view, particularly regarding what came out of the seminar as a need for more information, books and other written material, internet resources and a time resource to raise the level of multicultural competence in each kindergarten. As they see it, the main problem and challenge in this professional field is whether the director of the kindergarten and her team of pedagogical leaders have developed a broader perspective on diversity and an overall strategy of working with all kinds of differences or not. In the last case they have continued to be looking at ethnic, religious and partly linguistic differences as a “separate case of difference” which demands special measures and a constant supply of special professional skills that are different from, or at least comes in addition to, the normal early childhood pedagogy and professional competence.

As a consequence, both these professional ambients call for a main project that will address these challenges in particular and effectively. The representatives from JIK also mentioned the situation of the Afghan women who have arrived in Norway recently as particularly important to follow up on. They often have a very limited or inexistent social network and are home alone waiting to give birth to their first born or caring for their first child. They agree that the statistics indicate that there are more of them than they had thought, although they doubt the accuracy of the “size of the gap” between Afghan children *already in* and *not yet in* kindergarten that was described by the researchers. They agree that these women need a place to meet with others, exchange experiences, learn Norwegian and “start their new life”.

12 Conclusion

This report has shown that the Afghan community is a growing migrant community in Norway. Besides, being a new and young group of migrants, more and more Afghan children are, and will be, integrated into the Norwegian educational system. There are important lacks in the existing literature where the Afghan family and the education of Afghan children are more or less invisible. This study has tried to fill in some of these gaps by focusing on the encounter between Afghan families and pedagogical staff in Norwegian kindergartens. Their *experiences* of these cultural encounters have been stressed.

In the daily life in the kindergarten very much seems to converge into a strong emphasis on language development and systematic work to improve the language skills of all the children, regardless of linguistic background and present knowledge.

The personnel's clear focus on each child as a unique person with its unique background, resources and potentialities seems to help them to see beneath the more general assumptions about particular categories of children they may have as "preliminary cultural hypothesis" or "first guess hypothesis" – for instance with reference to class, ethnicity or religion. This is the findings that emerge from the interviews. But we have seen that there are reasons to believe that the picture is more nuanced. The main challenge is whether the director of the kindergarten and her team of pedagogical leaders have developed a broader perspective on diversity and an overall strategy of working with all kinds of differences or not. Some have continued to be looking at ethnic, religious and partly linguistic differences as a "separate case of difference" which demands special measures and a constant supply of special professional skills that they believe are different from, or at least comes in addition to, the normal early childhood pedagogy and professional competence.

Cultural encounters and differences, and specifically *challenges faced in the context of the Norwegian kindergarten* related to these differences, are experienced in different ways by the Afghan families and the kindergarten personnel. In a general way, the families interviewed are rather reluctant when asked if they can specify something "negative" or "problematic" about living in Norway and point out that they are thankful to the Norwegian state for receiving them. When asked to talk more specifically about their thoughts on the Norwegian kindergarten, a similar attitude is found (not wanting to criticize). One aspect was however identified by some of the families as to have an improvement potential and that is the mother

tongue education, which is considered as not good (lack in quality and the number of mother tongue teachers available).

Concerning the kindergarten personnel and their experiences with the Afghan families, and especially the examples they give to illustrate these, are somehow different from what appear in the interviews with the families themselves. The following aspects are mentioned as problematic by the personnel: 1) the special needs that the Afghan children have, often related to their migration history, 2) difficulties in explaining these needs adequately to the parents due to language barriers, 3) difficulties in getting the parents to understand the seriousness of these difficulties due to cultural differences, 4) difficulties related to family reunification, 5) challenges related to gender roles, 6) challenges related to sleeping habits (sleeping outside or inside), 7) challenges related to cultural differences concerning clothing (both dressing up for official photos and the kindergartens' request of the children having appropriate clothes for all kind of weather), 8) challenges related to strong correction - sometimes physical, 9) the fact that some Afghans come late in the morning, and 10) challenges related to food habits. The latter is also mentioned by some of the Afghan families themselves. But while the families express concerns about their children eating pork in the kindergarten, the personnel stresses that some families might bring food considered as unhealthy according to Norwegian norms. An aspect which is strongly underlined as problematic by both the families and the kindergartens is the lack of, or too little capacity, in mother tongue education compared to the demand.

The encounter between kindergarten personnel and Afghan parents, language and mother-tongue related issues and the situation of Afghan mothers on maternity leave emerged as the three themes which generated most reactions and/or comments among the participants in the workshop where those who were interviewed and other resource persons were invited to discuss the findings in the study. These three themes could, indeed, be areas to focus on when it comes to further work in this field. Already in the interviews with the Afghan parents and the kindergarten personnel, it became evident that the language issue, particularly the level in Norwegian as a second language among the Afghan parents, was regarded as an obstacle for good communication between the kindergarten and the parents about the child's wellbeing, learning and development. Alternative and connected proposals concerning how to work with these issues has therefore been elaborated and are now being discussed in conversations between SIK and potential partners in future development projects.

13 Bibliography

- Arendt, Hannah. (1998): *The human condition*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Berg, Berit (2006): ”Jeg glemmer å være trist”. *Evaluering av et gruppebehandlingsprosjekt for barn og foreldre i mottak..* Trondheim: SINTEF
- Brochmann, Grete and Kjeldstadli, Knut (2008), ‘A History of Immigration: the Case of Norway 900-2000,’ Oslo, Universitetsforlaget
- Buronwood, Neil (1986): *The culture concept in educational studies*. Philadelphia, PA, NFER-NELSON.
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989): New York, UNICEF
- Convention 169 (1989): *Indigenous and Tribal Peoples’ Convention*. Geneva, International Labour Organization (ILO)
- Crittenden, Jack (1992): *Beyond individualism: reconstituting the liberal self*. New York, Oxford University Press
- Djuve, Anne Britt., Hanne C. K. og A. Hagelund, 2011, *Kvinner i kvalifisering. Introduksjonsprogram for nyankomne flyktninger med liten utdanning og store omsorgsoppgaver*. Fafo-rapport 2011:02
- Djuve, A. B., H. C. Kavli, M. Lund og T. Østberg (2001): *Fra sosialhjelp til lønnet kvalifisering. Resultater fra forsøk med heldags introduksjonsprogram for flyktninger*. Fafo-rapport 364. Oslo: Fafo
- Enes, Anette W; Henriksen, Kristin (2012): *Monitor for introduksjonsordningen*, Rapport 1/2012, Statistisk sentralbyrå / Statistics Norway, Oslo-Kongsvinger
- Frost, J., & Lønnegaard, A. (1996). *Språkleker: praktisk del*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Godzimirski, Jakub M., 2011, ”Diasporaer og norsk utenrikspolitikk”, *Internasjonal politikk*, n. 4, pp. 580 – 614
- Haus, Sigurd (2011) *MIKS - Inkludering og mestring i en flerkulturell kontekst. Johannes Læringscenter 2009/2010 SIK-report 2011 : 1*
- Henriksen, Kristin; Østby, Lars; Dag Ellingsen (eds.), 2011, *Immigration and immigrants 2010*, Statistical Analyses (series)
- Hundeide, K. (1996). *Ledet samspill: håndbok til ICDPs sensitiviseringsprogram*. Nesbru: International Child Development Programs
- Hundeide, K. (1996). *Facilitating cultural mediation: Indonesia*. In P. Klein (Ed), *Early Intervention: Cross-cultural experiences with a mediational approach*. N.Y. Garland Publishing
- Hundeide, K. (2008). *Psychosocial care for disadvantaged children in the context of poverty and high risk: Introducing the ICDP Program*. (Submitted)
- Jensen, Hanne Rossing; Irgan, Tom; Karlson, Henrik. YPNN, *Integreringsrettet landkunnskap om Afghanistan*, Utlendingsdirektoratet/Landinfo
- Kunnskapsdepartementet (2011): *Rammeplan for innholdet i og oppgavene til Barnehagen*. Oslo
<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/documents/legislation/regulations/2011/framework-plan-for-the-content-and-tasks.html?id=631906>

- Lauritzen, Camilla (2007), *Barn i mottak. Et pilotprosjekt om barns psykiske helse i nordnorske asylmottak 2006-2007*, Institutt for klinisk medisin – det medisinske fakultetet, Universitetet i Tromsø
- Lauritsen, Kirsten (2009), *Barnehagetilbudet til asylsøkjerbarn*, Notat til Østbergutvalget, 14. Desember 2009
- Lov 2003-07-04 no 80: *Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskopplæring for nyankomne innvandrere (introduksjonsloven)*. Oslo, Barne-, likestillings- og inkluderingsdepartementet
- “Norway to deport 400 Ethiopian asylum seekers” // Lindsey Smith in EthiopianReview.com, 27 January 2012, online URL: <http://www.ethiopianreview.com/content/36285>
- NOU (1973:17): *Innvandringspolitikk (Danielsenutvalget)*. Oslo, Kommunal og arbeidsdepartementet
- NOU (1986:8): *Flyktingers tilpasning til det norske samfunnet*. Oslo, Sosialdepartementet.
- NOU (1995:12): *Opplæring i et flerkulturelt Norge*. Oslo, Det kgl kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet
- NOU (2010:7): *Mangfold og mestring. Flerspråklige barn, unge og voksne i opplæringssystemet*. Oslo, Kunnskapsdepartementet.
- Olwig, Karen Fog (2011), ‘Integration’: Migrants and Refugees between Scandinavian Welfare Societies and Family Relations,’ in ‘Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,’ vol. 37, no. 2, pp. 179-196
- Qureshi, Iffit Z., 2006, ”Sviket mot minoritetskvinnene”, *Samtiden*, N. 1, pp. 6 – 17
- Rambøll 2011, *Analyse av resultatoppnåelse i introduksjonsordningen*, Sluttrapport, FOU-prosjekt, <http://www.imdi.no/Documents/Rapporter/Ramb%c3%b8ll%20FoU%20intro.pdf>
- Rundskriv H-20/05 til Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskopplæring for nyankomne innvandrere (introduksjonsloven). Oslo, Det kongelige kommunal- og regionaldepartement
- St.meld. nr. 74 (1979-80): *Om innvandrere i Norge*. Oslo, Kommunal- og arbeidsdepartementet
- St.meld. nr. 49 (2003-2004): *Mangfold gjennom inkludering og deltagelse. Ansvar og frihet*. Oslo, Det kongelige kommunal- og regionaldepartementet
- St. meld. nr. 18 (2007-2008): *Arbeidsinnvandring*. Oslo, Arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartementet
- St. meld. nr. 9 (2009-2010): *Norsk flyktning- og migrasjonspolitik i et europeisk perspektiv*. Oslo, Justis- og politidepartementet
- St.prp. nr. 1 (2006-2007): *Handlingsplan for integrering og inkludering av innvandrerbefolkningen og mål for inkludering*. Oslo, Arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartementet.
- Strand, Arne; Akbari, Arghawan; Wimpelmann, Torunn Chaudary; Berg, Kristian Harpviken; Sarwari, Akbar; Suhrke, Astrid (2008): ”Return with Dignity, Return to what? Review of the Voluntary Return Programme to Afghanistan”, CMI Report 2008:6
- Strøm, Vidar, 2011, ”Det er den draumen”. Erfaringer og resiliens hos enslige mindreårige fra Afghanistan. Hvordan kan barneverntjenesten møte enslige mindreårige”, Masteroppgave, Universitetet i Bergen, Det psykologiske fakultetet

UNHCR (Christine Mougne), 2010, *Trees only move in the wind. A study of unaccompanied Afghan children in Europe*, report PDES/2010/05

Valenta, Marko; Thorshaug, Kristin, 20011a, "Ansatte med innvandrere- og flyktningbakgrunn i norske asylmottak: institusjonens menneskelige ansikt?", *Sosiologisk tidsskrift*, n. 2, pp. 153 – 173

Valenta, Marko; Thorshaug, Kristin, 20011b, "Avviste asylsøkere i Norge: Ventemottaksordningen og andre returnmotiverende tiltak. *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning*, n. 2, pp. 212 – 234

Vatne Pettersen, Silje, 2009, *Innvandrere i norske kommuner. Demografi, levekår og deltakelse i arbeidsstyrken*, Rapport 2009/35, Statistisk sentralbyrå / Statistics Norway, Oslo-Kongsvinger

14 Websites

Afghans in Norway”, page on facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Afghans-in-Norway/128235010589032#!/pages/Afghans-in-Norway/128235010589032>

Maiwand Afghan Social and cultural association in Trondheim, Norway

<http://www.maiwand.org/> (the website is still empty, created in March 2012)

Website of the ongoing PREMIG project at PRIO (dealing with (Afghan) return migration)

<http://www.prio.no/Research-and-Publications/PREMIG/About/>

Blog of researcher Ceri Oeppen, working with Afghans in Norway (PREMIG project)

<http://oeppen.org/2012/02/16/fieldwork-with-afghans-in-norway/>

Andishe Sabz, Afghan association in Rogaland

<http://andishesabz.no/>

Afghan Youth

<http://afghanyouth.no/index.htm>

The Norwegian Afghanistan Committee

<http://www.afghanistan.no//>

www.ssb.no (especially for data on foreigners with residency permits)

www.udi.no (especially for data on asylum seekers)

The Norwegian Kindergarten Act - Act no. 64 of June 2005

<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/doc/laws/Acts/kindergarten-act.html?id=115281>

The Norwegian Framework Plan for the Content and Tasks of Kindergartens

<http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/documents/legislation/regulations/2011/framework-plan-for-the-content-and-tasks.html?id=631906>

15 Annex: Interview guides

Five different interview guides have been used during the interview process. Each of them was adapted to the different groups of informants.

15.1 Interview guide 1 – Afghan families

Informant number:

Relevant personal data:

Gender:

Age:

Place of residence:

Civil status:

Number and age of children:

Juridical status (asylum seeker, refugee, citizenship...):

Educational level:

Current occupation:

Place of birth (in Afghanistan):

Place of residence before leaving Afghanistan:

Year of leaving Afghanistan:

Year of arrival in Norway:

Ethnicity:

Questions and themes to be addressed (if and when relevant) during the interview:

Life in Afghanistan:

- Work situation
- Family situation
- Reasons for leaving
- Elements making the departure possible

The journey:

- Mode of travel
- Eventual (stay in) transfer countries

Arrival in Norway:

- Where
- Eventual stay in a reception centre for asylum seeker

→ stay in Kindergarten / primary school (6-9 years) for the children during this period?

If yes: experience of the first encounter with this structure(s)

The reinstallation (or still “the arrival” for those who came to family reunification):

- Where
- Generally on the Introduction Program (IP)
- Where were or are or the children during the IP? How did or does the IP prepare the parents to the Norwegian preschool concept? Experience of maternity leave during IP?

General impression and experience of living in Norway:

- What do you like about living in Norway?
- What do you find strange or confusing about living in Norway?
- What has surprised you about living in Norway?
- How welcoming is Norway to new arrivals?
- What would you like to be different (and how)?
- What would help you to feel that you belong?
- Do you feel that Afghan culture is understood / respected (would you like it to be, what difference would it make, how would you like this done)?

Questions on parenting styles and how children are looked after within the family were also included as we suspected that family members play different roles than Norwegian parents and families. In addition questions on how they parented in Afghanistan may differ from what they can in Norway (e.g. if extended family are not in Norway) were also included. Also whether their child went to a kindergarten in Afghanistan or not (if applicable)

More specifically on the encounter with kindergarten/elementary school:

- What were your expectations of kindergarten in Norway? (few children in Afghanistan go to kindergarten and those that do will have had a different experience than they will in Norway so parents may have assumptions about what will happen there and the experience they want for their children)
- Does anything puzzle you about the kindergarten?
- What do you like about the kindergarten?
- What, if anything, would you like to be different?
- Challenges met as Afghan parent in a Norwegian preschool context? (challenges and difficulties related to language, cultural differences: values, norms, important knowledge, religious knowledge, gender differences, learning forms and strategies etc. Structural difficulties: kindergarten far away, no car etc.)
- How to explain these challenges?
- How to resolve these challenges?
- Eventual positive experiences and/or aspects of kindergarten/elementary school
- Have the informant ever been to or heard of “open kindergartens”? Thoughts on that?
- Explicitly whether parents feel kindergarten staff understand their culture and whether they adapt their behaviour accordingly?

- Also whether the kindergarten responds, in general to children from a minority ethnic group (e.g. celebrate Eid, books/songs/kitchen utensils from other cultures etc.) Do they do anything to include migrant heritage children?

General knowledge of and contact with the Afghan community in Norway:

- How many in your area?
- Which ethnicities?
- Contact zones (associations, cultural celebrations, family celebrations...)
- Difficulties faced (language, work, undocumented...)
- Impression of the “ambient”
- How much contact with majority population?

Contact with Afghanistan and future projects (perhaps less relevant but interesting if time permits):

- Type of contact with networks in Afghanistan (internet, phone calls, vacations, remittances ...)
- Short-term project
- Long-term projects

15.2 Interview guide 2 – Kindergarten personnel

Informant number:

Relevant background data of informant:

Position of informant:

Job description with focus on special tasks and responsibilities relevant for our theme:

Formal qualifications / work experience

Background data of the kindergarten:

Kindergarten no:

Type of kindergarten (1): (state/private)

Type of kindergarten (2): (full time/family/ mother-child)

Number /type of departments:

Number of children (per department):

Ratio Norwegian mother tongue / foreign mother tongue

Nationalities / languages represented (specify languages and numbers of children for each)

Religions

Ratio foreign background with Norwegian citizenship versus foreign background with status as refugee, asylum seeker, applicant with negative answer

Number of personnel:

Ratio personnel with/without teacher's certificate

Pedagogical platform (Internal and external steering documents, general aims – particularly concerning diversity and inclusion, organizing / working with / valuing cultural, linguistic and religious differences

Function of Kindergarten in relation to Municipality's model for early age mother tongue - and Norwegian as a second language (NASL) – learning

Program / plans for competence development regarding mother tongue, NASL, cultural and religious diversity

Ways / models of working with parents (ICDP, family learning etc).

The kindergarten's experience of cooperating with Afghan families:

How many in your area? (see above in case of more than one interview in kindergarten)

Which ethnicities and languages represented? (see above in case of more than one interview in kindergarten)

Average age of Afghan children, time of family in Norway, status and migrant histories

Since when Afghans in this kindergarten?

In general, do migrant heritage children come to the centre or not?

How is this for Afghans specifically?

Does your kindergarten have any outreach work in order to encourage participation or not?

If many Afghans don't use the service, do you have any thoughts on why they don't?

Any systematic observations concerning their choice – for instance in terms of:

- income/ work/economy
- transport opportunities/difficulties,
- other practical conditions,
- motivation / incentives,
- ethnicity (Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek)
- language (Dari, Pashto, Uzbek),
- conflicts between groups
- cultural or religious barriers

Knowledge of Afghanistan, Afghan culture and world view, situation of migrating Afghans:

- Knowledge of contact zones (associations, cultural celebrations, family celebrations.)
- Knowledge of difficulties they face as a group (language, work, undocumented...)
- Impression of the “ambient” in the community
- Do you consider it important to know these kinds of things to be able to do your work?

“Professional” experiences / knowledge gained while working with Afghan children, parents, families:

- Challenges experienced as early years workforce in working with migrant heritage parents/Afghan parents (for instance frustrations if migrant heritage families do not appreciate what they are trying to do for their children)
- Challenges you know the Afghan parent in a Norwegian preschool context face, (for instance difficulties related to language, cultural difficulties, structural difficulties [kindergarten far away, no car etc.]
- How to explain these challenges?
- How to resolve these challenges?
- Eventual particularly positive experiences and/or aspects of the kindergarten in their working with Afghan families (examples of “best practice”)?
- Models / material developed?
- Reports, literature in use?

Other issues to be addressed during interview with kindergarten workforce:

- some of the assumptions they are making
- their levels of confidence in working with migrant heritage children
- their knowledge and understanding of different cultures and world views in general (and for Afghan’s specifically)
- Awareness of what refugee children may have experienced (either in country of birth or during the journey to Europe)
- Importance of knowing these things and what impact it should have (in their view) on their professional behaviour and practice
- Training opportunities or professional development programs in this field?
- Would such training be helpful?
- What else do you think might better equip you to work with migrant heritage parents and their families?

15.3 Interview guide 3 – Key informants from humanitarian/charity/social institutions

Informant number:

The institutions’ contact with the Afghan community:

- What kind of contact do you have with the Afghan community?
- What kind of help or services do they demand for?
- What kind of help or services can you offer?
- What advice do you have you for working with Afghans? (e.g. face to face contact; identify key person in community to spread key messages etc.)
- What capabilities do Afghans have to offer?

- Have you ever dealt with concerns related, directly or indirectly, to preschool and Afghan children? If yes, specify.

The institutions contact with other minority communities (national / ethnic / religious):

- Which are they?
- What kind of contact do you have with them?
- What kind of help or services do they demand for?
- What kind of help or services can they offer?
- Have you ever dealt with concerns related, directly or indirectly, to preschool and these groups? If yes, specify
- Any reflections concerning your encounter / interaction / experience with the Afghan community versus other minority communities?

The institutions' general knowledge on the Afghan community

- Understanding of Afghan culture and perspective/Afghanistan
- What they would find helpful in working to support them work with Afghan's/minority heritage people (may provide clues for kindergarten sector)
- How many are they?
- Which ethnicities are represented?
- Do they tend to concentrate in one geographic zone?
- Do they tend to concentrate in one professional niche?
- Which difficulties do they face? (undocumented migrants, language, culture, gender...)
- Do the children face any difficulties in particular?

15.4 Interview guide 4 – Key informants from the Afghan community

Informant number:

Questions about their experiences of living in Norway (similar to Afghan parent's schedule)

The informant's general knowledge on the Afghan community:

- How many are there?
- Which ethnicities are represented?
- Do they tend to concentrate in one geographic zone?
- Do they tend to concentrate in one professional niche?
- What Afghan organizations do you know and what can you say about these? (regional and national level)
- Which difficulties do they face? (undocumented migrants, language, culture, gender, citizenship competence, employment, housing etc. may come up...)
- What Afghan's contribute to the Norwegian society (or could contribute)

- Value conflict or conflict of interest between parents and educational institutions when it comes to parenting and nurturing?
- Do the children face any difficulties in particular?

15.5 Interview guide 5 - Administrative personnel (Central Early Childhood division of Municipalities)

Informant number:

Relevant background data of informant:

Position of informant:

Job description /special tasks and responsibilities relevant for our theme:

Specific qualifications and work experience in this professional field:

The kindergartens and background of children / parents attending

Municipality:

Number of Kindergartens in Municipality:

Ratio full time/family/mother-child kindergartens:

Ratio private / state kindergartens:

Total number of children in Kindergartens:

Ratio Norwegian mother tongue / foreign mother tongue:

Nationalities / languages represented (specify languages and numbers of children for each):

Religions represented in Kindergartens:

Ratio foreign background with Norwegian citizenship versus foreign background with status as refugee, asylum seeker, applicant with negative answer

Distribution of NASL children: (one central / reception kindergarten, semi centralized or local):

Number of personnel:

Ratio personnel with/without teacher's certificate:

Ratio personnel – department / children:

Policy regarding ethnic / linguistic / religious diversity

Pedagogical platform (internal and external steering documents, general aims – particularly concerning diversity and inclusion, organizing / working with / valuing cultural, linguistic and religious differences)

Specialization- /differentiation-policy or mainstreaming of all kindergartens in relation to municipality's model for early age mother tongue - and Norwegian as a second language (NASL) – learning?

Participation in committees or councils across departments in the municipality dealing with issues of and the development of action plans / strategy documents for national/ethnic/linguistic/religious diversity?

Programs / plans for training and / professional development for personnel regarding mother tongue, NASL, minority / migration pedagogy, cultural and religious diversity?

Would such training be helpful?

What else might better the kindergarten workforce's capability to work with migrant heritage children and their families?

Knowledge in kindergarten administration about the Afghans / Afghan communities?

Total number in your area (statistical data)?

Which ethnicities and languages represented (statistical data)?

Average age of children, time of families in Norway, statuses and migrant histories?

Since when Afghans in this municipality and its kindergartens?

Contact zones (associations, cultural celebrations, family celebrations...)?

Difficulties they face as a group (language, work, undocumented...)?

Impression of the "ambient" in the community?

In general, do migrant heritage children come to the centre or not?

How is this for Afghans specifically (confirmed numbers or estimates)?

Does your department / office or any other office in the municipal administration have any outreach work to try and encourage participation or not?

If many Afghans don't use the service, do you have any view on why they don't?

Any systematic in their choice – for instance in terms of:

- income/work/economy
- transport opportunities/difficulties
- other practical conditions
- motivation / incentives
- ethnicity (Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek)
- language (Dari, Pashto, Uzbek)
- conflicts between groups
- cultural or religious barriers

Knowledge, awareness, and practical experience gained in kindergartens and (to your knowledge) systematized:

Kindergarten workforce's knowledge and awareness:

- General assumptions regarding migrant heritage children?
- Experienced levels of confidence in working with children?
- Knowledge and understanding of different cultures and world views in general (and for Afghan's specifically)?
- Awareness of what refugee children may have experienced (either in country of birth or during the journey to Europe)?
- Reflections regarding the importance of knowing these things and what impact it should have (in their view) on their professional behaviour and practice?
- Working with migrant parents (family learning, ICTP etc.)?

Practical experiences / knowledge gained while working with Afghan children, parents, families in the kindergartens:

- I. Challenges experienced by the staff themselves in working with migrant heritage parents/Afghan parents?
- II. Challenges they know the Afghan parent in a Norwegian preschool context face:
 - a. difficulties related to language?
 - b. cultural difficulties?
 - c. structural difficulties [kindergarten far away, no car etc.]?
- III. How to explain these challenges?
- IV. How to resolve these challenges?
- V. Eventual particularly positive experiences and/or aspects of the kindergarten in their working with Afghan families (examples of 'best practice')?
- VI. Models / material developed?
- VII. Reports / literature in use?

Senter for Interkulturell Kommunikasjon (SIK)

Centre for Intercultural Communication

2013

Misjonsmarka 11, N-4024 Stavanger, Norway

Phone: +47 51516274 / E-mail: sik@sik.no

www.sik.no

Senter for Interkulturell Kommunikasjon
2013

ISBN: 978-82-7721-124-4

ISSN: 1500-1474

Misjonshøgskolens forlag
Misjonsmarka 12, 4024 Stavanger, Tlf.: 51516247
Fax: 51516253, E-mail: forl@mhs.no