



Initial education policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic: Norway

Strengthening adaptability and resilience in the context of COVID-19

Initial evidence suggests that pre-existing resources in the education system facilitated areas of Norway's early response to the pandemic. The ongoing focus on low-stakes, continuous evaluation and assessment for learning enabled decisions regarding national examinations to be taken swiftly and with minimal disruption. Pre-existing practices of municipal and county-level monitoring and reporting also seem to have helped Norway to more quickly ascertain challenges and concerns facing students. As Norway works to balance short-term responsiveness with longer-term strategic aims, priorities evolve. A [national expert group](#) (2020) reported that immigrants in Norway were disproportionately affected by the crisis, including increased learning disruption and greater exposure to trauma and bereavement. Some targeted supports were introduced, but such measures will need to be a focus in the longer term. Furthermore, as challenging conditions continue, the pressure on educators to find innovative and flexible solutions persists. Establishing and promoting collaborative communities could provide the supportive environments that facilitate this, while also addressing an area for development identified pre-crisis.

This snapshot presents information originally published as part of the **Education Policy Outlook: Norway (2020)**, available at: www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Norway-2020.pdf



The Norwegian education system's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic

On 12 March, Norway [announced the closure](#) of all educational institutions. Phased reopening began with kindergartens on 20 April, followed by younger primary school students and some upper secondary and tertiary students from 27 April. Initial responses in light of the work of the *Education Policy Outlook* in 2020 in the context of this pandemic are:

1. **Ensuring continued access to learning and smooth educational pathways:** To support online learning, the Directorate for Education and Training published a [list of information and resources](#) and all schools received free access to tools for online teaching. The government launched a grant scheme for local initiatives that aim to support distance education, and committed to compensating municipal and private kindergarten providers and leisure services for lost income to ensure their survival. Grants were also dedicated to developing flexible vocational and adult education programmes and increasing study places. Norway cancelled written and oral examinations at the end of upper and lower secondary education, prioritising learning time over exam preparation during closures. Instead, school-based assessments of students' performance across the school year would inform all final grades. At upper secondary level, students who passed all subjects would receive a diploma enabling them to apply to higher education. Examinations were maintained for candidates from outside the formal school system and in higher education, where continuous assessment is less embedded, but via flexible methods which respected social distancing. For vocational students, a final assessment was still required but could be administered flexibly, determined by the institution.
2. **Strengthening the internal world of the student:** During the school closures, Norway held two press conferences specifically for children, hosted by the Prime Minister and relevant Ministers. A 24-hour phone line was made available to children and young people affected by the crisis.
3. **Providing targeted support and interventions for vulnerable children and families:** Kindergartens and primary schools remained open for children of key workers and those deemed vulnerable (children with special care or educational needs, and those with difficult home lives), including during the Easter holidays. Many municipalities and schools maintained both social and emotional welfare services and support for minority communities remotely. During the school closures, concerns grew about support for immigrant communities, specifically, and the government committed increased funds to strengthen outreach work among local voluntary organisations. Norway also committed extra funding and grants to voluntary organisations that provide education and leisure activities to children from low-income families to enable them to adapt their operations. The state special educational service for municipalities developed a resource bank to support schools to continue educating students with special education needs.
4. **Harnessing wider support and engagement at local and central level:** As described above, several new government grant schemes supported local organisations to adapt or continue their work during the school closures. In terms of decision-making, Norway consulted social partners prior to both the school closures and reopening. At the international level, several Norwegian EdTech companies joined an [international collaborative](#) offering remote learning solutions to countries across the world.
5. **Collecting, disseminating and improving the use of information about students:** Teachers were encouraged to regularly assess student participation and learning during school closures, the results of which would help inform students' final grades, where relevant. Several efforts to monitor student experiences at system-level helped inform the decision to reopen and other emergency measures. A survey of municipal responses ascertained local-level impressions of current and long-term consequences. [Statistics Norway](#) (2020) published a report on the costs of closures across the education system. A [multi-sectoral expert group](#) (2020) reported on the effects of emergency measures on vulnerable children and young people, specifically.



Table 1

Selected indicators of system readiness (OECD)		Norway	Average	Min	Max
<i>Students' readiness (according to students' self-reports in PISA 2018)</i>					
1	Percentage of disadvantaged students who are academically resilient	12.3%	10.3%	7.6%	15.6%
2	Percentage of students in disadvantaged schools with access to a computer at home that they can use for school work	94.2%	81.5%	23.5%	96.5%
<i>Teachers' readiness (according to lower secondary teachers' self-reports in TALIS 2018)</i>					
3	Percentage of teachers with a high level of need for professional development related to ICT skills for teaching	22.2%	17.7%	5.3%	39.0%
4	Percentage of teachers agreeing that most teachers in the school provide practical support to each other when applying new ideas	84.9%	77.9%	64.7%	86.5%

Note: The information presented in this spotlight covers key measures announced or introduced **before 05 May 2020**.

For more information visit: <http://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/>

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