

# SHORT WAY TO FRIENDSHIPS



advice from 210 young people who are new in Norway



# THANK YOU

A HUGE THANK YOU to the children and young people who have given advice in this project.

You know best how to make it as good as possible to be new in Norway. You have a lot of knowledge about how to create friendships when someone is new to a place, to a school and a class. You have contributed with wise and creative solutions that adults would not have been able to find without you.

Thanks to leisure clubs and schools that have helped recruit participants for the project, including: Ishavsbyen upper secondary school, Tromstun school, Hop school, Lynghaug school, Heimdal upper secondary school, Hersleb school, Kuben upper secondary school, Greåker school, Thor Heyerdahl upper secondary school, Godalen school, Songdalen school, Kirkens Bymisjon V13 Bergen, Engelminnesgata centre for young people in Stavanger.

We hope and believe that your advice will be taken seriously and contribute to important changes in Norway.

Changefactory Knowledge Centre

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The photos are of participants in the advice collection

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# Short way to friendships

## About the participants

210 children and young people aged 14-22 took part in the project. Everyone decided whether they wanted to participate. Most of the participants were between 16 and 19 years old and there were about the same number of boys and girls. The participants had been anywhere from a few weeks to many years in Norway, and came from various countries, such as Afghanistan, Syria, Eritrea, Great Britain, Congo and the Philippines.

Young people from different parts of Norway participated: Trondheim, Bergen, Tromsø, Larvik, Sarpsborg, Oslo, Stavanger, Kristiansand and surrounding areas. The participants attended either regular classes at secondary schools and upper secondary schools, or various types of special classes such as combination classes, introductory classes or Norwegian learning classes. Some also went to specific Norwegian training schools.

## About themes and main issues

The theme of the project was what adults in the school, pupils who were born in Norway, and pupils who are new in Norway, can do so that those who are new in Norway will thrive, learn and make friends.

- What do schools do so that Norwegian and foreign pupils can get to know each other?
- What should schools do in order for more Norwegians and foreign pupils to get to know each other?
- If you were a teacher and someone who was new in Norway joined your class, what is the most important thing you can do?
- If you are a pupil and someone new in Norway joined your class, what is the most important thing you can do?
- If you are new in Norway and starting a new class, what is the most important thing you can do?

## Conducting the project

National weekend gatherings and local gatherings were organised to gather advice:

- 2 national weekend gatherings and one national summer camp, to collect advice and get to know each other through social activities
- Gatherings at 11 schools and 2 leisure clubs to collect advice
- Local gatherings with activities

Group discussions and creative assignments where the participants used film, images and text to illustrate advice were carried out. Visits were made to schools and leisure clubs where children and young people both answered some questions individually and took part in group discussions.

The gatherings were organised with an emphasis on ensuring that they felt as safe as possible for those who participated. The adults who facilitated were trained to meet children and young people with openness and human warmth. This is based on the main findings from children about how adults must be, in order for them to be able to talk freely.

All participants were told from the start that they could withdraw at any time, without having to explain why. They were also informed that everything written down would be anonymised.

# Give us a chance

In 2021, Changefactory conducted an advice collection in which 105 young people with a refugee background participated. They shared knowledge about what it's like to arrive in Norway, and to start at a Norwegian school. The answers showed that the young people are separated a lot from Norwegian pupils, and that it is therefore difficult to learn Norwegian and make friends:

- Most have not had a say in what it takes for them to learn Norwegian in the best possible way. No one knows the reasons why they are placed in classes the way they are.
- Most would like to go to classes with Norwegian-speaking pupils, but not everyone has had the opportunity to do so.
- Some have been placed in classes with adult pupils. Then they have often spent more time learning and they have missed getting to know others their own age.
- Many have not attended a class where they speak Norwegian. Some have been very separated from the Norwegian children and it has felt as if they went to a completely separate school.
- Most have experienced that the class felt unsafe. There have been various reasons, such as large differences in knowledge of Norwegian and age. When the class has felt unsafe, the pupils have been worried about, or dreaded, going to school. This has had major consequences for learning.

# Laws and frameworks

*Norway is now drafting a new Education Act. If those who decide listen to the knowledge from pupils, they can make a law that makes it easier for municipalities, schools and teachers - to give pupils who are new in Norway the best possible plan to learn Norwegian, make friends, and get to know each other as part of Norwegian society.*

*In Changefactory's advice collection "Give us a chance" (2021), many of the pupils answered that they wanted to go to a regular class, but had not been given the opportunity to do so. Most had also not received information about why they were not allowed to go to ordinary class.*

In 2020, over 41,000 pupils in primary school received special Norwegian education. There are no exact figures for upper secondary school, but altogether a large number of children and young people in Norway go to school every day and feel that they do not know enough Norwegian. (Hearing note Education Act, 2021:216)

The school rights of newly arrived pupils are set out in the Education Act. The law states that the municipalities and county councils can organise language training in their own groups, but only if "this is considered to be in the best interest of the pupil" (§§ 2-8 and 3-12). Even if pupils do not know Norwegian well enough to follow the normal teaching at school, they are not obliged to receive special language training, for example in a separate class. Since it is voluntary, the pupil or parents must consent before a decision is made about such training. Pupils who refuse have the right to attend an ordinary class according to Section 8-2 of the Education Act.

The Norwegian authorities know that the Education Act leaves room for a lot of discretion. The Ministry of Education says: *«It is possible for the municipalities and county councils to offer introductory offers and combination classes (...), but there are no guidelines for what the content of such offers should be. Furthermore, the law does not say anything about how primary, secondary and upper secondary schools should organise the special language training or when it should be given»* (Hearing note Education Act, 2021:220).

Several reports (Liedtvalget's reports, Rambøll 2016 etc.) have shown challenges related to the training offered to pupils who are new in Norway: Great variation in the offer, lack of educational resources, expertise and mapping material.

The Children's Ombudsman believes that the regulations give the municipalities and county councils so much room for action that it comes at the expense of the pupils' rights. The answers from children support this. In order to ensure a school that is perceived as safe and useful, where they can learn Norwegian as quickly as possible and make friends, clearer frameworks must be made, based on the answers from those who are new in Norway now.



The way to friendships is short

## Quotes

Last year, in secondary school, we had a class that came for 2 hours. Then we worked together, drew, did homework. I have made many friends that way. We discuss with each other, started playing football and they say hello every time, greet me and such. (boy, new in Norway)

I didn't know there was a combination class at my school until now. It is very hidden on a different floor than where the rest of the classes are. Then it becomes very difficult for both sides to make contact. (girl, born in Norway)

Norwegian young people think we are dangerous because we come from a country at war. Maybe the parents told them not to contact young people from these countries. The most important thing to show that we are not dangerous is to do activities together at school. (boy, new in Norway)

We Norwegians do not learn much about other countries and cultures. We can become a little shy and not know how to get to know the new people who have a different language and a different religion. (girl, born in Norway)

I have good teachers - they understand pupils who have come from other countries. (girl, new in Norway)

If I've broken my arm, people will help because they can see it. If my heart hurts, no one can see. If you say a nice word, it helps. One thing helps more than nothing. (boy, new in Norway)

It is good that there are many people to talk to, public health nurses, teachers, school psychologists - they will help you if you are having a hard time. (girl, new in Norway)

## NUMBERS FROM THE PROJECT

1 out of 4 went to a class with Norwegian young people

1 out of 3 had made Norwegian friends at school

1 out of 2 had Norwegian friends who were not from their school

1 out of 3 did activities with Norwegian young people

FROM US WHO ARE NEW IN NORWAY



# To you who grew up in Norway

## **Don't be afraid to make a fool of yourself**

Don't be afraid to talk or ask us about things you are unsure about. Don't be afraid to make a fool of yourself. It is better to try and fail and rather apologise, than not to try to get to know each other.

We know that you Norwegians are often shy, afraid of making mistakes and afraid of being labelled racist. Remember that we do not know how Norway works and need advice and help. Don't be afraid to ask if you can help.

## **Understand that we are learning a new language**

Don't laugh at us when we try to speak Norwegian. Please don't do it, no matter what. It can hurt very much and perhaps make us not dare to speak. Remember that many of us know many languages and other important things that Norway needs. If you want to help someone speak correct Norwegian, you can do it in a patient and kind way. When we start talking and someone laughs, it can take away the courage to talk again.

## **Learn a little about culture and religion**

It is good if you learn a little about the culture and religion of those who are joining your class. Then you avoid asking stupid questions that could feel hurtful. Similarities and differences are good, show respect for differences. Don't think that it is the media that gives the truth about the country we come from. We are ordinary people and not terrorists even if there is a war in our home country. We come here for peace and security, not for food and money. We shouldn't have to apologise for being here.

## **Show that you want to get to know us for real**

Please be kind and invite us to be with you Norwegians, when someone is sitting alone. Don't just ask once - it's really nice when you ask several times. Some may be a little shy, but still usually want to join. If the language is difficult, you can use body language and maybe a little English if you can. Smile and say hello, it can help a lot on a difficult day.

It is also very nice if you dare to talk to us even if you are with your Norwegian friends. Ask if we want to hang out. Then we understand that you want to get to know us for real.

## **Tips for getting to know us**

- Talk to us on social media. Then maybe we can find out if we like the same things. Maybe we can eat together, play something, watch something together - and become friends.
- Feel free to show us around town or where we live. It is very nice if you want to show us places and where we can find different places that are important. Feel free to show us your favourite places. Tell us how Norway works.
- Through friends we can make new friends. It's kind when you Norwegians introduce us to your friends. It can be through just hanging out, through activity, or adding us as a friend on Snap or Insta.



# For those of you who are new in Norway

## **Be brave**

Don't be afraid to speak Norwegian, even if you say it wrong. Don't wait for someone to come talk to you. Even if you don't know Norwegian well, you can say hello, and eventually you will learn more and more. Say your name, where you're from and what you like to do, watch or read about. Try to make a friend, then it's easier to meet their friends.

## **Smile and use the opportunities**

It is brave to dare to smile. You can smile on the way to school and at school. Use the opportunities that exist. A smile can be the way to get to know someone. If you look closely, you can see that many people are kind and respectful if they notice that you are respectful. Therefore, smile.

## **Join activities**

If you join activities, you can have the opportunity to make friends and feel like part of the community. It's easier to get to know each other when you do activities together, such as football or ping pong. Talk to the Norwegians and find out if you have anything in common. If you're extra brave, ask if you can watch or do the activities.

## **Find something in common**

Finding things you have in common is important to get to know each other. If, for example, two people enjoy cooking, it is easy to talk about it and then it is easy to get to know each other better. It's a good idea to try to talk about some important things too, to get to know each other well, not just jokes and silly things. If you find a person who likes the same thing as you, that person may also have other friends who like the same thing. Then it is easier to get to know them as well.



# To adults in school

## **Give us lessons together with a regular Norwegian class**

Today, many of us are not allowed to go to a Norwegian class. When we only go to class with others who are new in Norway, we easily feel isolated from them. It takes longer before we learn the language and become part of society. Therefore we **MUST** have classes together with regular classes. It can be in a subject where we don't need to know so much Norwegian. The school just has to find a solution on how to do it.

## **Let's start in Norwegian class as soon as possible**

When we are new in Norway, we must be able to start in a regular Norwegian class as soon as possible. Most of us would prefer that. Then we can make Norwegian friends and learn Norwegian faster. We can quickly get to know what it is like at a Norwegian school. If we have to go to another class first, we must spend at least a few hours a week in a regular class. Then it will be easier to transfer to a Norwegian class afterwards.

## **Make activities together with Norwegians at school**

In the schools, it must be arranged so that those of us who are new in Norway can do activities together with Norwegians. We ask that both the school, social workers and teachers be given responsibility for this. We can go for a walk, play games, play outside or do other things together. The adults have to start the activities and then they can usually withdraw from the activity a little.

## **Let's work together in the classroom**

We need to collaborate more with those we go to class with. We learn more from it. When we work together, we get to know the others in the class more easily. You who are teachers can, for example, change places in the classroom every week. It helps us to get to know more people in the class better.

## **Tell us what the plan is**

It is difficult to know how long we will be in the class without Norwegian pupils, when you say different things. If you had said that we can start in a regular class when we know enough Norwegian, then we would have tried to learn very quickly. When we don't know, it's easy to lose motivation and give up.

## **Talk about how the school welcomes new pupils**

At the start of the year, you must be responsible for talking to the classes about how to welcome new pupils.

## **Understand that we can feel sad inside**

If a pupil doesn't always pay attention in class, it's best not to get angry. You must try to understand why they do not pay attention. We may feel sad inside.

## **Focus more on how it is in other cultures**

It is nice to talk in class about what it is like in other cultures and other countries. Then it becomes easier to understand each other. The news mostly shows the negative things. You can also ask those who are new to the country if they want to tell the class something positive about their culture and something nice about the country they come from.

## **Organise lessons where we can help each other**

You can make a lesson, during school hours or right after, where we can be in a room with other pupils and help each other with homework. When we help each other, we get to know each other faster. We can talk together and learn from each other.

## **Be patient and let us learn at our own pace**

Your patience is important to many of us. If we don't understand something, explain and say you think we can do it. Don't give up on us. We are all different and we learn at different paces. When we feel we are not learning Norwegian as quickly as we could have done, many of us can quickly lose motivation.

## **Give us information about leisure activities**

Some of us have not known about leisure activities that one can take part in. Some have independently found leisure activities and organisations where you can volunteer, for example the Red Cross. It is nice if you give us information about things we can be involved in, outside of school.

## **Organise free activities outside school hours**

Not everyone who is new in Norway can go on leisure activities. The school should have different activities from week to week, or there may be fixed activities every month. It can be sports that give a sense of teamspirit, yoga, card games and board games. Activities make it easier to get to know each other.

## Dear you who decide

This is serious. While we go to classes without Norwegian children and young people, precious time disappears. It is time we'll never get back. It is time that could have been used to learn more Norwegian and more about the country. We could learn much faster, together with those who speak Norwegian.

Language is a bit like a key, which opens doors. Without the key, it's easy to get left out of almost everything.

Many of us come from countries at war. We can feel sad inside. When we are sad, friendship is extra important. But it is difficult to get to know and make Norwegian friends, when so many of us do not get to be with Norwegian children and young people.

We would like to learn Norwegian, make friends, go to school and get a job.

Now it takes a very long time. Then it takes even longer before we become part of society.

So dear you who decide. We ask you to take these numbers seriously and give us a chance. Let us go to class with Norwegian-speaking pupils if we want to.



# CHANGEFACTORY KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

## Why knowledge directly from children?

Children and young people have to feel that the school, kindergarten, support services, police and legal system are safe and useful for them. Children and young people all over Norway have experiences from meeting these systems and advice on how they can be the best possible. Authorities, professionals and students often lack this knowledge from children and young people, when frameworks and what constitutes good practice are to be determined, nationally and locally. Therefore, it must be brought in to a much greater extent and, together with other knowledge, be part of the knowledge base, in order to develop and ensure the quality of good systems for children and young people.

## More than 10 years of collecting knowledge

For more than 10 years, Changefactory (CF) has systematically collected experiences and advice from children and young people about how they experience school, kindergarten, support services, the police and the legal system. In 2017, the Prime Minister opened Changefactory Knowledge Centre, to collect knowledge from children and young people about the public systems. As far as we know, there are few knowledge centres in Europe whose main purpose is to gather and disseminate knowledge directly from children and young people about the systems they are in. CF seeks collaboration with similar organisations.

## Participatory and practice-oriented method

In order to collect, systematise and disseminate summarised experiences and advice from children and young people, a participatory and practice-oriented method is used. CF has called it the Changemethod. The Changemethod has been developed in close collaboration with children and young people. It greatly considers that children have the right to express their opinion, in ways that feel safe for them. The method consists of process descriptions and tools that help many diverse children and young people to participate. It's based closely on a participatory method used in action research, called Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

## Safety is most important

The experiences and advice are collected directly from children and young people in sessions or interviews. The sessions are organised with an emphasis on ensuring that they are experienced as safely as possible for the children and young people who participate. The adults who facilitate are, among other things, trained by children to meet children and young people with openness and human warmth. This is based on the main findings from children about what adults have to be like, in order for children to be able to tell honestly.

## Experiences and advice are summarised

Experiences and advice from the sessions are documented in transcripts and other written and visual documentation. The data is summarised and systematised. No links are made to theory. Experiences and advice that are repeated by many children and young people in many places in the country, become the main answers. We call this knowledge directly from children.

## Children and young people present

The knowledge from children is presented in reports, films, podcasts, books and online. Participants in the qualitative surveys can also be invited, as pros, in communication and professional development. The pros present knowledge directly from children to politicians, national authorities, professionals and students.



### Give us a chance

Advice from 105 young people with a refugee background give advice to schools



### Safe in class

Tools for a safe and good learning environment in grade 1.-10.



### Angry on the outside, hurting on the inside

Advice from 101 children on how to meet children and young people who are angry and use violence



### Life skills

Tools for the class LIFE SKILLS, a talking-class where children and young people get to practice putting feelings into words

