

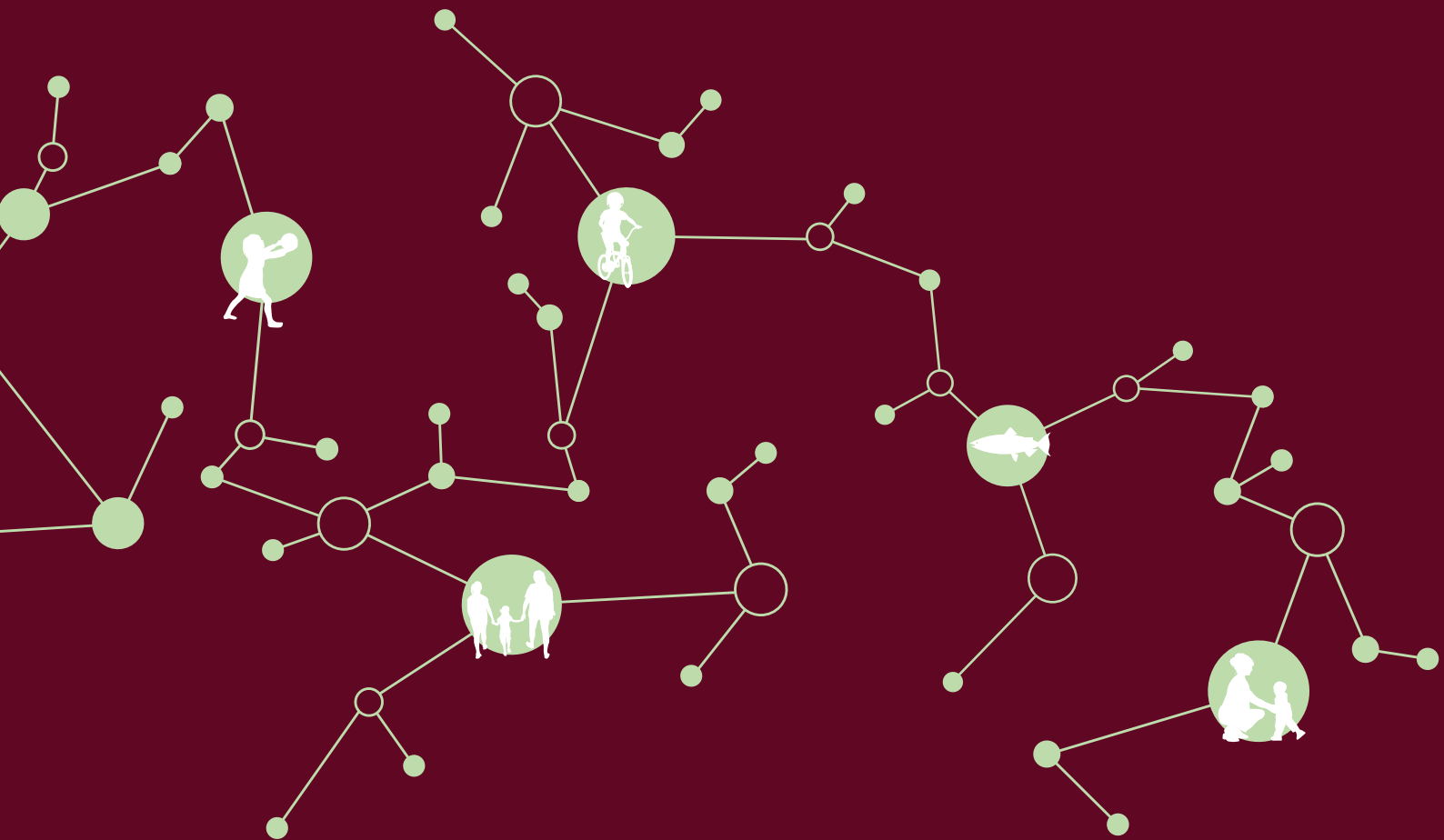


Western Norway  
University of  
Applied Sciences



Funded by  
The Research  
Council of Norway

KINDknow  
Kindergarten Knowledge Centre  
for Systemic Research on Diversity  
and Sustainable Futures



# 2025

## Annual Report

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KINDknow notes series 20, 2026



**UiT** The Arctic  
University of Norway

**OSLOMET**



UNIVERSITY  
OF OSLO



**NORD**  
University



**DMMH**  
Høgskolen for  
barnehagelærerutdanning



**UiA** University  
of Agder

**NIH**



UNIVERSITY  
OF BERGEN



Inland Norway  
University of  
Applied Sciences



CITY OF  
BERGEN



**ØY  
GARD  
EN**



**Tromsø  
kommune**  
Municipality of Tromsø



**Kinn kommune**



**Lærdal  
kommune**



**HELSE BERGEN**  
Haukeland universitetssjukehus



**Helsedirektoratet**  
Norwegian Directorate of Health



**NIPH**  
Norwegian Institute of Public Health



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**NORCE**

kunst  pilotene

 **kanvas**

**FILIORUM** Senter for  
barnehageforskning  
Universitetet i Stavanger



**Norlandia**  
BARNEHAGENE

**Livsglede**  
for Eldre



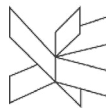
UNIVERSITY  
OF WOLLONGONG  
AUSTRALIA



UNIVERSITY OF  
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MONASH University



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UNIVERSITY



AARHUS UNIVERSITY



**SAPIENZA**  
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA



**Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University**



**OMEP** 

**ipa**

International Play Association  
promoting the child's right to play

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# Introduction

## Olga Shangina Williams

Editor and Administrative Leader at  
KINDknow Research Centre



The journey towards research excellence is not measured solely by academic outputs but by the tangible difference our work makes in the lives of children, families, educators, and communities. The year 2025 has been a defining period for KINDknow—a year in which we have deliberately and systematically transformed our approach to research, expanded our collaborative networks, and intensified our commitment to creating meaningful societal impact.

*Path to Excellence and Societal Impact* is the central theme of this annual report, reflecting our evolution from conducting smaller, localised studies to leading large-scale, interdisciplinary research projects that resonate across sectors and borders. This transformation is the result of strategic vision, sustained partnerships, and an unwavering belief that early childhood research must serve a greater purpose: to build more sustainable futures for our children and for the planet they will inherit.

We have also broadened our interdisciplinary foundation, bringing together perspectives from health, innovation, technology, economics, arts, and culture. At the core of our work lies strong collaboration with national and international partners. These partnerships are essential to our ambition of producing research of high academic quality with clear societal relevance.

Engagement with policy-making institutions has been a key priority. We actively seek dialogue with stakeholders and decision-makers, and we aim to contribute knowledge that can inform and influence policy development in our field.

This year has also been marked by the completion of several important projects. Among these is the project EX-PED-LAB—Sustainable Designs for Early Childhood Education Professional Development through Workshop Methodology. This project explored exploration as a methodology in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and was concluded with a creative conference and the launch of a web-based resource, EXPLORATORIUM.NO.

Since 2024, KINDknow has been developing a pioneering research area focused on artificial intelligence in ECEC. This strategic initiative recognises that AI technologies are no longer distant possibilities but present realities, increasingly integrated into children's everyday lives, play experiences, and educational settings. The KINDknow Centre has been developing research in theoretical frameworks and practical resources that support the early childhood sector in navigating this technological transformation.

At KINDknow, we were privileged to work alongside three post-doctoral fellows and 13 PhD candidates in 2025—talented researchers who represent the future of early childhood educational research. Their energy, creativity, and critical perspectives enrich our research environment and push us to think differently about what excellence means and how impact is achieved.

This time, we challenged our doctoral and postdoctoral researchers to reflect deeply on two fundamental questions:

What project activities contribute to excellence in research?

What societal impact has the project generated or aspires to create?

We hope you will enjoy reading about our achievements and challenges in this year's annual report.

*Warm regards,*

*Olga Shangina Williams*

*Editor and Administrative Leader of KINDknow Research Centre*

# Introduction from KINDknow Centre's Director

## Prof. Elin Eriksen Ødegaard

Director of KINDknow Centre



The year 2025 marked a consolidation of our vision for the period leading up to 2028, while at the same time representing an important leap forward in our ambitions, goals, and outreach in early childhood research. This development has strengthened both our local and national anchoring, and—most importantly—our international collaboration, visibility, and societal impact.

Our vision, Early Childhood Research for More Sustainable Futures for Our Children, provides a clear and coherent value framework for KINDknow's research. For me as Director, this vision is both inspiring and practically useful when setting priorities and navigating dilemmas and uncertainty. The times we are entering call for intensified efforts to generate new and innovative knowledge that enriches the lives of children and families and supports early childhood educators in their mandate to provide high-quality education for all. These times also require hope, creativity, and renewed energy. In this regard, it is deeply encouraging that we already have strong and highly competent research teams, and that we are welcoming new researchers engaged in ambitious and inspiring projects.

Throughout 2025, our researchers have worked intensively on publications, encompassing all stages of scholarly work—from innovative research design and interdisciplinary collaboration to complex analytical processes. Such work requires time and sustained effort. As a research milieu, we have undergone a significant transformation. Whereas 10–15 years ago much of our work was based on smaller Norwegian samples and closely connected to teacher education practices or collaborations with individual kindergartens, we now work predominantly in team-based, interdisciplinary projects. These projects are often conducted in partnership with organisations, enabling systemic knowledge production relevant in local and international contexts. Several of our initiatives are radically interdisciplinary, extending beyond education into health and care, innovation, technology, economics, and, in many projects, close collaboration with the arts and cultural sector.

For many years, KINDknow has maintained strong and sustained collaboration with both public and private kindergarten sectors, as well as with international universities and organisations. This long-term engagement represents a clear movement towards research excellence, co-creation, and pedagogical innovation within the field of education for sustainability.

I will highlight only a selection of events and achievements from 2025 that illustrate our ambitions for research excellence and societal impact; further details are presented elsewhere in this annual report.

In February, we hosted a strategic meeting with the Department of Strategy and Analysis at the Norwegian Ministry of Education. Prepa-

ring for and engaging in dialogue with policymakers at the highest national level is of great value for strategic leadership. Key researchers, members of the steering board, and selected partners were actively involved, ensuring that both the preparation and the dialogue contributed to KINDknow's ongoing strategic development. This meeting provided an opportunity to showcase research results and ongoing initiatives, as well as to articulate new ambitions for Early Childhood Educational Research (ECER).

Our role as host of the research school NORCHILD continues to offer significant opportunities to consolidate and innovate national initiatives for PhD and postdoctoral candidates in ECER. In 2025, we established a new leadership course in collaboration with the University of South-Eastern Norway and developed work-life training opportunities that resulted in externships for three pioneering PhD candidates. We also hosted an international summer school with 26 participants from seven countries.

In 2025, we concluded two major research projects. The first, DocTalent4EU, was a Horizon Europe project in which KINDknow participated through a partnership agreement with the University Côte d'Azur. We led the development of doctoral training in transferable skills within interdisciplinary research teams. Our contributions and leadership were highly appreciated by partner institutions, and the development of transferable skills may provide new job opportunities for PhD students both within and outside of academia. This project impacted our understanding of and our ability to communicate what kind of skills a researcher develops through an academic carrier—skills which are often invisible to those outside academia.

The second project, EX-PED-LAB—Sustainable Designs for Early Childhood Education Professional Development through Workshop Methodology, funded by the Research Council of Norway, responded to a call for scholarly knowledge on exploration as a methodology for collaborative and responsive pedagogical design. The project has influenced quality development practices within our partner organisation, the City of Bergen, and has contributed to changes in teacher education and regional professional development. EX-PED-LAB involved radical interdisciplinary exploration, generating valuable learning experiences and new cross-sectoral networks spanning health, technology, design, and the arts and cultural sector. This project directly impacted students, educators, and leaders of the early childhood sector, while indirectly impacting the quality of education provided for children in kindergartens.

A third highlight is the KINDknow's increasing visibility on high-impact platforms for education for sustainability. As Research Director, I have had the privilege of delivering invited keynote lectures in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway on leadership through workshop methodology and future-oriented leadership grounded in imagination and play. I have also served as chair for a UNESCO webinar on Education for Sustainable Development in Early Childhood Education, as well as for a global webinar at the COP30 Climate Conference in Brazil on Early Childhood Education as the First Line of NCD and Climate Resilience Prevention, hosted by the International Institute for OrthoPostural Education (IIOPE) organisation. I was also rewarded for my long-term commitment as the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP) Treasurer role at the Executive Board of World OMEP at the World Assembly in Bologna in July.

These highlights represent only a fraction of KINDknow's activities in 2025. Together, they point towards our continued commitment in the years ahead to advancing knowledge, strengthening practice, and serving society in the best interests of children and future life on our planet.

*Elin Eriksen Ødegaard,  
Research Director of KINDknow Centre*

# Introduction from KINDknow's Chair

## Christine Øye

Chair of KINDknow Research  
Centre

Pro-rector for Research,  
Western Norway University  
of Applied Science



As Chair of KINDknow Research Centre, I am proud of how we build bridges between research excellence and practical impact in kindergartens. Our work supports Western Norway University of Applied Sciences's (HVL) strategic ambition to integrate world-class research quality with regional development. KINDknow leads the way on a path towards high-impact excellence and societal benefit by identifying co-creation opportunities between researchers, kindergarten professionals, and decision-makers in the early childhood sector. This interdisciplinary and collaborative approach ensures that cutting-edge research is translated into practice. Through the development of innovative learning methods and pedagogical tools, we enable kindergartens to offer high-quality learning environments for both children and educators. It is precisely at the intersection of international knowledge exchange and regional collaboration with kindergarten stakeholders that KINDknow positions itself as a leading international and interdisciplinary actor in early childhood research.

# About KINDknow

Kindergarten Knowledge Center for Systemic Research on Diversity and Sustainable Futures

## Research areas

 <p>Movement, play and exploration</p>	 <p>Systemic leadership and conditions for children in kindergartens</p>	 <p>Pedagogical innovation and cocreation</p>
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## Our research meets UNESCO focus areas



## Our vision and core values

Our vision is:

# Kindergarten research for a fairer and more sustainable future for our children

Kindergarten research plays a pivotal role in shaping a fairer and more sustainable future for our children. KINDknow is at the forefront of pioneering work in the research, knowledge development, and innovation aimed at promoting sustainable futures centred on the interests of children and the kindergarten.

Our community mission is to conduct outstanding research as well as promote knowledge development and innovation. We strive to be an attractive collaboration partner and a trusted source for the kindergarten sector. Through our efforts, we aim to significantly contribute to the advancement of early childhood education and care, ensuring a brighter and more equitable future for all children.

### Outstanding

World-class ECEC research  
Innovative and creative methodology  
Building an inclusive, high-performing research community

### Sustainability

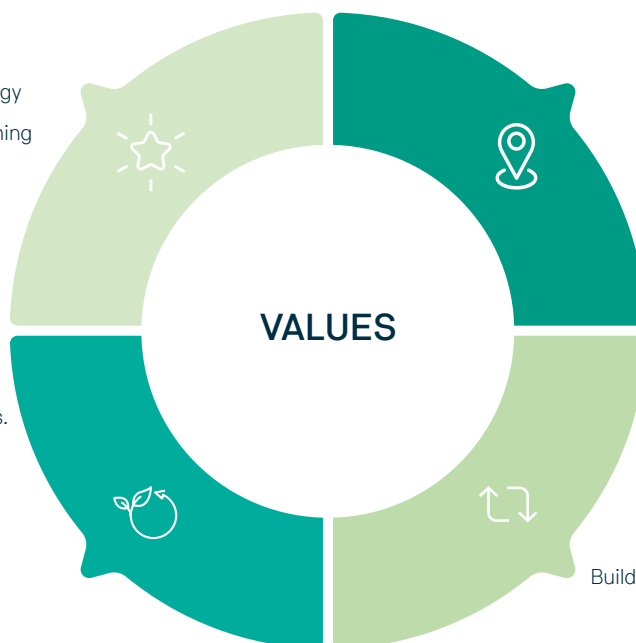
Integrating ecological, cultural, social, and economic perspectives.  
Advancing sustainability in education and society.  
Promoting well-being for children, families, and staff.

### Glocality

Collaborating across borders and disciplines.  
Championing cultural diversity.  
Strengthening local, national, and international partnerships.

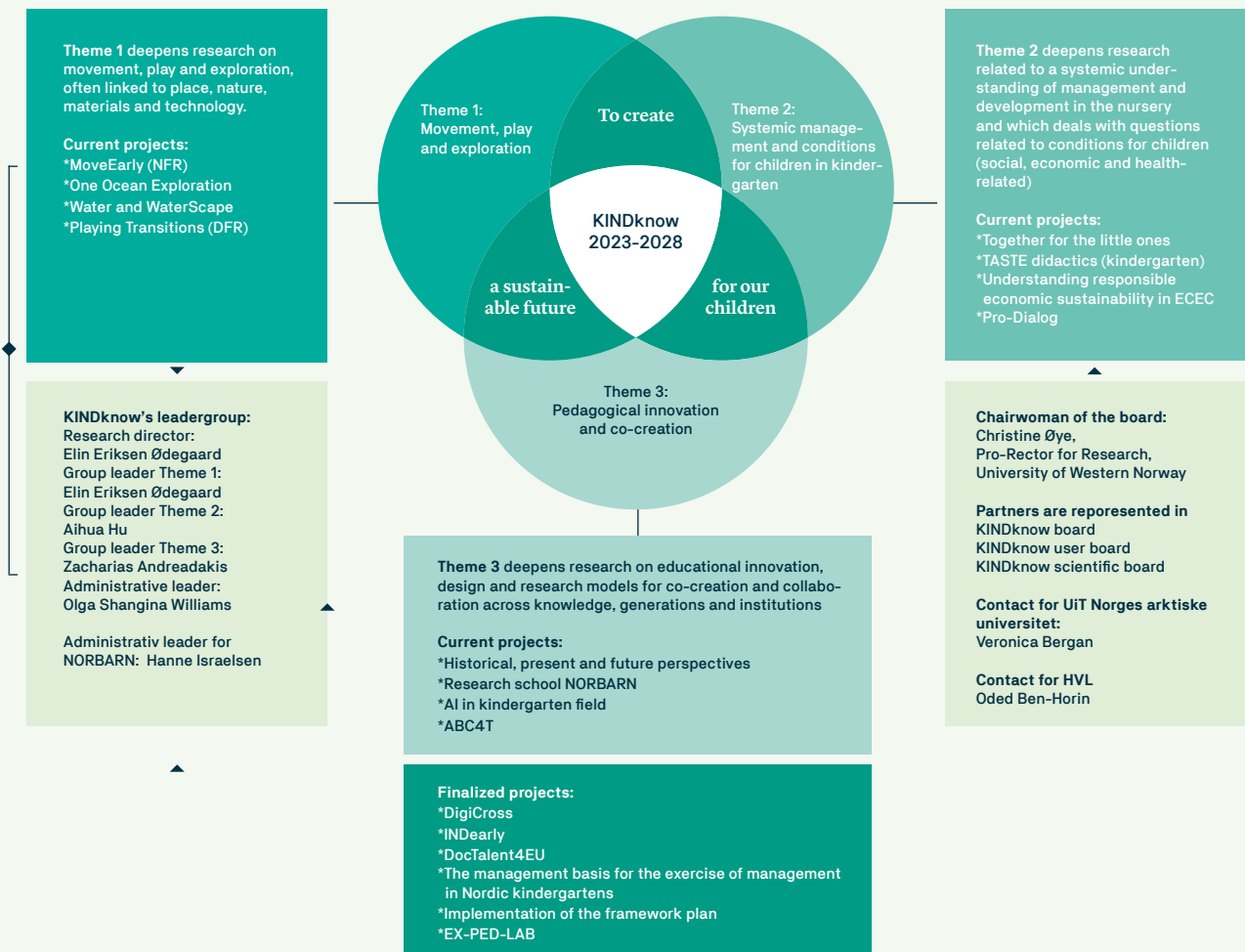
### Co-creation and sharing

Driving innovation in co-creation and participatory research.  
Elevating quality and competence in the kindergarten sector.  
Building knowledge through collaboration with diverse stakeholders.

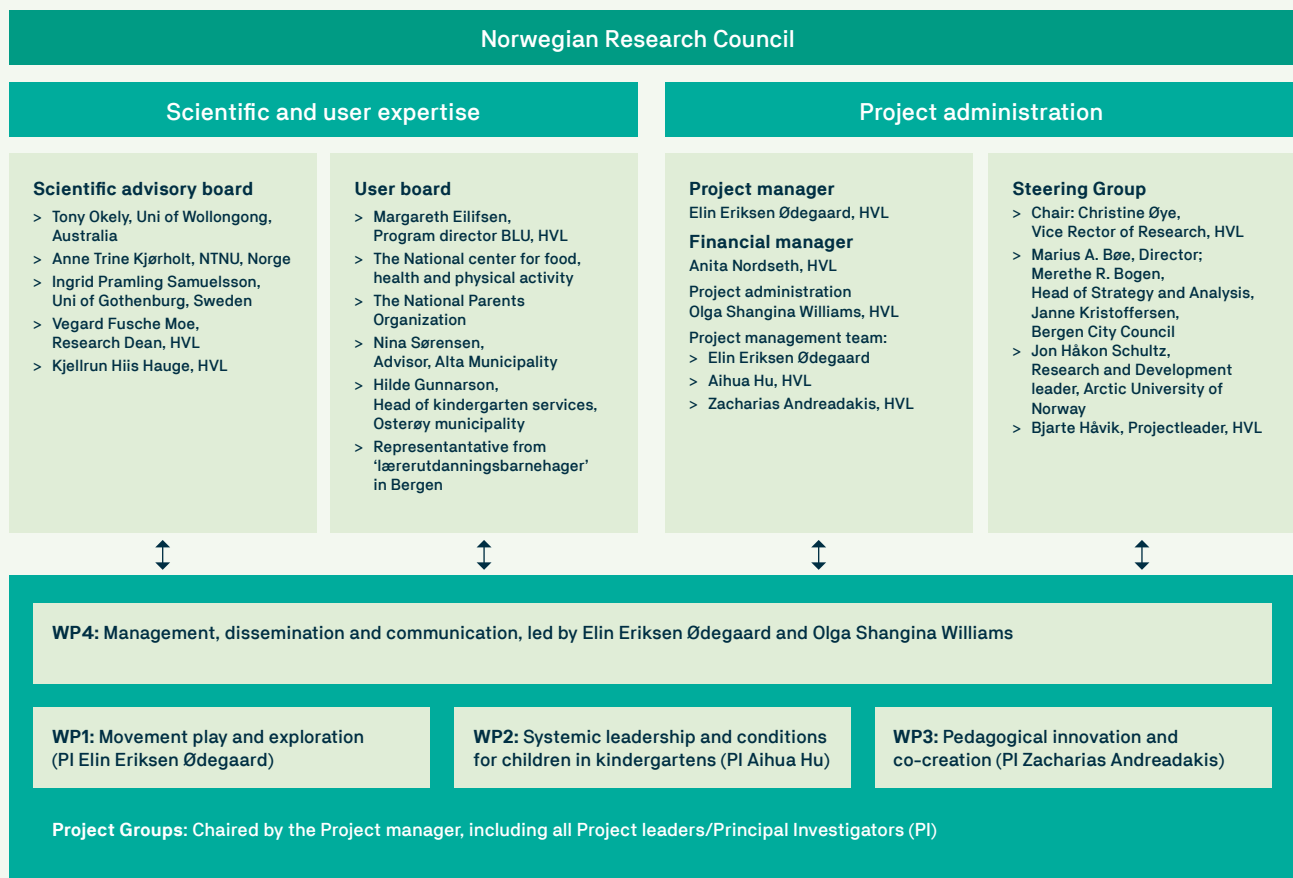


# Methodological design

To accomplish its objectives, the KINDknow Research Centre facilitates research opportunities involving kindergartens and various partners, spanning diverse regions within Norway and internationally. Given the global emphasis on sustainability (as outlined by the UN) and its integration into Norway’s new framework plan for kindergartens, it is imperative to employ new research methodologies, particularly participatory research methodologies, to inform and reshape practices effectively. In 2025, KINDknow has continued to design research methodologies characterised by co-creation with diverse stakeholders to secure research into real life problems.



# KINDknow Organisation Design



# Partners and collaborators

## Our core partners

Municipality of Bergen and UiT—The Arctic University of Norway remain our partners in the new project period (2023–2028). This strategic collaboration ensures the quality of our research by fostering close collaboration with the field of practice. Together we strengthen our efforts in ECEC research, particularly within the unique contexts of Bergen and the Arctic.

We aim to address region- and local-specific challenges and opportunities, advancing ECEC practices and policies tailored to these distinct geographical and cultural environments. Through this partnership model, we are dedicated to conducting impactful research that supports the growth, development, and well-being of young children in these regions.

Our partnership with Municipality of Bergen continues in research partnerships in Together for the Little Ones (Sammen for de minste), EX-PED-LAB, and the MoveEarly project. These projects engage about 60 kindergartens in the city. Together for the Little Ones received funding from National Programme for Public Health in municipalities in its closing phase, resulting in a digital module for staff in the municipality sector working with children up to five years old. EX-PED-LAB, funded by The Norwegian Research Council from 2021 until the end of 2025, has resulted in a change of practices in designing leader meetings with headmasters in kindergartens. Workshops are implemented as a main working methodology. The MoveEarly project is in the middle of a large intervention in about 25 kindergartens, with results to come later.

An important part of the cooperation with the Municipality of Bergen has been the development of a new PhD candidate. In November, Dr. Marion Oen, representing the Municipality of Bergen, successfully defended her PhD thesis entitled “I See That You Want to Play—Co-Creating Navigable Opportunity Spaces for Working with Play in Kindergarten” (“Jeg ser at du vil leke—samskaping av navigerbare mulighetsrom for arbeid med lek i barnehagen”). Her research focuses on play, professional development, and co-creation between the ECEC sector and academia, and contributes a theoretically grounded conceptual framework and methodological approach to support kindergarten teachers’ work with children’s play. Marion’s PhD position was part of the ExPedLab project.

(Further in this report we will touch upon both Marion’s thesis and project ExPedLab.)

In 2025, KINDknow’s partner at UiT further strengthened its research profile through the affiliated centre KINDknow–UiT. The centre comprised 18 researchers within ECEC, including one PhD candidate, and demonstrated a high level of activity across research, dissemination, and collaboration.

A key highlight of the year was the successful acquisition of several externally funded research projects, reflecting both strong competitiveness and relevance within national and international research arenas. Among the funded projects were Interreg Aurora on Intercultural Competence (2025, EUR 40,000), led by Helge Habbestad, and multiple Erasmus+ projects coordinated by Maria Dardanou: GENIAL (2025–2027, EUR 250,000), EUTEKNE (2025–2028, EUR 250,000), and TET4CL (2025–2028, EUR 400,000). In addition, the Directorate for Education and Training granted funding for the Development Module Digital Practices in Kindergarten (2025–2026, NOK 3.5 million), also led by Maria Dardanou. Further research activity included the project Draw a Scientist (2025–2026), led by Torstein Unstad Heimdal.

Research dissemination and academic exchange were key priorities for KINDknow–UiT in 2025. Through seminars and workshops, the centre actively contributed to scholarly dialogue, while strengthening connections between research and practice.

As part of this work, Veronica Bergen organised a workshop and seminar with visiting scholar Prof. Sean Blenkinsop (Canada). The seminar, How to Transform Education in and with Nature, explored nature as a co-teacher in education and combined experiential outdoor learning at Holt Økopark with indoor academic discussions at UiT.



Veronica Bergen and Sean Blenkinsop at the workshop in Tromsø.

Marit Sundelin initiated action One Day at Kindergarten (Operasjon barnehagedagsverk) in connection with the UN's International Children's Day. The initiative invited scholars in early childhood teacher education to spend a full working day in kindergartens. By bringing researchers closer to everyday kindergarten practice, the initiative aimed to highlight the competence, opportunities, and societal value of the ECEC sector, while also contributing to a more positive and nuanced public narrative about kindergarten work.

KINDknow–UiT researchers were also active in national and international conference arenas. Six researchers participated in the National ECEC Research Conference (Barnehageforskningskonferansen) in Stavanger. In addition, research from the centre was presented at several international conferences and festivals, including the conference arranged by the European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA), the Nordic Educational Research Association (NERA), the International Conference of Innovative Technologies, and the International Ecoliteracy Research Festival. These contributions supported international knowledge exchange and strengthened the centre's academic visibility.

Several KINDknow–UiT researchers received recognition through invitations to key national and international arenas. Maria Dardanou was appointed to the Programme Board for Research on Digitalisation and Digital Competence in Kindergartens and Schools at the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2024–2030). She was also invited to speak at the OECD experts' meeting related to the OECD Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Skills project, held in Oslo in March 2025.

Furthermore, Maria Dardanou and Torstein Unstad Heimdal were invited speakers at DiBA 2025—Digital Balanse Agder in Kristiansand in September.

Carola Kleeman contributed to national knowledge exchange as a keynote speaker at the NABU conference (National research network on sustainability and education) in Alta, with the presentation “Linguistic sustainability in an Arctic context: Strengthening Sámi language and culture in kindergartens in Sea Sámi areas”, highlighting linguistic sustainability in Arctic ECEC contexts.

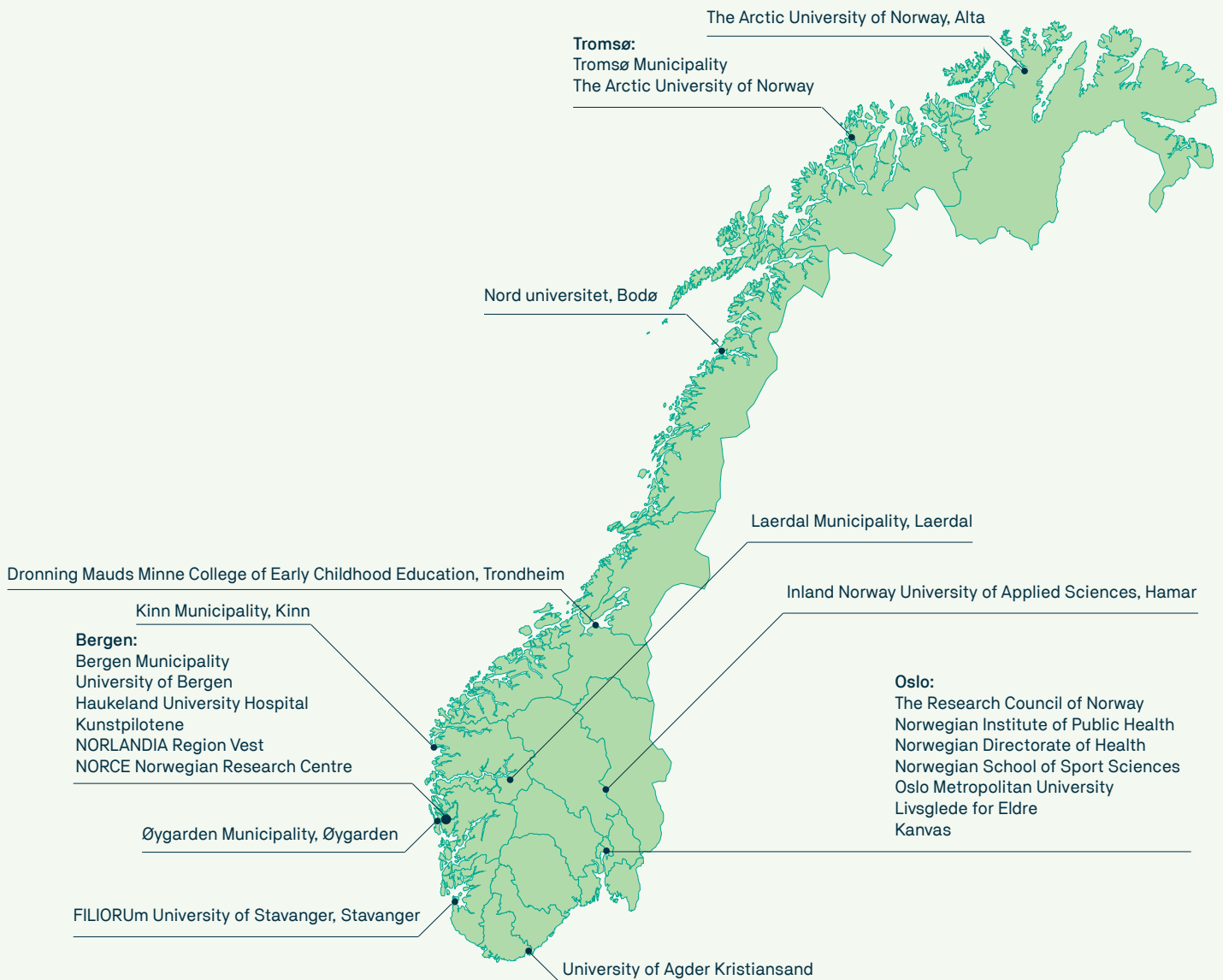
Efforts to enhance outreach and visibility continued throughout the year. The centre further developed its online presence through the UiT website ([https://uit.no/research/barnkunne\\_uit](https://uit.no/research/barnkunne_uit)), contributing to increased accessibility and dissemination of KINDknow–UiT's research profile and activities.

Overall, 2025 was marked by strong research growth, high external funding success, and increased national and international visibility for KINDknow–UiT, reinforcing the centre's role as a key contributor to ECEC research within KINDknow's collaborative framework.



Picture: Sharing experiences from “One Day at Kindergarten”.

## Our partners and collaborators in Norway



## International Collaboration

In 2025, KINDknow further strengthened its commitment to international collaboration by deepening and expanding its partnerships with a broad range of leading academic and research institutions worldwide. These strengthened relationships have enhanced both the quality and the reach of our research, while reinforcing KINDknow’s position as an internationally engaged centre for early childhood education and care.

In the Southern Hemisphere, our long-standing collaborations with the University of Wollongong and Monash University in Australia, as well as the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, were further consolidated in

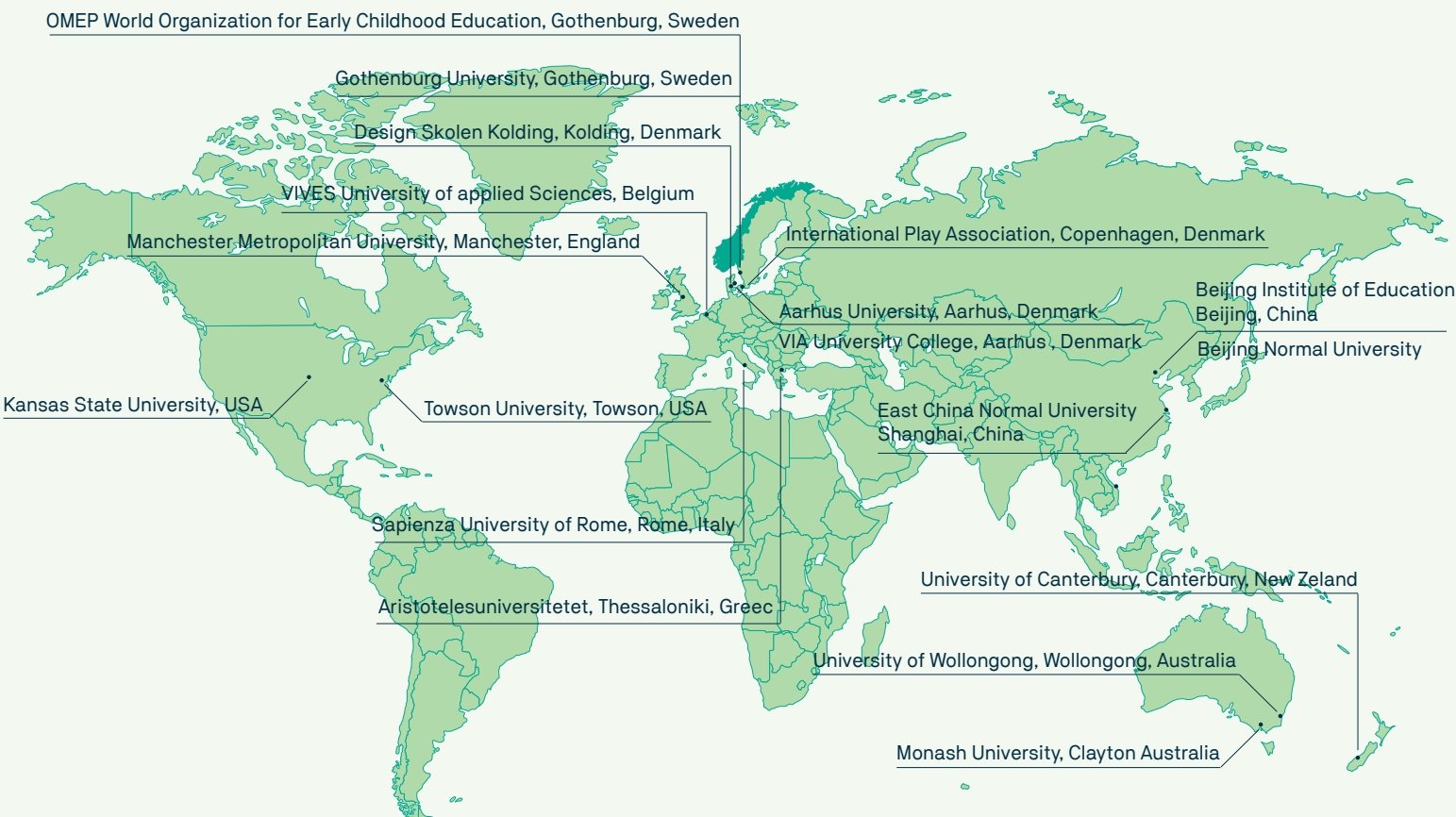
2025. Through intensified cooperation, these partnerships continue to provide valuable opportunities for research exchange and comparative perspectives on innovative early childhood practices. Our cooperation with Dr. Bradford Wiles from Towson University in the United States remains in our focus.

In Asia, KINDknow strengthened its already fruitful collaborations with Beijing Normal University, East China Normal University, and the Beijing Institute of Education in China. We continue widening our cooperation and scholars exchange to support joint research initiatives.

Across Europe, our cooperation with Aarhus University, Design School Kolding (DK Kolding), and VIA University College in Denmark, Sapienza University of Rome in Italy, the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, the University of Helsinki, the University of Primorska, Slovenia, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the University of Western Attica, and the University of Crete in Greece, and VIVES University of Applied Sciences in Belgium was further developed in 2025. These strengthened partnerships reflect KINDknow’s robust engagement with diverse European research initiatives and methodological approaches within early childhood education. These partnerships have also resulted in several project application initiatives.

The KINDknow Research Centre also continues its collaboration with OMEP—an international organisation dedicated to early childhood education.

By further strengthening this extensive international network in 2025, KINDknow benefits from a wide range of geographical, cultural, and theoretical perspectives that enrich our research and innovation in ECEC. These partnerships position us well to address global educational challenges and to advance practices that promote the well-being of children and educators worldwide.



# Highlights

## Ex-Ped-Lab: Exploration and Pedagogical Innovation Laboratories



Elin Eriksen Ødegaard,  
Co-project Leader



Hege Fimreite,  
Postdoctoral fellow,  
Co-project Leader



Czarecah Tuppil Oropilla,  
Postdoctoral fellow,  
Co-project Leader

The year 2025 marks the conclusion of *EX-PED-LAB* (*Explorations of Pedagogical Innovation Laboratories*), a research and innovation project funded by the Norwegian research council. The project is an important part of the KINDknow Research Centre. Over four years, EX-PED-LAB explored how workshop methodology could serve as a sustainable model for pedagogical innovation in ECEC. The project's closing conference in November 2025 "Courage to Co-Create" ("Mot til å samskape") celebrated both its achievements and its continuing influence through initiatives from our postdoctoral projects such as *EXPLORATORIUM.NO*, *PedPod*, *STM-Lekforsk*, *LEIKFORSK Sogndal*, *SognaBLU*, *SAMSKAP*, and *Leketøys* visual storytelling. *EX-PED-LAB* also have had a effect on working methodology in the City of Bergen, as documented by our partner, Mimmi Bjerkestrand, at the closing conference. Together, these 2025 efforts reflect *EX-PED-LAB*'s lasting contribution to research excellence and societal transformation.

### Research excellence: Innovation, collaboration, and knowledge creation

EX-PED-LAB's strength lies in its transdisciplinary design and creative research methodology. The workshop model—tested across kindergartens, municipalities, and universities—functioned as a third space for collaborative exploration, combining pedagogy, art, design,

and leadership. In 2025, this model reached maturity and documentation in the "Project Handbook" ("Prosjekthåndbok", KINDknow Notes Series 18, 2025), which synthesises findings, methods, and success factors for future replication, as well as in the booklet "What Does It Mean to Explore" ("Hva betyr det å utforske", KindKnow Notes Series 13, 2025).

A major milestone of the final year will be the launch of *EXPLORATORIUM.NO*—a digital infrastructure hosting innovation tools, reflective frameworks, workshop write-ups, and analysis resources. Developed collaboratively by researchers, designers, and educators, the platform ensures open access to EX-PED-LAB's knowledge base, positioning HVL as a leader in digital pedagogical innovation.

Collaboration with *STM-Lekforsk* (Science, Technology, Mathematics) strengthened the project's scientific dimension by linking early childhood research with inquiry-based and play-centred approaches to science and mathematics. Collaboration with *LEIKFORSK* in Sogndal has strengthened the project's interdisciplinary approach through design-based educational workshops in kindergarten teacher education. These partnerships exemplify research excellence across institutions and fields of knowledge—where exploration, creativity, and innovative inquiry merge.

Finally, excellence also extended to new modes of dissemination. The PedPod by *EX-PED-LAB* podcast established a novel podcast-as-method framework, engaging international scholars and practitioners in global dialogue on pedagogical innovation.

### Societal impact: Co-creation, education, and sustainability in practice

In 2025, *EX-PED-LAB*'s societal impact was made visible through its integration into practice, new partnerships, and creative dissemination.

The collaboration with *LEIKFORSK* in Sogndal has led to further collaboration that has resulted in designing and co-creating new learning activities for students and ways in which educators teach. The workshop methodology continues to influence teacher education and professional practice through *SAMSKAP*, a large-scale co-creation initiative addressing Norway's urgent need for qualified kindergarten teachers and more practice-oriented higher education. The project's flagship prototype, SognaBLU, stems from a letter of intent written in December 2024 by six municipalities where the municipalities offer BLU (ECEC education) students a 20% paid kindergarten position alongside their studies, while co-designing courses with employers and faculty. This model, inspired by *EX-PED-LAB*'s collaborative ethos, strengthens recruitment, relevance, and reflective capacity in teacher education.

Collaboration with *STM-Lekforsk* ensured continued dialogue between science, play, and pedagogy—bridging research and early childhood practice. Similarly, the One Ocean project and intergenerational workshops extended *EX-PED-LAB*'s methodology into new arenas of sustainability learning and community engagement. Building on this work, material innovation also emerged as a key 2025 achievement. The "Sensory Play Kits" ("Sanselekkassen") represents a pedagogical innovation designed for intergenerational and early childhood contexts. Officially disclosed to Western Norway's Innovation organization (Vestlandets Innovasjonsselskap - VIS) and supported by HVL in 2024 (Project No. 80882), the innovation introduces a sensory-based tool that bridges learning, play, and inclusion across generations. An Innovation Agreement was signed in 2025 to enable further development, commercialisation, and societal outreach. While not a patented product, the "Sensory Play Kits" hold significant value as a public sector innovation—translating *EX-PED-LAB*'s exploratory ethos into tangible, cross-sector pedagogical practice.

The 2025 partnership with designer Håvard Legreid (Legreids Leketoys) added a creative dimension to impact. His visualisations—including the Exploratorium Island Map and series of workshop illustrations—translated complex research into accessible, playful narratives. These works not only communicate findings but also embody *EX-PED-LAB*'s belief that art and design are integral to innovation.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate *EX-PED-LAB*'s societal impact: strengthening professional identity, bridging sectors, and sustaining a culture of curiosity, courage, and co-creation across Norway's ECEC landscape.



Visual illustration of *EX-PED-LAB* project by Håvard Legreid



## AI in early childhood context



Dr. Zacharias Andreadakis



In 2024, KINDknow established artificial intelligence in early childhood education as a dedicated research focus, responding to the rapid integration of AI technologies into children’s everyday lives and educational settings. Dr. Zacharias Andreadakis leads this emerging field, developing theoretical frameworks and practical resources that support the early childhood sector in navigating technological transformation.

Central to this work is the concept of critical empowerment and ethical response to AI—equipping early childhood educators with the knowledge, analytical tools, and professional confidence to engage thoughtfully with emerging technologies. Rather than positioning educators as passive recipients of technological change, this research programme foregrounds their agency and professional judgment in determining how, when, and whether AI tools serve children’s interests and developmental needs.

Two major international volumes anchor this research programme. A co-edited volume with Springer, *Confronting the Polycrisis in ECEC*, brings together international contributors addressing Indigenous knowledge systems, intergenerational pedagogy, environmental sustainability, and artificial intelligence. Dr. Andreadakis authors four chapters within this volume, addressing pedagogical innovation, Industry 5.0 implications, and AI’s role in caring for futures for young children. The volume’s guiding

concept centres on empowerment and critical thinking for ECEC educators navigating multiple intersecting crises.

A second edited volume, *Creative Futures: Re-examining Childhood and Creativity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, is forthcoming with Routledge following rigorous triple peer review. This work addresses a critical theoretical gap identified by international reviewers: how generative AI fundamentally reshapes our understanding of creativity in early childhood. By placing classical creativity theories in dialogue with contemporary AI practices, the volume offers both theoretical grounding and practical guidance for international audiences.

Additional research outputs include systematic analyses of generative AI deployment in preschool contexts, practical frameworks for prompt engineering designed specifically for ECEC practitioners, and investigations into AI persona design for co-creative pedagogy. Collaborative work with colleagues examines how pedagogical values interact with AI image generators, contributing to critical understanding of educator-AI relationships.

Together, these activities strengthen Europe’s capacity to prepare both doctoral researchers and early childhood educators for an AI-transformed educational landscape—ensuring that technological change serves both children’s flourishing and educators’ professional agency.

# Outreach activities

## ECEC Podcasts

### PedPod podcast by EX-PED-LAB



Czarecah Tuppil Oropilla,  
Postdoctoral fellow at  
Ex-Ped-Lab project



The *PedPod podcast by EX-PED-LAB*, co-produced by Czarecah Tuppil Oropilla and HVL Media Lab, explores pedagogical innovations in ECEC, focusing on defining and operationalising these innovations. It aims to disseminate and co-create knowledge while uncovering the conditions and characteristics of pedagogical innovations. Each 30–40-minute episode featuring global researchers addresses questions about the essence, development, and implementation of pedagogical innovations. Discussions highlight methodologies like design thinking, play-based learning, and collaborative and relational approaches, emphasising values, cultural contexts, and challenges in advancing ECEC pedagogical innovations.



In the picture: Czarecah Tuppil Oropilla, Host of the Pedpod by EX-PED-LAB

*PedPod* continued its momentum in 2025 as both a research-based podcast and an emergent methodological contribution to knowledge creation in ECEC. Co-produced with the HVL Media Lab and continued to be hosted by Czarecah (Eya) Tuppil Oropilla, *PedPod* has evolved into a dialogic platform that disseminates research, translates complex theories into accessible forms, and surfaces tacit practitioner knowledge that often remains unarticulated in traditional academic outputs. As scholarly podcasting gains recognition as a legitimate arena for qualitative inquiry and multimodal research dissemination, *PedPod* contributes to this expanding landscape by cultivating cross-cultural, reflective, and practice-sensitive conversations that speak directly to questions of excellence and societal impact.

### Dialogic, cross-cultural knowledge production

Season 1 laid the foundation for *PedPod by EX-PED-LAB*'s contribution to research excellence. Featuring leading scholars primarily from Europe, Australia, and Aotearoa New Zealand, the season examined sustainability, dialogic pedagogy, democratic practice, play philosophy, and systemic transformation. These conversations underscored that pedagogical innovations are not defined by novelty alone but by deep ethical engagement, collaborative inquiry, and evidence-informed practice. The season also revealed the need for broader epistemic and geographic

inclusion—an insight that shaped the design and methodological direction of Season 2.

Season 2 expanded this commitment to excellence by intentionally centring Global South, Indigenous, and culturally diverse perspectives. Through dialogues with scholars, practitioners, advocates, and policymakers, the podcast illuminated how pedagogical innovation is conceptualised and enacted in varied sociocultural, political, and ecological contexts. This pluralistic knowledge base enhances research quality by widening analytical frames and challenging dominant paradigms that often shape ECEC scholarship.

### Featuring global voices driving pedagogical change

Season 2 of *PedPod* by *EX-PED-LAB* highlighted a constellation of international voices whose research, leadership, and lived experiences are shaping the future of ECEC. These guests bring distinct perspectives from across continents—demonstrating how pedagogical innovation is deeply rooted in cultural, ecological, political, and relational contexts.

From Indonesia, Dr. Vina Adriany, Professor at Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia and Director of SEAMEO CECCEP, opens the season by urging educators and researchers to rethink innovation beyond dominant Western paradigms. Her work centres Indigenous knowledge, community empowerment, and gender justice—particularly in the face of neoliberal pressures shaping education in Southeast Asia.

Ngaroma Williams, a respected Māori educator and researcher from Aotearoa New Zealand, brings over 40 years of experience to her episode. She powerfully frames pedagogical innovation not as invention but as reconnection—returning to land-based knowledge, lunar cycles, and ancestral responsibility in the face of climate change and cultural loss.

A global policy perspective is provided by Mercedes Mayol Lassalle, outgoing President of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP). Drawing on her extensive international advocacy work, she articulates innovation as a political and ethical stance that must challenge inequity and rethink educational systems through the lens of children’s rights and social justice.

In West Africa, Professor Adefunke Ekine, President of OMEP Nigeria, speaks to the urgency of culturally rooted

pedagogy and gender-responsive education. Her episode illustrates how innovation must be grounded in the lived realities of educators and children, particularly in contexts affected by school-based violence and inequality.

Dr. Margaret Kernan, a senior researcher at International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI), draws on decades of work in intergenerational and community-based learning. She reminds listeners that innovation often emerges not from theory alone but from asking hard questions: “Where is the pain?” Her work brings visibility to community solidarity, inclusive play hubs, and the power of everyday practices.

Expanding the conversation to affective and embodied pedagogies, Associate Professor Gloria Quiñones of Monash University brings deep insights from her cultural-historical work in the Philippines, Latin America, and Australia. Her episode highlights how love, movement, and emotion are central to learning—and how pedagogical resistance can begin with relational care.

Dr. Kassahun Weldemariam, currently based at the University of Gothenburg, offers transnational reflections informed by his Ethiopian roots. His episode connects sustainability, education for ecological responsibility, and post-human theory, challenging listeners to see children not only as learners but as agents within larger environmental and spiritual systems.

Cross-cultural comparisons are brought into focus by Dr. Bradford Wiles, a US-based public health and early childhood specialist who spent a year embedded in HVL-KINDKnow. His reflections expose the stark contrasts between US and Nordic approaches to risk, agency, and public investment in ECEC—emphasising that meaningful innovation is always context-sensitive and relational.

Finally, Professor Liv Torunn Grindheim and Associate Professor Svein Gunnar Sjøtun of HVL introduce the concept of Responsible Pedagogical Innovation, developed through their work on teacher education and the NORCHILD network. They advocate for systemic change grounded in ethics, collaboration, and professional courage—reminding us that innovation must be responsible, not just reactive.

As Season 2 concludes, two new voices from the Philippines will soon join the archive. Maricar Gustilode Ocampo, an early childhood practitioner and professor at De La Salle University, and Lester Lim, a child protect-

ion specialist from the University of the Philippines, will offer back-to-back reflections on pedagogical innovations within contexts of community care, child protection, and local cultural frameworks.

### PedPod by EX-PED-LAB's societal impact

*PedPod* by EX-PED-LAB functions as part of EX-PED-LAB's broader "kunnskap" strategy—knowledge created with others rather than for them. Each episode becomes a dialogic site where practitioners, scholars, and community actors engage in real-time reflection that supports local and global capacity-building. The episodes are now embedded in teacher education courses across sustainability, leadership, and pedagogy, contributing directly to professional learning and strengthening the research–practice nexus.

By amplifying diverse voices and fostering shared, public-facing reflections, *PedPod* advances EX-PED-LAB's societal mission. The podcast contributes to more inclusive and culturally grounded understandings of early childhood education, while strengthening cross-sectoral partnerships aligned with SDGs 4 and 17. Through these conversations, *PedPod* by EX-PED-LAB continues to chart a path towards excellence and societal impact, shaping a global, living archive of pedagogical possibilities and fostering juster, more sustainable, and more culturally responsive futures for young children and their communities.

### Participation in other podcasts

#### BluPodden podcast by HVL ECEC Education



Researchers from KINDknow were also frequent guests at the local podcast for early childhood education, *BluPodden*. Here is a short overview of the topics discussed by the researchers of KINDknow Research Centre invited to the podcast.

In the September episode of *BluPodden* highlighted as “Is early childhood education primarily a preparation for adult life, or is it an arena where childhood has intrinsic value in its own right?”, Lillian Ylvisåker Pedersen, Associate Professor at HVL and researcher at KINDknow, engages in a conversation with Professor Solveig Østrem from OsloMet, and they both reflect on the value base and professional ethics of early childhood education—and what these imply for the role of the kindergarten teacher in a society shaped by political priorities and rapid change. The conversation highlights key issues related to democracy, children’s right to be heard, and the importance of professional judgement.

In the June episode, Alicja Sadownik, Associate Professor of Pedagogy at HVL and researcher at KINDknow, discusses PRIDE initiatives in kindergartens. Her dialogue partners are Eydis Sævarsdottir, kindergarten teacher; and Tor Ragnar Hjelmtveit, University Lecturer in Norwegian, HVL. In recent years, PRIDE initiatives in early childhood education and care have sparked strong reactions and challenging public debates. At the same time, the sector’s value base is clearly articulated in the Framework Plan, which emphasises the promotion of diversity, respect, and equality. In this podcast episode, the discussion draws on a bachelor’s thesis that explores how kindergartens can mark PRIDE in ways that support children’s identity development, while also acknowledging parents’ rights to freedom of religion.

In the episode about “Exploring Space through Play and Movement” in April, Lillian Ylvisåker Pedersen, Associate Professor, and Ingrid Skarprud, PhD Fellow, both researchers at KINDknow, introduce the listeners to the project “*Kartfaring*”, developed by Ingrid Skarprud and Gro Merete Eide and presented during the Bergen International Festival. The project invites children to explore the university campus on tricycles, with a trailer that captured their movements through ink balls rolling across paper. Rather than teaching children how to read or use maps, the aim was to create a playful, embodied experience of space and movement—an open-ended form of mapping that emphasised exploration over predefined outcomes.

In the episode about “Supporting Play for the Youngest Children”, Lillian Ylvisåker Pedersen and Eivind Rogne, Associate Professors at HVL and researchers at KINDknow, discuss the problematics of “How can early childhood teachers create, extend, and regulate play for the very youngest children?” In this episode of BluPodden, they explore a study examining how Norwegian kindergarten teachers interact with children aged 2–3 during play. Through video analyses of 18 teachers engaging in play with small groups of children, the researchers identify three key characteristics of play practices and examine how variations in these practices can influence both the development of play and children’s inclusion.

Another episode in January “Communication Apps in Early Childhood Education: Opportunities and Tensions” features PhD Fellow at KINDknow Karoline Jangård Sellisetth in dialogue with Eivind Rogne, Lecturer in Pedagogy. They take a closer look at the complex consequences

of using communication apps in ECEC. The discussion explores how these apps shape collaboration between parents and staff, and how they influence the everyday work of kindergarten professionals. Has technology come to occupy so much space that it detracts from valuable time spent with children? The episode also considers how communication apps may redefine the parental role and affect relationships and dynamics within the kindergarten environment.

### Buttercup Podcast by Marisa Masy from University of Wyoming

Kine Melfald Tveten was a guest on Buttercup, a podcast hosted by Marisa Masy from University of Wyoming. The dialogue in the podcast was about early childhood practices in Norway.

## Other media outreach activities

Our research impact extends beyond academic publications and policy engagement; we also try to use accessible, creative formats that inspire and engage broader audiences. In 2025, KINDknow demonstrated this commitment through an innovative collaborative film project that bridges research, artistic practice, and early childhood education.

*Magical Images That Can Walk* (*Magiske bilder som kan gå*) emerged from a partnership between KINDknow, Lærdalsøyri barnehage (kindergarten), the artist Håkon Hoffart, and the HVL Media Lab. This collaborative endeavor illustrates how interdisciplinary partnerships can generate knowledge products that are both pedagogically rich and artistically compelling. The film captures the wonder and creativity inherent in young children’s engagement with visual imagery, movement, and storytelling, offering educators and researchers alike new perspectives on children’s meaning-making processes.

The project’s recognition through nomination for the prestigious International Educational Film Conference (TREFF) in Tromsø in 2026 affirms both its creative excellence and its pedagogical significance. This nomination places KINDknow’s work on an international stage,

demonstrating how research-informed creative practice can achieve visibility and impact in ways that complement traditional academic dissemination.

*Magical Images That Can Walk* exemplifies our belief that research should not only inform practice but also inspire imagination, dialogue, and new ways of seeing children’s learning and development. Through such media outreach activities, we extend the reach of our research beyond academic circles, engaging practitioners, families, policy-makers, and the wider public in meaningful conversations about the possibilities and potentials of early childhood education.

The film can be seen on Youtube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rn7XBxif4Is>



# Our projects

## OneOcean - exploration



Elin Eriksen Ødegaard,  
Co-project Leader



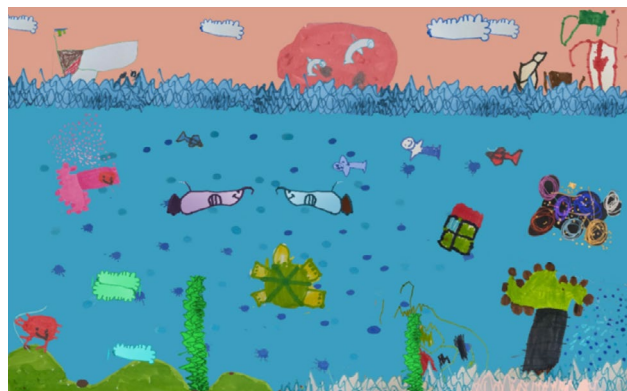
Dr. Aihua Hu  
Co-Project Leader

One Ocean Exploration is an ongoing project dedicated to understanding children's perspectives on the ocean and fostering their connection to its preservation. Oceans play a significant role in the lives of all humans and planet. Our concern here is the children and the practices of early childhood education, but children and staff are seldom invited to contribute their perspectives and practices regarding oceans and their meaning and significance. In line with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, this initiative aligns with the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The project seeks to raise awareness of the critical importance of a clean ocean, while actively engaging children and local communities in building a brighter future.

The key milestone in 2025 for this project is that the special issue we were invited to edit, titled "Emergent Ocean Literacy", for the scientific journal, *ECNU Review of Education*, is progressing well. In total, seven articles were submitted, of which two were accepted, and the remaining five were under review.

More importantly, the special issue was brought to the attention of the Shanghai Municipal Bureau of Oceans, which recommended sending it to the Shanghai Modern Think Tank as an exemplary contribution. As we move into 2026, One Ocean Exploration will continue to expand its reach, deepening its impact on

children's understanding of the ocean and contributing to the broader dialogue on ocean literacy and sustainable development. In March 2025, our documentary was screened in Japan at a conference hosted by Japan Nursery Federation, with 1,300 participants. At present, we are working on contributing to Ocean Week 2026 with a launch of the special Issue on "Emergent Ocean Literacy". This project is funded by KINDknow and HVL, and associated milieus have brought in their own funding for their participation (Kunstpilotene, Øyarden municipality). This project is networking with universities and organisations in Europe to find new pathways to use and further explore our pedagogical and didactic knowledge and designs for working to expand and share ocean literacy with children and staff in kindergarten accordance with the UN's SDG numbers 4, 11, 13, 14, and 17, as well as UNESCO's goal of Ocean Literacy for All.



## Water and Waterscapes: Children's right to clean water



Elin Eriksen Ødegaard,  
Co-project Leader



Dr. Aihua Hu  
Co-Project Leader

The ongoing *Water and Waterscapes: Children's right to clean water* project (2023 – 2027) aims to raise awareness of the need to cherish and protect water landscapes and sources and broaden understanding of water as a concept and vital resource for children and their families across contexts, nations, and cultures. Moreover, its research interest focuses on understanding children's exploration and meaning-making in local landscapes and communities in rural and urban settings worldwide.

In 2025, this project gained momentum and became an OMEP world project, officially announced at the OMEP World Assembly held in Bologna, Italy, in July. Elin Eriksen Ødegaard presented the project at the World Assembly on 15 July to all of the about 50 participating countries. Internally, after the presentation and conference, we were contacted by 14 countries. Nationally, we presented the project at the Nordic Early Childhood Research Conference and received interest from colleagues at OsloMet, who plans to connect the project to early childhood teaching education. In addition, a blog on this project is published on the website of both OMEP World and OMEP Norway (<https://omeworld.org/water-and-waterscape-childrens-right-to-clean-water/> and OMEP Norway <https://omep.no/#>).

We have also created a film with Lærdalsøyri barnehage, artist Håkon Hoffart, and the HVL Media Lab; *Magical Images That Can Walk (Magiske bilder som kan gå)*. The film is nominated to the International Educational Film Conference, TREFF, in Tromsø in 2026. We are in the process of publishing two scientific articles from the

Pilot study. The plan for 2026 is to gather and analyse the data provided by the responding milieus for a scientific publication. In collaboration with Media Lab at HVL, we also plan to create a documentary based on the project in 2027. In addition, we will write a policy brief, present it at the OMEP World Assembly in 2027, and share it with the world. We will also look for upcoming opportunities to share data from the project to inspire ECEC in Norway and internationally.

This project is funded by KINDknow and HVL, and associated milieus in Norway—e.g. the Lærdalsøyri kindergarten, Lærdal Municipality, and OsloMet University—have brought their own funding. At the Norwegian ECEC Research Conference (Norsk barnehageforskningskonferanse), we collaborated with staff from Lærdalsøyri kindergarten and our partner UiT—The arctic University of Norway to create a shared symposium where we could come into dialogue with participants at the conference. This project is aligned with the UN Sustainability agenda (SDG numbers 3, 4, 11, 13, 14, and 17) and the UNCRC, Article 24, namely, that every child has the right to the highest attainable standard of health, including access to clean drinking water, and will work to make political and pedagogical impact locally and internationally across global continents. The project has the potential to showcase local kindergartens in Norway and how they work with sustainability in tight collaborations with families, local community, and researchers to preserve local landscapes and build global mindsets

# Weaving futures together

Weaving futures together: Intergenerational engagements for sustainable early childhood pedagogies



Czarecah Tuppil Oropilla,  
Postdoctoral fellow at  
Ex-Ped-Lab project  
Project Leader



At KINDknow Research Centre, we work from the conviction that sustainable futures are shaped not only through policies and technologies but through relationships. In a time often described as a polycrisis—where ecological, social, cultural, and economic challenges overlap—our research direction, “Across Generations”, explores how intergenerational engagements can become everyday anchors of resilience, care, and sustainability.

Intergenerational engagements are not merely encounters between the very young and the very old; they are pedagogical, cultural, and relational practices that strengthen the social fabric, while promoting well-being across the lifespan. We believe they provide fertile ground for research excellence, while simultaneously generating tangible societal impact in municipalities, communities, and early childhood institutions.

## Excellence: Advancing knowledge through innovative, practice-based research

Our work builds on a growing international literature demonstrating that intergenerational relations are powerful sites of learning, emotional connection, and cultural continuity. What distinguishes KINDknow’s contribution is its rigorous, practice-based methodology that integrates cultural-historical perspectives, sustainability research, Indigenous knowledge, and participatory co-creation with kindergartens and community partners.

At KINDknow, we see intergenerational engagements as generative pedagogical spaces where knowledge is co-created rather than simply transferred. Through

music, storytelling, crafting, gardening, sensory play, and nature exploration, participants collectively produce new understandings about care, identity, and learning. These approaches represent a fresh orientation to pedagogical innovations, responding to global calls for relational and sustainable educational practices.

Our research programme investigates how such engagements:

- enhance children’s social-emotional learning and identity development;
- support older adults’ well-being and reduce loneliness;
- strengthen community cohesion and interdependence;
- facilitate the transmission of cultural heritage and relational knowledge; and
- build resilience in communities undergoing demographic shifts and post-pandemic transitions.

This contributes to KINDknow’s strategic aim to develop ecologically, ethically, and socially sustainable pedagogies, positioning the centre as a leader in intergenerational scholarship both nationally and globally.

## Societal impact: Strengthening communities, municipal services, and everyday lives

Intergenerational practices are inherently impactful: they support well-being, deepen connections, and foster solidarity within and across communities. Our work directly benefits Norwegian kindergartens, health and care services, families, and municipalities by providing new pedagogical tools, training resources, and evidence-informed models for sustainable relational practices.

Through practitioner workshops, co-creation laboratories, public seminars, and open-access publications, we ensure that research moves beyond academia and into the hands of those who implement change in children's everyday lives.

A clear example of societal impact is the "Sensory Play Kits" ("Sansselekkassen"), co-developed by Oropilla and Fagerbakke. These hands-on sensory kits emerged directly from research and is now used to facilitate intergenerational and sensory dialogues in both ECEC and community settings. Similarly, practice-oriented dissemination—through TOY Project blogs, Barnehage.no articles, EXPLORATORIUM.NO entries, and collaborative local projects—ensures that findings are accessible, actionable, and culturally grounded.

### External funding as a driver of excellence and impact

In 2025, we intensified our external funding efforts to expand intergenerational research and practice, recognizing that long-term partnerships with municipalities and NGOs require strong structures and shared resources. Many of our applications target arenas such as public health, community care, teacher education, and sustainable innovation.

### GenerasjonsHUB (GENHUB)

A flagship initiative is seeking funding for GENHUB, which promotes well-being and sustainability across generations through co-creations, developed in collaboration with HVL's Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, Sandefjord and Haugesund municipalities, and Livsglede for Eldre. GENHUB aims to:

- establish intergenerational hubs linking kindergartens, schools, health services, universities, and volunteer organisations;
- reduce loneliness among home-dwelling older adults;
- create meaningful learning spaces for children and youth;
- relieve pressure on municipal staff through innovative workforce models and coordination tools; and
- develop toolkits, policy briefs, and a sustainability roadmap for municipalities.

If funded, GENHUB will include pilot sites, extensive co-creation workshops, and a PhD fellowship—representing a major step towards national-level impact and excellence in cross-sectoral innovation.

### Looking forward

Intergenerational research consistently demonstrates that relationships between young and older people hold transformative potential—not only for personal growth and learning but also for building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable societies. We remain committed to advancing excellence through high-quality research and strengthening societal impact through collaborative development projects and strategic funding partnerships.

By weaving together generational experiences, cultural perspectives, and pedagogical innovations, we contribute to early childhood practices that sustain life, community, and hope—across generations.

## PRO-DIALOG

# Promoting mental health in young children: A sustainable dialogue-based approach in kindergartens



Dr. Alicja Renata Sadownik  
Work package Leader

*PRO-DIALOG* is a large, interdisciplinary randomised controlled trial (RCT) that addresses the pressing rise in mental health challenges among young children. Funded by the Research Council of Norway (project number 344516) and led by Professor Ingvar Bjelland (Helse Bergen & UiB), the project introduces a screening tool with strong potential to ensure early and appropriate support for kindergarten children experiencing emerging mental health difficulties and insecurity. KINDknow is a partner in this project.

### Projects contribution to promoting research excellence

As a large-scale, interdisciplinary RCT, *PRO-DIALOG* employs a methodology that is currently recognised as the most rigorous for generating representative and reliable results. The clinical component of the study is strengthened by qualitative methods, which provide in-depth insight into how parental conferences are conducted—with and without the use of the Dialog-Based Early Detection (DBTO) method.

DBTO is specifically designed for use during parental conferences in kindergartens. It supports the preparation, structure, and outcomes of these meetings, ensuring that important issues, questions, and concerns are addressed effectively within the limited timeframe of conferences, typically held once or twice per year. Prior to each

conference, both parents and kindergarten professionals complete a tailored form covering various aspects of the child's development, including social and emotional well-being.

The method is being tested in an RCT involving 22 kindergartens, which serve as intervention and control groups. The DBTO method is used in parental conferences for children born in 2020 and 2021.

The full study design is described in the published protocol paper in the journal *Trials*:

[PRO-DIALOG—The effect of a novel dialogue-based parent-teacher conference on mental health in kindergarten children: A cluster randomised controlled trial | \*Trials\*](#)



### The societal impact of PRO-DIALOG

*PRO-DIALOG* directly contributes to solving two major societal challenges in Norway related to delayed or inappropriate referrals to specialised (health/psychological) services. Many patients in mental health care report symptoms and developmental challenges that could have been addressed much earlier in childhood, while existing psychological and mental health services are overburdened with referrals of children who do not require treatment.

The use of DBTO has the potential to address both of these challenges: it can rule out concerns when help is not needed; and it can ensure faster routing to appropriate services for children who do require support. This potential for substantial societal impact has been recognised by Western Norway’s Innovation organization( Vestlandets Innovasjonsselskap - VIS).

To strengthen the communication and dissemination of project knowledge—and thereby the project’s impact—the project leader, Ingvar Bjelland, applied for and was granted a commercialisation grant from the RCN: FORNY20 (RCN project number: 347349). These funds were used to create a website and short videos for kindergarten professionals and parents, which are currently in production.

In 2025, the project reached several significant milestones, including:

- a next round of successfully recruiting participants for both the RCT and the planned qualitative studies, and
- publishing of the protocol article: “PRO-DIALOG—The effect of a novel dialogue-based parent-teacher conference on mental health in kindergarten children: A cluster randomised controlled trial | Trials”

## KINDknow’s contribution

KINDknow’s role in PRO-DIALOG focuses on the ongoing qualitative studies. These include conversational analyses of recorded parental conferences conducted with and without the DBTO method, as well as group interviews with professionals and parents who have participated in DBTO-based conferences.



In the picture from left to right: Remi Kaldhussæter; Veronica Kibbe Lisæth; Maj-Britt Rocio Posserud; Amanda Louise Flygel Tufta; Alicja Renata Sadownik; Kjersti Solvang Sundal; Ingvar Bjelland; Lisbeth Farestveit; Ida Lygre Vermeer; Trine Leikanger; Synnøve Ygre Hauge; Gro Janne Henningsen Wergeland

## Move-play-explore in ECEC (MoveEarly)



Prof. Eivind Aadland  
Project Manager

The primary objectives of *MoveEarly* are to develop and test:

- i) a novel early childhood education pedagogical approach integrating movement, play, and exploration as conceptual cornerstones for whole child development; and
- ii) a pioneering model of continuing professional development for preschool staff underpinning the implementation of the pedagogical approach.

Through this innovative approach, we seek to create new knowledge to overcome the pressing challenges in the fields of early childhood education, movement sciences, and public health, to shape future public health and education policy, and to lay the foundation for a physically active, equitable, and sustainable society.

Giving every child the best start in life must be the highest priority to effectively address social inequalities and improve population health. Contemporary trends of “schoolification” within early childhood education and increased levels of physical inactivity in young children are two worrisome trends that are counterproductive to this aim. Through developing and testing an integrated move-play-explore pedagogical approach, we increase our understanding of how societal challenges for young children can be tackled through transdisciplinary efforts in early childhood education. By uniting the UN sustainable development goals on supporting good health and well-being and quality education, we show researchers

and practitioners alike, a suitable way of improving holistic child development.

Further, we pioneer integration of co-creation and partnership approaches with experimental study designs, to combine a responsive approach to practitioners wants and needs with gold-standard evaluation—a large cluster RCT, including 49 kindergartens and more than 1,200 children and practitioners. The pedagogical approach will be implemented through continuing professional development (optional 15-credit) of preschool staff over 18 months—a much longer timeframe than commonly applied—as we believe long-term efforts are crucial to support implementation and lasting changes to practitioners’ and organisations’ development underpinning provision quality.

*MoveEarly* has the potential to inspire early childhood education research through focusing on embodied and embedded approaches to learning in young children. By improving their confidence in integrating movement, play, and exploration across all learning areas, practitioners will gain a better understanding of how preferable it is for children to learn this way. The responsive approach to children is also taken beyond pedagogy by the developing a new assessment tool for children’s skillfulness and creativity in and through movement, which will open an avenue of research targeting more responsive approaches in early childhood education.

In sum, *MoveEarly* can have major benefits to society by providing a solution to promote life-long physical activity, health, learning, well-being, agency, and life opportunities for the generations to come. Of particular importance for societal impact, with very few evaluated continuing professional development programmes available for the practice field, our ultimate goal if *MoveEarly* is successful—and with adaptations according to the process evaluation—is sustained dissemination of the intervention. We will offer the continuing professional development model as part of HVL’s in-service teacher training programmes and include it in the existing undergraduate

education programmes. As planned by structuring the professional development within a 15-credit university model, we will from 2026/2027 include this continuing education as part of HVL’s study portfolio. Thus, there is a very short distance from testing to scaling. Furthermore, by using established infrastructure, we will make on-line resources developed and tested through the project publicly available for universities and the early childhood education sector after the project is completed, to support teacher education and continuing professional development over the long term.

## DocTalent4EU: Doctoral skills recognition



Dr. Zacharias Andreadakis



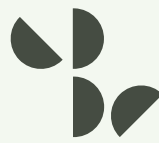
*DocTalent4EU—Transforming Europe Through Doctoral Talent and Skills Recognition*—is a Horizon Europe project partnering eight institutions: University Côte d’Azur, University of Alcalá, University of Porto, University of Limerick, Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iasi, UiT—The Arctic University of Norway, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, and the European University Foundation. The project enhances PhD employability through innovative recognition systems for the transferable skills that early-career researchers acquire during doctoral training.

As PhD holders increasingly pursue careers beyond academia, doctoral programmes must equip them with competencies valued across sectors. The consortium developed digital credentials under the European brand “DocTalent4EU credentials”, established local talent management centres to support career planning, and created an interdisciplinary curriculum grounded in the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications, and Occupations (ESCO) framework. Three courses are now available through open access via the PhD Hub platform: Teamworking and Networking, Personal Effectiveness and Leadership, and Enhancing Communication and Negotiation Skills. These resources extend the project’s impact well beyond the original consortium partners.

Read more about *DocTalent4EU* at <https://doctalent4eu.eu/> and connect with it via LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/doctalent4eu/posts/?feedView=all>



Prof. Liv Torunn Grindheim,  
Chief Editor of Nordic Early Childhood Educational Research



**nordisk  
barnehageforskning**  
nordic early childhood educational research

*Nordic Early Childhood Educational Research (Nordisk Barnehageforskning, NBF)* remains the main academic journal in early childhood education research in the Nordic region. The journal is a joint collaboration between OsloMet and Filiorum centre at the University of Stavanger. The journal platform is run by Cappelen Damm. The journal remains an important source for relevant research in ECEC. This is an online, open access journal which is freely available to all interested readers. The journal opens for multilingual scholars to publish: it publishes in all three Scandinavian languages in addition to English.

In 2025, the journal received 139 manuscript submissions, a considerable increase from last year when 89 manuscripts were submitted. This shows the importance of the journal in the ECEC sector. Of these, 32 articles were accepted after a thorough evaluation process, and in total 43 articles were published in 2025.

In 2025, there were four issues, with two of them being special issues, exploring significant and contemporary topics in early childhood education: “Reading with/for/by children—With relevance to early childhood education”; and “Pedagogical creation and cocreative processes in ECEC sector”.

The publication process is organised through a collaborative distribution of tasks involving editors-in-chief from three partner institutions (HVL/KINDknow, UiS/

FILIORUM, and OsloMet), subject editors or special issue editors, and reviewers. This structure contributes to strengthening the quality of published articles, while simultaneously supporting the development of a strong and inclusive early childhood research community. Researchers at different career stages, including early-career scholars, are actively involved in the publication process. To recognise and make visible scholarly contributions, the names of responsible editors are included in the published articles. The journal is also happy to confirm the reviewer’s contribution, by a certificate of appreciation. A single-blind review approach is applied to support the progression of PhD candidates. Furthermore, when applying for special issues, *NBF* requires editorial teams to include members from more than one institution or country, promoting diversity and cross-institutional collaboration.

# Norwegian and Nordic phenomena of (self-)formation – Historical perspectives on early childhood



Dr. Geert Thyssen  
Project Leader

Phenomena of early childhood and kindergarten education—Of the past, present, and future

The year 2025 has been an intense and very productive year for KINDknow’s history project group, which focuses, from various glocal perspectives, on education phenomena relevant to Nordic and more specifically Norwegian kindergarten education.

The first half of 2025 saw leading members prepare for the 9th Nordic Educational History Conference at the University of Stockholm in May and a symposium commemorating the 50th anniversary of the first Norwegian Kindergarten Act (1975). At the Stockholm conference, Merethe Roos presented on “Schooling for six-year-olds? Experiments with schooling for under-sevens in Norway in the 1960s”, while Geert Thyssen presented a paper co-written with Elin Eriksen Ødegaard on “*Urban-coastal art and embodied re-remembering: ‘StreetWise’ and ‘One Ocean–Ocean Portrait’ as cases of collaborative, activist history making*”. The panel on Politics, Arts and Historiography of Education drew a good audience, attesting to the excellence of the academic work.

Ødegaard, Roos, and Thyssen organised a symposium marking the 50 years transpired since the passing of the first Norwegian Kindergarten Act. Anne Greve from OsloMet was a featured speaker alongside project group members Roos and Camilla Farestveit. This symposium attracted diverse participants, including current kindergarten staff, kindergarten “pioneers”, such as Ida Knutsen, HVL staff and students, and policymakers.

In 2025, Roos contributed to a series of publications. Her work includes a co-edited book with the renowned publisher De Gruyter, entitled *The Exceptional North: Perspectives on Past and Present Nordicness*. She also co-edited *Education policy as a crisis factory (Utdanningspolitikk som krisefabrikk)* with Tom Are Trippestad and Erlend Eidsvik. Additional publications include an article in *Studia Theologica* entitled “Encountering post-war Norway”, thematising Norwegian education developments after the Second World War, and a chapter on Nordic educational cooperation in a handbook on Nordic cooperation generally. She contributed an overview chapter on the history of education in Norway, mentioning KINDknow’s history work, in a book co-edited by Johannes Westberg, Emma Hellström, and Esbjörn Larsson, as well as an article on Grundtvigian influences on Norwegian education, also relevant to kindergarten education. Beyond academic publications, Roos exemplifies our commitment to societal impact through her regular contributions to public debates via NRK (Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation) and national newspapers.

Thyssen and Ødegaard completed their paper on collaborative creation of history of education with street artists, adult relational artists, and children of kindergarten-age as legitimate artists in glocal urban and coastal settings. This paper, commissioned for a special issue guest-edited by Ian Grosvenor and Eulàlia Collelldemont for the Spanish journal *Historia y Memoria de la Educación*, made it through and was issued open access at the end

of 2025. Building on this work, Thyssen, Ødegaard, Alicja Sadownik, Eya Czarecah Oropilla, and Veronica Bergan collaborated in drafting a Horizon Europe funding application. This application heavily centres on excellence and societal impact.

Thyssen together with Cat Martins, a nonbinary trans colleague from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto, explored in an article entitled “Imagining trans past yet to come” why it is necessary and how it might be possible to rescue from centuries of rendering invisible and erasing early childhood and other education experiences which people we now refer to as trans\* (gender binary-queering) may be imagined to have lived. This article was selected for a special issue related to the International Standing Conference on the History of Education (ISCHE 45) on (De)coloniality and Diversity in Natal, Brazil, in 2024. This special issue will be published in 2026 in *Paedagogica Historica*, which attests to the excellence of the article concerned.

Thyssen is extending this research to Norway, exploring materials held at “Queer Archive” (“Skeivt Archiv”) in Bergen. The intention is for this work to have impact amidst current debates on transgenderism and the demonisation of trans\* people internationally, also in the field of kindergarten education in Norway today.

## Looking ahead to 2026

Roos, Thyssen, and Ødegaard have been preparing the 2nd National Conference on the History of Education in Norway, scheduled for January 2026. The strong international response—with participants from Sweden, Denmark, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, and the United Kingdom alongside Norway—reflects the organisers’ extensive networks and scholarly reputation. Some attendees participated in the 2025 Histories of Education Summer School (online and in Leuven, Belgium, in 2025), where Roos and Thyssen were invited as keynote speakers and are invited to deliver keynotes again in 2026. These activities position KINDknow as a significant player in the history of education and kindergarten education, demonstrating our commitment to excellence and societal impact for diverse stakeholders.

# Research school NORBARN



Prof. Elin Eriksen Ødegaard  
Scientific Head  
of the Research School



The year 2025 has been a significant year for the NORCHILD (NORBARN) research school, marked by various initiatives aimed at enhancing the relevance of kindergarten research within the sector and promoting knowledge and transferable skill acquisition among PhD candidates.

The Research School has successfully admitted 34 PhD candidates and engaged five postdoctoral fellows, fostering an enriched environment for scholarly knowledge, transferable skills, and expanded networks across academia and professional life in Norway and internationally.

NORCHILD is hosted by the scientific milieu of KIND-know Research Centre, at the Faculty of Teacher Education, Arts, and Sports at HVL, and collaborates with academic partner Institutions University of Stavanger (FILIORUM), OsloMet, University of Agder, Queen Maud University College of Early Childhood Education, Innlandet University, University of Eastern Norway, and NORD University (new partner from 2025). NORCHILD also partners with the professional life institutions Kanvas Foundation and The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), as well as its new partners: Sandefjord municipality and City of Bergen and the Norwegian Teachers Union (Utdanningsforbundet).

Prof. Elin Eriksen Ødegaard is Scientific Head of the Research School and project leader. Deputy leader is Dr.

Zacharias Andreadakis. Administrative Coordinator is Senior Advisor Hanne Israelsen. Prof. Mikhail Gradovski was involved in the follow-up research.

## Key activities

1. **Course in Open Science:** This course focused on integrating open access and the dissemination of research results into standard scientific practice. Participants gained insights into the open science framework, covering aspects such as ethics, data management, and publishing, thus reinforcing the importance of transparency in research. The course was led by Professor II, Mikhail Gradovski, HVL.
2. **International Summer School of Narrative Inquiry:** In August, the summer school facilitated dialogue-based lectures and individual writing sessions for 23 researchers from eight countries. Participants explored how narratives can reveal human knowledge and experience, receiving guidance on their work from international experts. This initiative was backed by collaborators from the University of Alberta, University of Victoria, and HVL/NORCHILD.
3. **Course in Shadowing Practice:** This course introduced participants to methods for observing and learning in workplace settings. Candidates had the opportunity to shadow experienced leaders in organisations such as the

Norwegian Federation of Education (Utdanningsforbundet), Sandefjord Municipality, and the City of Bergen, enhancing understanding of operational practices. The course leaders were Professors Karin Hognestad and Marit Bøe, USN in collaboration with HVL/NORCHILD.

4. Systematic Reviews with a Focus on Scoping Reviews: Participants learned to conduct systematic literature reviews, focusing on identifying, evaluating, and synthesising existing research. This structured approach enables the identification of research gaps and supports informed decision-making. Professor Hilde Hofslundsengen, NORCHILD, and Astrid Guldbrandsen, Kunnskapssenteret, UiS, coordinated this course.

### PhD seminars and webinars

The seminar “Researcher Positions in Meeting Children and Kindergartens” was arranged in March and was a collaboration between NORCHILD and UiA. And the seminar “Quality in Kindergarten Research—What Can It Mean?” was arranged in October and was a collaboration between NORCHILD and UiS. Both seminars have received good feedback for their content on Quality in research. Here, participants also presented parts of their projects and received feedback from both kindergarten researchers and representatives of the working world.

The webinar “Enactive, Therapeutic Sensory-Motor Play” was a collaboration between Ragnhild B Håkstad, UiT, and Kine Meldfald Tveiten, HVL. Another webinar, “Children’s Rights and Participation in the Context of Child Protection”, was a collaboration between Marit Skivenes, UiB, and Francesca Vaghi, HVL. And the last webinar, “Pedagogical and Responsible Innovation: What Does It Mean in Kindergarten Teacher Education”, was a collaboration across faculties at HVL and NORCHILD, with Liv Torunn Grindheim, Svein Gunnar Sjøtun, and Czarecah Oropilla. All of these webinars have been openly available to a wider audience.

The graduate school also has ongoing research on the kindergarten sector that is relevant to the graduate school. In the spring of 2024, the foundation for NORCHILD’s follow-up research in phase 1 was laid, where a combined methodological design of oral interviews and follow-up of several of the candidates was carried out. NORCHILD is now starting phase 2 of the follow-up research with a focus on mapping professional life relevance and transferable skills. The graduate school also has ongoing research on the kindergarten sector that is of relevance to the graduate school.

Some of the graduate school’s candidates have had the opportunity to participate in the project’s talent development programme (DocTalent4EU). The EU project was concluded in 2025. NORCHILD has evolved and been inspired by the insightful research and recommendations of Dr. Zacharias Andreadakis

### Plans for 2026

We look forward to build on the experiences from 2025 in the years to come. In the spring of 2026, NORCHILD plans to conduct the following activities:

- On 19 January, the course “Newer Kindergarten research in a Nordic Perspective” starts. Professor Tove Lafton is responsible. The course is run by OsloMet and is in collaboration with Filiorum, UiS, and HVL/NORCHILD (5 ETCS).
- The “Pop-up” course (course on-demand) “Ethics and Children in Research” starts on 10 March, with, among others, Professor Linnea Bodén from Stockholm University as international guest. The course is an initiative from the PhD candidates: Marit Fri-mannslund, OsloMet, Thilde, Kleppe Vårnes, HVL, and Alice Pope, Innlandet University.
- The course “Responsible Leadership in the Kindergarten Sector” starts on 25 March and is run by HVL in collaboration with USN and NORCHILD. Professor Liv Torunn Grindheim is responsible (5 ECTS).
- NORCHILD invites representatives from professional life sector to a Conference 8–10 June: “The Role of Kindergarten Research in the Development of Kindergarten Knowledge for the Future of Childhood and Working Life”. The conference will be hosted by DMMH, with Professor Ellen Beathe Sandsether as chair in Trondheim in collaboration with NORCHILD. The PhD candidates will be active participants, and there will be organised an extra day for the Phd candidates only.
- The NORCHILD Summer school of PLAY Research in August will be led by Professor Helle Marie Skovbjerg, Design School Kolding, and the KINDknow Research Centre will be responsible.
- We are starting a new course in late autumn 2026: Understanding and using research in the kindergarten sector (Research literacy in ECEC sector). This course will also open up for participation by working life actors.
- The webinar series will continue in 2026, with the goal of arranging three webinars.

- On 20 October, we will arrange a PhD seminar the day before the Norwegian Kindergarten Research Conference with the theme “The Creative Kindergarten” (Den skapande barnehagen). The host will be NORCHILD, HVL, Bergen, in collaboration with UiS.
- NORCHILD will also offer Shadowing Practice Courses and internships for candidates in 2026. We hope that more of the candidates will want to use this opportunity and that we can thus also collaborate with more working life actors.

### Impact of NORCHILD’s work

NORCHILD represents a new and unique infrastructure for early childhood educational knowledge and research in Norway. The activities and initiatives undertaken by the research school in 2025 set traces and build a history in the kindergarten research landscape. The impact of the professional development of PhD candidates is profound. By focusing on open science, systematic review methodologies, and learning and reflection through shadowing practices, NORCHILD has started to bridge the gap between academia and professional life within the kindergarten sector. The shadowing course has allowed candidates to observe and engage directly with leaders in the field, providing them with a deeper understanding of the challenges and realities faced in the kindergarten sector. This is a promising start to fulfill the aim of enhancing ECEC research relevance for Norwegian society. By equipping candidates with a broad range of methodological tools to broaden their scholarly knowledge, as well as opportunity to train a variety of soft skills, NORCHILD build up their knowledge and enables a new generation of scholars to act with higher impact at various levels within the ECEC sector. NORCHILD strengthens academic as well as professional life networks by drawing on diverse expertise and perspectives that benefit all participants.

## TASTE



TASTE-workshop participants, Copenhagen, June 2025

The *TASTE* project contributes to KINDknow's work on research excellence and societal relevance through research on taste, food, and pedagogy in kindergartens and schools. The project combines empirical research with close collaboration with practitioners and focuses on the development, implementation, and study of taste didactics in kindergartens.

### Contribution to research excellence

Research excellence in the *TASTE* project is supported through a strong organisational structure, collaboration across institutions, and a coherent research design. The kindergarten strand of the project consists of the PhD student Chloë Carpi from HVL, professor Hege Wergedahl and associate professor Asle Holthe from HVL, assistant professor Elly Herikstad Tuset from OsloMet, and co-supervisor for the PhD student, associate professor Valérie Lengard Almli from NOFIMA. This composition ensures continuity in the research work, close supervision of the PhD project, and opportunities for joint analysis and publication.

In 2025, the project group held several meetings and workshops, including a joint meeting for all *TASTE* participants in Copenhagen in June. These meetings

included organisational discussions between work package leaders as well as joint sessions with all participants. We discussed data collection, analysis, and results from data collection in both kindergartens and schools. The focus of the meetings this year has been on the development and implementation of taste didactics.

An important contribution to research quality is the way taste didactics were developed in collaboration with kindergartens. In spring 2025, each participating kindergarten established a project group with representatives from different departments. These groups were responsible for developing taste-related activities adapted to their own kindergarten context. The activities aimed to increase children's awareness of taste and to encourage participation and willingness to explore different foods. The development process was iterative, with activities being tested, discussed, and adjusted when needed.

Researchers supported this work through meetings with the whole staff and through supervision of the local project groups. This approach ensured that the activities were informed by research, while still being grounded in everyday kindergarten practice. From a research perspective, this design provides rich qualitative material on

pedagogical development processes and on how taste didactics can be understood and used in different institutional contexts.

### Societal impact and relevance

The societal impact of the TASTE project is closely linked to its relevance for kindergarten practice and professional development. By involving staff directly in the development of activities, the project supports competence development and reflection on food and meals as part of everyday pedagogy. The work with taste didactics has encouraged staff to reflect on their own roles, on children's participation, and on how food-related activities can be organised in more inclusive and exploratory ways.

In October 2025, the activities developed in each kindergarten were collected and shared across the participating institutions. During autumn 2025 and early 2026, the kindergartens were asked to implement both their own activities and selected activities developed by other kindergartens. This exchange allowed staff to gain inspiration from others and contributed to knowledge sharing across institutions.

From a broader perspective, the project addresses issues related to children's food experiences, health, and inclusion. By focusing on children's willingness to taste and their opportunity to explore food through the senses, the project supports early engagement with food in a way that is relevant for later food habits. The activities developed in the project can be integrated into everyday kindergarten practice and are therefore likely to have value beyond the project period. Through dissemination to kindergartens, teacher education, and the research community, the TASTE project contributes knowledge that is relevant both for practice and for further research.

## Erasmus+ mobility grant



Dr. Aihua Hu  
Co-Project Leader

From August to December 2025, KINDknow hosted two master's students from Beijing Normal University (BNU) during their exchange at HVL. During their stay, they completed coursework, engaged in internships at a kindergarten, and collected data for their master's projects. They met researchers at KINDknow, participated in the centre's academic and social activities, and presented their research projects to the centre's researchers. Both students described the exchange as a transformative experience. Reflecting this impact, one student is currently exploring opportunities for further doctoral study in Norway, while the other plans to establish some collaborations with Norwegian counterparts upon beginning her professional career in autumn 2026.

Looking forward to 2026, a Norwegian master's student will start a three-month exchange at Beijing Normal University (BNU), with planned site visits to the Beijing Institute of Education (BIE) and Northwest Normal University (NWNNU) in February. Furthermore, there will be reciprocal staff exchanges: a researcher from BIE will visit Bergen for one month, while a Norwegian staff member will conduct a one-month overseas stay in China, visiting the three partner institutions. These

exchanges are dedicated to the joint development of Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) modules in early childhood education and to catalysing new research initiatives and advancing existing projects in collaboration with the three partner institutions.

# Erasmus+ project: Anti-bias competences for ECEC teachers

## Anti-bias competences for ECEC teachers: Learning through video-coaching (ABC4T)



Monica Hauge Skaten



Thor Erik Sortland



ANTI-BIAS COMPETENCES FOR TEACHERS



Co-funded by  
the European Union

### Research and exploration phase

As part of the research and exploration phase of the enhancing anti-bias competences of ECEC through video-coaching (*ABC4T*) project, we have completed two systematic literature reviews: one focusing on the effectiveness of anti-bias education and another investigating video coaching as a method in ECEC. Additionally, we have conducted over 30 interviews with teachers from three different countries: Belgium, Poland, and Norway. All five partners—Norway, Belgium, Austria, Poland, and Spain—have also administered a comprehensive survey with more than 1,000 respondents working in ECEC across their respective countries. HVL has played an active and, in key areas, research-leading role in these endeavors. The methodological designs have been theoretically grounded, thoroughly planned, and consistently implemented by researchers at each partner institution. Conducting the same interviews and surveys in various European countries provides us with data that offers valuable comparative insights.

A central contribution of *ABC4T* has been the co-creation of the video-coaching methodology in close collaboration with our practice partners at Espira Salamonskogen kindergarten. This iterative, design-based approach has strengthened the scientific quality of the project by

allowing theoretical perspectives on anti-bias education and professional learning to be systematically tested, challenged, and refined in real pedagogical contexts. Through several rounds of collaborative testing and analysis, video has emerged as a robust methodological tool for supporting collective reflection and for de-privatising pedagogical practices related to anti-bias work. Rather than positioning video as an external evaluative device, the pedagogues have actively shaped how video-coaching can function as a dialogical, ethically grounded research and development method. The participating pedagogues have also engaged in transnational exchanges with international partners from other kindergartens, critically discussing both possibilities and methodological pitfalls related to video use in sensitive areas, such as diversity, power, and social justice. Importantly, practitioners have taken a leading role in defining how video-coaching can support reflective, socially just pedagogical practices, thereby contributing to methodological innovation and strengthening the project's overall research excellence.

Throughout the course of the project, we successfully applied for additional funding to test and adapt established methodological approaches within KINDknow, specifically the *EX-PED-LAB* methodology, which has previously demonstrated strong research and practice-based outcomes. We completed a workshop that examined diversity

through storytelling practices. This study investigates how storytelling can serve as a powerful resource when embedded in co-creative workshop processes.

### Societal impact

The societal impact of our project is significant and expansive, with three key aspects standing out as particularly important. Firstly, our project is likely to prevent discrimination and bias. Secondly, we provide access to a quality resource that benefits ECEC in multiple European countries. Thirdly, the work conducted in Norway exemplifies successful cooperation between academic institutions and local ECEC settings.

Early childhood is a critical stage in a child's socialisation process, where attitudes and perspectives about others and the world are developed. During this stage, children may also be profoundly affected by experiences of discrimination. It is paramount that we equip educators with the knowledge, experience, and practical tools to create inclusive environments. Our project will provide educators with such knowledge and resources. The immediate benefits include increasing educators' awareness of discriminatory practices occurring in kindergartens, along with biases they may observe in their colleagues or recognise within themselves. In the long term, our project

aims to foster structural changes within kindergartens. Children who experience inclusive environments develop strong social skills and demonstrate democratic citizenship.

The resources in the form of a professional development programme and practical toolkit will benefit at least five different European countries and potentially thousands of ECEC settings. They will be accessible for early childhood education at the academic level and have the potential to be integrated into curricula or offered independent courses. This scale enhances the societal benefits of our resources.

Since the project began, we have found that tight cooperation with practitioners is key to success. The perspectives of local ECEC settings are invaluable to the project's development. To create meaningful change, we must take their contextual experiences seriously. In Norway, we have been particularly successful in this endeavor, with two teachers and two leaders from a local kindergarten actively participating in various phases of the project. This collaboration serves as an example of effective partnership between these fields, enhancing professional competence across multiple ECEC arenas and further contributing to significant societal impact.



In the picture: participants of the project meeting in Wien, November 2025

# Network for Intercultural Competence and Interaction in Preschool and Kindergarten



Sidsel Boldermo  
Associate Professor,  
Project Leader

The Interreg Aurora project *A Network for Intercultural Competence and Interaction in Preschool and Kindergarten* (1 January–31 December 2025) is a collaborative initiative between UiT—The Arctic University of Norway, Luleå University of Technology (Sweden), and Novia University College in Vaasa (Finland). The project aims to establish a strong foundation for co-creation of knowledge and future cross-border collaboration in the field of intercultural interaction in ECEC within the Arctic region.

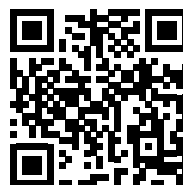
The project addresses key societal challenges related to diversity and intercultural competence in research, higher education, and kindergarten practice. A central focus has been the exchange and comparative analysis of national framework plans for higher education and preschool education in the three countries, with particular attention to how diversity and intercultural competence are conceptualised and implemented. In addition, the partners have shared concrete examples from their respective teacher education programmes, highlighting how these topics are integrated into compulsory and elective courses.

The project activities include digital workshops and seminars allowing the researchers and practitioners from each partner institution and participating kindergartens to present preliminary findings. The final digital seminar featured contributions from all three universities

and selected kindergartens. Researchers Anne Myrstad and Veronica Bergan from UiT presented findings from their research on Arctic kindergartens, contributing to knowledge exchange between research and practice.

A key outcome of the project is the ongoing development of a joint knowledge base on diversity and intercultural competence in Arctic research and education. This resource is intended to be accessible to teachers in higher education and kindergartens, as well as other relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the collaboration has resulted in a new application for a larger and more long-term Interreg project involving partners in Vaasa and Luleå, building on the networks and insights established through this initiative.

More information about the project is available through UiT's Interreg Aurora webpage and the CNIC - Interreg Aurora platform ([Interreg Aurora | UiT](#) and [CNIC - Interreg Aurora](#))



## GENIAL: AI in early childhood education



Prof. Maria Dardanou,  
Coordinator



From the left: Christen Andreas Orvin Wroldsen (from KD), Maria Dardanou, Sissel Skillinghaug, Marte Blikstad-Balas, Siv M. Gamlem, Ole Espen Rakkestad, Lene Karin Wiberg and Rune Johan Krumsvik.

The *GENIAL* project (GENerative AI for Inclusive and Ethical Early Childhood Education) was launched in September 2025 through partnership with UiT—The Arctic University of Norway and an active participation of Dr. Zacharias Andreadakis. This transnational initiative addresses one of contemporary education’s most pressing questions: how can artificial intelligence be integrated ethically, pedagogically, and inclusively into young children’s learning environments?

Grounded in Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory, *GENIAL* recognises that children’s encounters with AI are shaped by interactions across multiple levels—between children, educators, families, institutions, and broader cultural values. The project will deliver ethical guidelines safeguarding children’s rights and agency, pedagogical frameworks supporting educators in everyday practice, inclusive education recommendations addressing accessibility and equity, and policy guidance for institutions navigating AI regulation in ECEC. As generative AI becomes increasingly present in children’s daily lives, this research-informed guidance holds immediate practical significance.

*GENIAL* fosters educational excellence by creating research-informed frameworks and resources that set new standards for ethical AI integration in early childhood education. At the same time, it drives social impact by

promoting equity, inclusion, and digital empowerment for educators and young learners across diverse European contexts

UiT coordinates the consortium under the lead of Maria Dardanou, with contributions from UiT colleagues Torstein Unstad Heimdal, Nils Christian Tveiterås, and Bente Karlsen, and partners University of West Attica, Greece, University of Crete, Greece, Dr. Zacharias Andreadakis from KINDknow Research Center, HVL, University of Helsinki, Finland, and University of Primorska, Slovenia.



Prof. Maria Dardanou,  
Project Leader

## Erasmus+ : European Initiative for an Informed Use of Technology Grounded on a Socio-emotional Framework for nurturing Quality Education in ECEC

The Erasmus+ project European Initiative for an Informed Use of Technology Grounded on a Socio-Emotional Framework for Nurturing Quality Education in ECEC aims to equip early childhood educators with evidence-based tools for an informed, relationally attuned co-use of technology, delivering a psychological-pedagogical framework, an open and dynamic catalogue of ECEC technologies, an Emotional Augmented Reality Maps kit using low-cost NFC hardware and an authoring app, and practical guidelines for teachers and parents with policy recommendations

The applicant and project coordinator is LUMSA (Rome), and the consortium includes LUMSA, Italy, UiT—The Arctic University of Norway, Magyar Digitális Oktatásért Egyesület, Hungary, SMARTED SRL, Italy, University of València, Spain, and Roma Capitale, Italy.

*EUTEKNÉ* advances educational excellence by introducing evidence-based frameworks and innovative tools that redefine how technology is integrated into early childhood education. At the same time, it delivers social impact by fostering emotionally attuned, inclusive practices that empower educators, children, and families to engage with technology in ways that promote equity, well-being, and lifelong learning.



Prof. Maria Dardanou,  
Leader

### Erasmus+: Technology Enhanced Toys for Communication, Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creativity and Learning

This project aims to equip ECEC with a play-based theoretical framework for Technology Enhanced Toys (TETs), a teaching-and-learning repository, and a professional development model with an online community to build 21st-century competencies (4Cs) through STEAM. The University of Patras coordinates the consortium; UiT—The Arctic University of Norway leads WP4 on professional development, with Maria Dardanou as UiT PI and contributions from UiT colleagues Torstein Unstad Heimdal and Nils Christian Tveiterås. Partners include the University of Malta (Institute of Digital Games), Infinitivity Design Labs (France; platform and portal development), and UiT (Norway), with UPatras.

*TET4CL* drives educational excellence by introducing a research-informed framework and innovative resources that empower educators to integrate Technology Enhanced Toys into play-based pedagogy for STEAM learning. At the same time, it creates social impact by fostering inclusive, collaborative practices that build 21st-century skills in young children and strengthen equity and digital readiness across diverse educational contexts.

# Development of module Digital Practices in Kindergarten



Prof. Maria Dardanou,  
Project Leader

*Digital Practices in Kindergarten* is a national development project funded by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training and led by Maria Dardanou in collaboration with Torstein Unstad Heimdal at UiT—The Arctic University of Norway and the University of Stavanger (UiS). The project aims to strengthen early childhood educators' professional digital competence through the development of a comprehensive competence package that supports pedagogically sound and reflective use of digital technology in kindergartens.

The competence package consists of five modules developed in close collaboration with pilot kindergartens to ensure relevance to everyday practice. Module 1, which focuses on staff competence, has been completed and is currently being tested in kindergarten settings. Module 2, *Being a Child in a Digital World*, is under development and addresses children's perspectives, rights, and experiences in increasingly digital learning environments. The remaining modules will build on these foundations to provide a coherent and research-based framework for professional development.

The full competence package will be made publicly available through the Directorate's platform, [kompetanse.udir.no](https://kompetanse.udir.no), in autumn 2026. By combining research-based knowledge with practice-oriented modules, the project contributes to excellence in ECEC by supporting educators in developing sustainable, inclusive, and critically informed digital practices. At the societal level, the project promotes children's rights, creativity, and critical thinking.

## INDearly



Veronica Bergan,  
Associate Professor,  
Project Leader

The UArctic network project *Indigenous Knowledges for Sustainability in Early Childhood Education (INDearly)* aims to explore Indigenous and land-based knowledge for sustainability with relevance to ECEC in the circumpolar north. The project aims at underscoring Indigenous voices in ECEC and bringing attention to Indigenous perspectives on childhood by decolonising ECEC. Network members are from UiT—The Arctic University of Norway, University of Oulu, Finland, South Dakota State University, USA, University of Alaska Southeast, Nord University, Sámi University of Applied Sciences, and HVL.

During XI Conference on Childhood Studies at the University of Eastern Finland in 2026, it is planned to present the paper titled: “Boundaries and bridges: Indigenous perspectives on childhood and decolonising early childhood education and care”. In this paper, we examine the cultural boundaries of childhood in ECEC through interviews with parents of Indigenous children in Norway, Finland, and the United States, seeking to problematise the tensions between Indigenous ways of being and colonised ECEC systems.

The project activities include a network seminar with focus on analysing and writing our mutual research paper and exploration and connection to Land-based practices related to coastal and urban Sámi communities in and around Tromsø.



From the left: Marikaisa Laiti, Marianne P. Heggen, Jaana Juutinen, Angela Lunda, Viktor M. Johansson, Anne Myrstad, Veronica Bergan and Carie Green.

## SKAPE STED



Prof. Anne Myrstad,  
Project Leader

SKAPE STED (Create Space) is a collaborative project between KINDknow researchers at UiT—The Arctic University of Norway and HVL. The aim of the project is to explore the vital role of place in outdoor environments both within and surrounding kindergartens across different regions in Norway. “Place” is an ever-present element in outdoor practices, yet it is often overlooked as an active participant in the daily activities and routines of kindergartens.

The project underscores the importance of children’s active engagement with their own nature spaces in which they build relations and create meaning. By contrasting the role of regulated (and designed) outdoor spaces inside the fence of kindergartens to the formative value of reoccurring visits to rich and always changing outdoor places in nature, the impact raise the awareness of what makes excellence in Norwegian outdoor kindergarten practises. Our study suggest that all kindergartens should make space to let the children ”create their own places” within a walking distance from kindergarten that honors nature as co-teacher and relational knowledge of emplaced learning. Using a participatory design approach, the researchers explore the interplay between time, place, children, and staff across three kindergartens during different seasons. The researchers have regular meetings, approximately once a month, to collaboratively engage in the process.

Looking ahead, the researchers have plans to continue the work both transnationally and locally, aiming to enhance empirical research on the interplay with “place”. Further data collection and practical activities will be planned with the kindergartens during the spring, followed by data processing and analysis in 2026.

# PhD thesis defence

Dr. Marion Oen



Picture taken by Astri Kamsvåg, from the left: Tiri Beate Bergesen Schei (vise dean, HVL), Elin Eriksen Ødegaard (main supervisor, HVL), Marion Oen (PhD candidate, HVL/Bergen Municipality), Alicja Renata Sadownik (supervisor, HVL), Christian Eidevald (1. Opponent, Södertörns högskola in Sweden), Daniel Hågglund, Bergen Municipality, Mimi Bjerkestrand (mentor, Bergen Municipality), Ane Bjerre Odgaard (2. Opponent, UC Süd in Denmark), Hilde Christine Hofslundsengen (leader of the committee, HVL).

On 26 November 2025, Marion Oen publicly defended her PhD thesis titled “I See That You Want to Play—Co-creating Navigational Spaces of Possibility for Working with Play in Early Childhood Education” (“Jeg ser at du vil leke—Samskaping av navigerbare mulighetsrom for arbeid med lek i barnehagen”).

Oen’s research focuses on play, professional development, and co-creation between the ECEC sector and academia. A central contribution of the dissertation is a theoretically grounded conceptual framework and a methodological approach designed to support kindergarten teachers in exploring and expanding their role in children’s play.

## Background and purpose

Play is one of the cornerstones of Norwegian ECEC and is meaningful and important for those who engage in it. At the same time, working with children’s institutionalised play in increasingly diverse kindergarten settings is a complex task. Kindergarten teachers may at times struggle to find their place in children’s play.

## Research questions and data

The dissertation addresses two main research questions:

1. What navigational spaces for working with play in kindergartens can be identified and/or co-created by analysing previous research?
2. How can new navigational spaces for working with play in kindergartens be co-created?

The data material consists of systematically collected research literature, audio recordings from co-creative workshops, collaborative writing documents, and observations of play. The dissertation is structured as a compilation thesis comprising two journal articles, two book chapters, and an extended introductory chapter.

## What are educators already doing?

To examine how kindergarten teachers facilitate children’s play, Article 1 synthesises 10 years of international research (2012–2021). The findings are presented as a spectrum of 14 possible pedagogical doings: *participate, organise, extend, guide, observe, manage, distance, instruct, adapt, encourage, value, interrupt, collaborate, and theorise*.

These doings can be adjusted in relation to four navigational spaces that emerged during the analysis: motivation, imagination, power, and time.

### Creating new practice through co-creation

Developing new pedagogical practices requires a theoretically grounded methodological approach. This thesis and its constituent book chapters introduce and explore the workshop methodology EX-PED-LAB (Exploration and Pedagogical Innovation Laboratory) as a framework for co-creative research design. They further identify key success factors and barriers to pedagogical innovation, including negotiating responsibility, clear and inclusive leadership, digital flexibility, recognition of diverse forms of knowledge, and personal engagement and ambition among participants.

### The possibility workshop

To test the methodology in practice, a series of workshops and intermediate activities were conducted in two kindergartens. Through this process, four navigational spaces were co-created: *framing*, *conditioning*, *knowledging*, and *timing*.

These findings are synthesised in the introductory chapter through the development of the possibility workshop method. The possibility workshop is a playful, collaborative approach in which participants from the ECEC sector and academia jointly explore and develop practice through abductive, deductive, and inductive cycles.

### Significance

The dissertation contributes to both an overview of how educators can facilitate play and a methodological approach for systematically exploring and expanding this work. The study demonstrates how reflection and collaboration within possibility workshops can open up multiple ways of understanding, supporting, and participating in children's play, thereby strengthening children's opportunities for meaningful participation in a complex every day kindergarten context.

### About the Public Sector PhD

This project was conducted as a Public Sector PhD, a collaborative arrangement between a public-sector organisation and a degree-awarding institution, funded by the Research Council of Norway. In this case, the project was a collaboration between the Municipality of Bergen and HVL.

## Dr. Baizen Ciren



### A slice of bread became the start of my PhD

It was a small lunch—but it made me question what a proper meal really is.

This reflection became personal to me shortly after I arrived in Norway. Like many newcomers, I quickly adopted the very Norwegian habit of eating a cold lunch. One day, during a video call with my mom, I was holding a slice of bread with a layer of cheese. Just before the call ended, she said, “Okay, now go and eat your lunch, take care.” I explained that this was my lunch. She looked confused and replied, “No, that is not lunch. That is just a snack. Go and eat a proper lunch.”

This is a story I have shared on several occasions, and it still fascinates me because it shows how differently we perceive food across cultures. It also marks the point where my interest in this topic began. Reflecting on my own cross-cultural experiences, I noticed both similarities and differences in how food and meals are practiced in different places. It made me realise how important, and yet often taken-for-granted, food practices are within their respective cultural frames of reference. This sparked my curiosity and became the foundation for my PhD research.

My PhD research focuses on food and meals in kindergartens in Norway and China. At the heart of my project is the hope to better understand kindergarten food policies and everyday practices in two culturally distinct contexts, and to contribute to a shared food future for children that is nutritious, enjoyable, and sustainable.

Like many stuck-in-between researchers, my research was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, I wanted my project to focus on listening to the voices of young children. I was curious about the youngest members of society and how they experience food and meals in kin-

dergartens in two culturally distinct countries.

This research idea emerged from a professional concern I have had for years—understanding the complex intertwining of different practices in people’s daily lives, especially those whose voices are often minimised or missing in society. I was especially interested in how food is prepared, served, and monitored by adults in kindergartens. How does this dynamic actually play out in practice?

However, I could not proceed with my original research design because of the pandemic, so I changed my focus. I chose to concentrate on the policies and practices and investigate the context in which food and meals occur. I used policy documents, interviews with Norwegian kindergarten staff conducted pre-pandemic, and, fortunately, I was able to access some secondary research data from China, which I analysed and drew conclusions upon.

Having shared a bit about my research journey and motivations, I now want to highlight some key findings from my PhD work. Building on Hedegaard’s cultural-historical framework, which is well established in educational research but still relatively unexplored in food and health research, I emphasise the importance of understanding food practices as culturally and historically embedded. Three interconnected themes emerged from my analysis: health, sustainability, and change. These are not just research findings, they are crucial topics that deserve more attention in both research and practice. For instance, my findings show that sustainability plays a significant role, not only in the organisation of every day kindergarten meals but also in the education of future global citizens.

My PhD research highlight the importance of understanding food practices in their cultural and historical contexts, offering new, interdisciplinary insights into how kindergartens can promote healthy, sustainable eating practices. Ultimately, this benefits children’s well-being and development, both now and in the future.

## Dr. Nils Christian Tveiterås



In October, Nils Christian Tveiterås defended his doctoral thesis at UiT—The Arctic University of Norway, campus Tromsø, Department of Education. The committee consisted of professor emeriti PhD Helle Mathiasen from Copenhagen University, Denmark, and associate professor PhD Fredrik Mørk Røkenes from University of Oslo, Norway.

In his trial lecture, Tveiterås explored how application of other theories, namely, affordance theory and post-digital perspectives would have contributed to analyse parts of his material. The trial lecture was accepted, and the public defence could carry on.

Tveiterås' dissertation explores the concept of digital competence in early childhood teacher education. As digitalisation also impacts early childhood education, the education must prepare students to use technology in this context. Three sub-studies highlight different aspects of the topic through a literature review, an analysis of local study plans, and a design-based project exploring virtual reality with students. A summary article discusses the overall results.

The thesis reveals that the development of digital competence for early childhood teachers often fails to sufficiently consider the unique characteristics of early childhood education, such as play and exploration. These elements can also be relevant for students' use of digital tools. The study argues that digital competence in early childhood teacher education should not only adapt existing frameworks but also allow the specific qualities of early childhood education to contribute to its development.

From the left: Siri S. Madsen (supervisor), Siw Skrøvset (head of department), Fredrik M. Røkenes (2. opponent), Helle Mathiasen (1. opponent), Jens Breivik (leader of the committee), Nils Christian Tveiterås (PhD candidate)

# Stories

This year, we ask our PhD and postdoc candidates questions “How does your project and its activities contribute to promoting research excellence? What impact does the project have on society?”

## Hege Fimreite

Postdoctoral Fellow at  
Ex-Ped-Lab project, HVL  
April 2023–December 2025



Throughout my postdoctoral period, the EX-PED-LAB project has engaged in several initiatives aimed at advancing kindergarten education through innovative practices and collaboration with kindergarten teachers, designers, and artists. Exploration and co-creation with participants from diverse fields of knowledge through educational workshops have contributed to paving the way for excellence in higher education by demonstrating the value of playful, interdisciplinary methods. Design-based workshops strengthen the education’s interdisciplinary approach by engaging in different partnerships that exemplify research excellence across institutions and fields of knowledge, where exploration, creativity, and innovative inquiry merge. Co-creation with artists and designers has led to more playful learning activities and exploration of the teaching role.

This collaboration continues to influence the education and professional practice through SAMSKAP, a large-scale co-creation initiative in Sogndal addressing Norway’s urgent need for qualified kindergarten teachers and more practice-oriented higher education. The project’s prototype, SognaBLU, is a unique collaboration with six municipalities where the municipalities offer full-time kindergarten teacher students a 20% paid kindergarten position alongside their studies. Educators, students, and kindergarten teachers also co-design relevant learning activities. This model aims to strengthen recruitment, relevance, and reflective capacity in education and is expected to have a societal impact beyond the education in HVL, Sogndal.

As EX-PED-LAB concludes and my postdoctoral period ends, the impact will continue in the people, the partnerships, and projects it inspired. Research excellence and societal impact are inseparable when knowledge is created with communities, students, and kindergarten teachers rather than for them. My journey ends with an open invitation to everyone I have collaborated with to continue exploring, playing, and imagining with an open heart, an open will, and an open mind—and with the courage to co-create.

## Czarecah Tuppil Oropilla

Postdoctoral Fellow at  
Ex-Ped-Lab project, HVL  
May 2023–April 2026



My postdoctoral work in 2025 has centred on supporting the broader ambitions of KINDknow and *EX-PED-LAB* by helping to connect research, practice-based innovation, and knowledge translation. In my view, my contributions have aimed to create opportunities for further inquiry, collaboration, and societal engagement.

Within *EX-PED-LAB*, I assisted in developing workshops, digital tools, material resources, and our closing conference, as well as contributing to the continued growth of *PedPod by EX-PED-LAB*, our research-based podcast that invites diverse voices into conversations on pedagogical innovations. I also helped establish *EXPLORATORIUM.NO* as an emerging platform for disseminating pedagogical resources and innovations—envisioned as a small digital space that can inspire hope, curiosity, and new ideas for practitioners, educators, and students alike.

Research translation has been another central aspect of my work. I contributed to editing the forthcoming volume *Confronting the Polycrisis* (Springer) and engaged in forthcoming collaborative publications exploring intergenerational engagements, sustainability, cultural-historical approaches, and pedagogical innovations.

Grant development has been an important way for me to help open doors for future research. In 2025, I contributed to ten collaborative funding applications, including proposals to the DAM Foundation, Rieber Foundation, and the Norwegian Research Council (Innovasjonsprosjekt, INTPART, and the SFF KINDknow application). I was also involved in developing Horizon Europe, HKDIR, and LEGO Foundation proposals and pitches. Most of these proposals have intergenerational, co-creative, and innovative dimensions, building on my past work and competencies.

Finally, I shared our work at conferences, forums, seminars, workshops, and invited lectures in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Italy, and Norway, presenting on sensory play, pedagogical innovations, podcast-as-method, and intergenerational engagements—including insights from “Sensory Play Kits” (“Sanselekkassen”), our sensory co-creation tool developed within *EX-PED-LAB*.

Overall, my postdoctoral year has been about contributing where needed, strengthening collaborative initiatives, and helping build pathways towards excellence and societal impact in ECEC research.

## Francesca Vaghi

Postdoctoral Fellow, HVL

January 2025–January 2027



My two year project is titled *Understanding Responsible Economic Sustainability in ECEC*. The project sits under the “Systemic Leadership and Conditions for Children in Kindergartens” research area at KINDknow. The project aims to explore the concept *responsible economic sustainability in ECEC*, using several qualitative methodologies. In 2025, the project has focused on answering the question of how responsible economic sustainability might be defined, via a scoping review and through semi-structured interviews with ECEC professionals in Western Norway. Preliminary findings from the scoping review were presented in August 2025 at the Barn Conference II in Trondheim. A paper based on the interview data, co-authored with Janne Torsvik, was submitted for consideration to the newly established *Childhood in the Anthropocene* (CiA) journal. In 2026, the focus will shift to children’s perspectives and practices, using an ethnographic approach and child-centred methods to examine food practices’ potential to promote (or hinder) economic sustainability.

The project promotes excellence in research by applying a critical lens to often taken for granted concepts in early childhood education for sustainability, exploring the gap between policy and practice, with a commitment to centring the perspectives of children and professionals. The project does this by comparing what is found in literature and policy documents with empirical findings from qualitative research. Previous studies also suggest that a knowledge gap exists in relation to how the economic dimension of sustainability is taught and/or practiced in ECEC, with more emphasis usually placed on environmental and sociocultural sustainability. The project will thus address this gap.

Societal impact will be achieved by highlighting good practice examples from kindergarten settings, understanding children’s viewpoints, and assessing the structural factors that allow or constrain sustainable practices in kindergartens. These findings will not only be disseminated through academic publications and conferences but also shared with relevant stakeholders in the policy and practice arenas to better inform future decisions about how to support kindergarten settings through an understanding of professionals’ and children’s priorities in relation to early childhood education for sustainability.

## Kine Melfald Tveten

Postdoctoral Fellow at  
MoveEarly project, HVL  
February 2024–January 2028



In 2025, my work in the MoveEarly project focused on one clear goal: creating knowledge that makes a real difference for children, families, and communities. The year began with an inspiring research stay at the University of Wollongong in Australia. Immersing myself in a vibrant international research environment strengthened my skills and expanded my network. During this time, I worked on scientific articles and collected data for a study on children’s movement, play, and exploration—research that will help us understand how early experiences shape lifelong health and development.

Back in Norway, we completed the second round of data collection for MoveEarly. I helped recruit and train a team of assessors to ensure high-quality data. Visiting kindergartens and meeting educators and children reminded me why this work matters: supporting healthy development and giving every child the best possible start in life.

Sharing knowledge is just as important as creating it. In 2025, I presented our research at conferences in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Roskilde, Stavanger, and London. I also gave keynote talks for health professionals in Bergen and Oslo, turning research findings into practical tools for those working with children every day. This is how research creates societal impact—by moving from theory to practice.

Throughout the year, I contributed to KINDknow’s collaborative spirit by hosting a webinar for the NORCHILD research school, supporting PhD students with systematic reviews and actively engaging in research meetings. These efforts strengthen our community and ensure knowledge is shared and developed together.

By combining research excellence with active societal engagement, this work helps KINDknow fulfill its mission: promoting sustainability, global-local perspectives, and co-creation in early childhood research.

## Maria Grindheim

PhD fellow, HVL

January 2023–December 2026



My PhD research is embedded within *MoveEarly*'s (Move-play-explore in early childhood education) work package 1, which focuses on conceptualising and theorising the connection between movement, play, and exploration (the move-play-explore nexus). In my research, I employ multi-methodological approaches, including a scoping literature review, guided tours with children and staff, drawing maps, focus group conversations, and microanalysis of video-recorded moments of move-play-explore. The aim of my research is to foster more holistic discussions around central concepts in early childhood, specifically movement, play, and exploration. I aspire to address an expressed need for cultivating new approaches that counteract hegemonic discourses that may lead to unhelpful dichotomous thinking within the field of ECEC.

Furthermore, it is my hope that my research can contribute to *MoveEarly*'s aim of counterbalancing the challenges posed by sedentary activities in ECEC. I believe that by conceptualising and theorising the move-play-explore nexus, we can provide arguments for more child-sensitive and sustainable education that considers the whole child and all children, both nationally and internationally.

Over the last couple of years, I have been collaborating with Tracey Joyce, Elin Ødegaard, and Eivind Aadland on developing children's books based on empirical findings from my fieldwork. Our goal is to explore and inspire new ways to translate research for children and staff in kindergartens, both nationally and internationally.

Having finished my midterm evaluation, I am now in the process of writing up my papers. The further I delve into the material, the more I appreciate the richness of uncovering new knowledge through multi-methodological methods. Appreciative of how the field is already rich in diverse methodological approaches, I hope my contribution can join the ongoing efforts in this area.

## Karoline Jangård Selliseth

PhD fellow, HVL

September 2019–May 2025



My PhD project explores how digital tools—particularly communication and documentation apps—shape professional practices and parent collaboration in Norwegian kindergartens (“Digital Practices in the Kindergarten Sector: Communication, Documentation, and Professional Collaboration”). The research investigates how these technologies influence pedagogical decision-making, professional identity, and educators’ relationships with families.

The project contributes to excellence by addressing a critical, under-explored area of educational research: the intersection of digitalisation and pedagogical professionalism. Using qualitative methodologies and sociomaterial perspectives, the study provides nuanced insights into how digital platforms mediate professional practices and organisational routines. By combining rich empirical data from multiple sites with theoretical innovation, the research advances knowledge regarding digital transformation in the kindergarten sector and offers a conceptual framework for understanding technology’s role in shaping professional norms and collaborative practices.

Digitalisation in the kindergarten sector has profound implications for equity, transparency, and quality of care. This project informs policy and practice by highlighting both opportunities and challenges associated with digital communication tools. Findings are relevant for municipalities, educators, and parents, supporting informed decisions about technology use in kindergartens and potentially contributing to improved collaboration between families and institutions. The research also engages with public debate on tensions between parental expectations and professional priorities. Ultimately, the project examines the societal implications of technology use, its integration into organisational processes, and the consequences for institutions and users. These insights are transferable to other sectors of public administration, as questions concerning technological implications span a wide range of societal domains and governance contexts.

## Tracey Joyce

PhD Fellow at MoveEarly project, HVL

December 2022–November 2026



The development of The River Challenge, a new instrument which measures movement competence and creativity, will contribute towards future research as it is being shown to be valid and reliable in the initial analysis. It has been developed with a focus on children’s engagement and to reduce any pressure children may feel to participate in a test. The River Challenge “Path towards Excellence and Societal Impact” was developed based on observations of children’s freely chosen, self-directed play, which inspired the creation of stories about rescuing animals in which changes to the environment encourage children’s adaptability and creativity through movement. These combined aspects of the instrument are new and have not been used before in research, as most existing instruments focus on the attainment of specific motor skills by instruction. Feedback from the children and staff involved in the development of The River Challenge has shown this new instrument to be playful, engaging, and enjoyable for the participants, and the data analysis has proven to be an effective instrument which could be used in future research.

The intention of The River Challenge is to evaluate the impact of the *MoveEarly* project, an intervention in kindergartens to promote a pedagogical approach focussing on movement, play, and exploration. The goal of this project is to influence practices to prevent “schoolification” within kindergartens. It is also intended to use this evidence to help influence policy-making with regard to children and thus have an impact on children’s overall development.

## Pernille Buschmann Eriksen

PhD fellow

November 2023 – October 2027



On parental leave.

## Ingrid Skarprud

PhD Fellow

February 2024–January 2027



In academia, research processes and results are largely communicated through verbal and written language. The dominance of verbal language is clearly visible both in research processes and in higher education. The Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research's new *Strategy for Educational Research (2025–2029)* ask for strengthening innovation within theory, design, and methods, as well as promoting methodological diversity and renewal in educational research (KD, 2025). My project contributes to the development of the educational sector by performing research within arts-based research, namely creative processes as meaning-seeking in the practices. By using arts based research, I open up new perspectives and challenge established and dominating research methods. By expanding methodological diversity in educational research, my PhD project seeks to explore alternative ways to expand and understand knowledge in the research field. Within arts-based research, I look at how workshops can contribute to exploration and creative practises in ECEC teacher education

By researching ECEC teacher education through the perspectives of artist, researcher, and teacher (A/r/tography), I engage in creative and co-creative processes in workshops. In the workshop, one connects the subject, theory, materials, students, and space in an intra-active and co-creative teaching process. The project uses pedagogical retro-vation as a term, looking at the historical foundation of education in creative practices of art and craftsmanship in education. The social impact of utilising already established, but discarded, practices in education, where one is creative and active, can help strengthen the connection between education and practice.

## Thilde Kleppe Vårnes

PhD Fellow at MoveEarly  
project, HVL

January 2024–December 2027



My PhD project contributes to both research excellence and societal impact by delving into the complex relationship between young children’s domain-specific physical activity levels and socio-economic status (SES).

As part of the *MoveEarly* study, my PhD project is built upon an excellence-based, robust methodology that employs a cluster-randomised controlled trial to evaluate the intervention. This approach directly addresses the critical need for more robust longitudinal studies that can effectively test foundational theoretical frameworks. I use objective measures of movement competence, creativity, physical activity, and physical fitness. These objective data points provide precise data that is often lacking in existing studies, enabling a deeper understanding of these interconnected variables. Furthermore, through completing three PhD courses (PHD902, PHDH907, and PHD901), I have strengthened my academic skills and theoretical knowledge.

Beyond academic contributions, my research delivers significant societal impact. It directly informs strategies for reducing health inequalities by exploring whether the *MoveEarly* intervention can effectively reach all children, regardless of family background and SES. By understanding the association between SES and domain-specific physical activity, I provide essential knowledge of the Early Childhood Education and Care system. This knowledge will guide the development of evidence-based pedagogical practices that foster movement competence, physical activity, and physical fitness across all socioeconomic groups, counteracting issues like increasing sedentary behavior. My shadowing practice (“skyggepraksis”, organised by NORCHILD) in Bergen municipality has provided valuable practical insights into real-world applications, furthering my understanding of how to empower early childhood teachers through professional development to enhance pedagogical quality and competence within kindergartens. Ultimately, my PhD project aims to contribute to the formation of well-rounded, physically active individuals, enhancing children’s long-term health and well-being and supporting more equitable developmental trajectories from an early age.

## Anne Marie Carpi

PhD Fellow

November 2023–October 2026



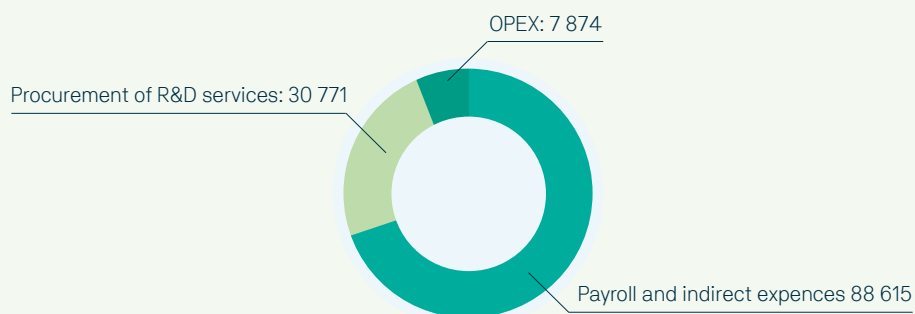
As a PhD candidate and an agent of change in academic research, excellence is central to my doctoral project and research activities. It drives my academic journey towards the highest standards of quality, rigour, and ethical responsibility, ensuring the reliability necessary for meaningful societal impact. In the field of ECEC, where children are the primary concern, the translation of research knowledge into practice is essential. Actively listening to children's voices and considering their lived experiences through appropriate methodologies are crucial for re-centring children within educational research and for fostering more reflective future generations.

My research project demonstrates excellence by adopting a phenomenological approach that is well suited to both the research inquiry and research with young children. This framework recognises children as competent and relevant participants whose perspectives are essential for understanding lived experiences, while addressing ethical considerations. The study explores how young children perceive and experience taste in Norwegian kindergartens through observations and focus group interviews, methods widely recognised in phenomenological research. These methods are further enriched by the Mosaic Approach, specifically designed for research with young children, which integrates visual methods such as drawings to support expression beyond verbal language. This multi-method design generates rich qualitative insights into the imaginary and symbolic meanings of taste and offers original contributions to food education research by focusing on children's often-overlooked perspectives.

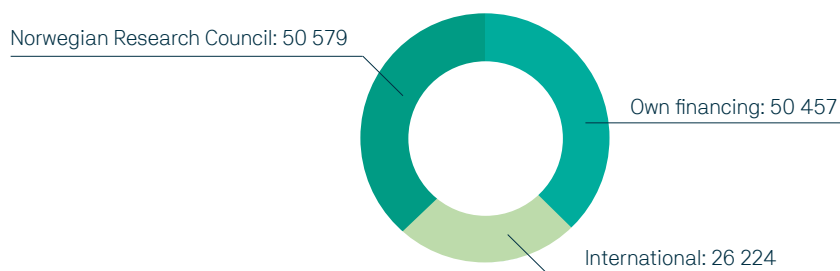
To generate these insights, the study uses a participatory approach based on close collaboration with kindergartens and the active engagement of children. The findings aim to inform the development of taste didactics that foster children's ability to make informed food choices through taste competencies and reflective thinking. By moving food education beyond rigid health norms towards a didactical approach, the study seeks to reshape kindergarten routines and practices and positively influence children's relationships with food at both individual and community levels.

# KINDknow annual accounts

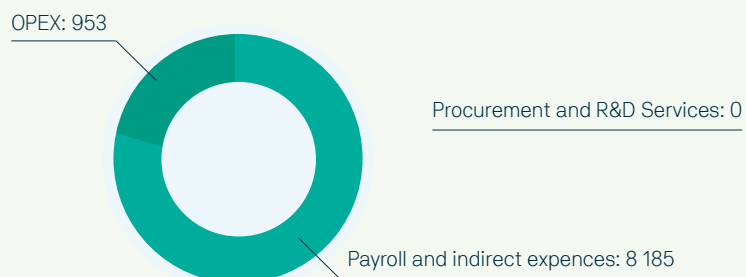
## Total costs 2018-2028, in 1000 NOK



## Funding plan 2018-2028, in 1000 NOK



## Costs in 2025, in 1000 NOK



# Publications, outreach and impact

## Articles in scientific journals

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## Educational documentaries and video interviews

Vaghi, F. & Skivenes, M. (2025, April) 'Children's rights and participation in the context of child protection: a conversation with Marit Skivenes.' Webinar recorded for NORBARN Research School. Summary available on: <https://www.hvl.no/norbarn/kurs-og-arrangement/seminar/childrens-rights-and-participation/>

Ødegaard, E. E. (Director & Co-producer), Goia, F., Grønhaug, K.L. & Jordal, S. (2025). *Magical images that can walk* [Educational documentary]. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. In collaboration with Lærdalsøyri barnehage and Hoffart, H. Nominated for the International Educational Film Conference (TREFF), Tromsø, Norway, 2026.

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Göteborgs Municipality. (2025). *Varför ska vi arbeta på vetenskaplig grund? Video interview with professor Elin Eriksen Ødegaard*, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. [Video]. Available upon request.

## Podcasts

Oropilla, C.T. (Host) (2025, January 15). *Pedpod dialogue with Anthony Okely*. In audio podcast PedPod by Expedlab. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/1CEFct4fCaxhRQtwicqQxT>

Oropilla, C.T. (Host) (2025, February 18). *Pedpod dialogue with Vina Adriany*. In audio podcast PedPod by Expedlab. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6apoVNUvNt9YhcorFIuFDO>

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Oropilla, C.T. (Host) (2025, April 15). *Pedpod dialogue with Margareth Kernan*. In audio podcast PedPod by Expedlab. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6tRsDco6XxF4KIs63fZTS1>

Oropilla, C.T. (Host) (2025, May 15). *Pedpod dialogue with Svein Gunnar Sjøtun*. In audio podcast PedPod by Expedlab. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/i1PgAKL4KlAcGJ7JLQjo9X>

Oropilla, C.T. (Host) (2025, June 15). *Pedpod dialogue with Adefunke Ekine*. In audio podcast PedPod by Expedlab. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3dMgSd4xv8V5MbutNCH4eZ>

Oropilla, C.T. (Host) (2025, July 15). *Pedpod dialogue with Ngaroma Williams*. In audio podcast PedPod by Expedlab. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/7gCEKv14mUwinZ9FAwZjn3>

Oropilla, C.T. (Host) (2025, August 19). *Pedpod dialogue with Gloria Quinones*. In audio podcast PedPod by Expedlab. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/7m1MLYImmtqphetYOcfM1T>

Oropilla, C.T. (Host) (2025, September 16). *Pedpod dialogue with Kassahun Weldemriam*. In audio podcast PedPod by Expedlab. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6pKd26fpiIy7AGG-kcKldvD>

Oropilla, C.T. (Host) (2025, November 17). *Pedpod dialogue with Bradford Wiles*. In audio podcast PedPod by Expedlab. Western Norway University of Applied Sciences. <https://open.spotify.com/episode/3sD1kW1zICFXxJnFivlPVz>

## Lectures, seminars and workshops

Andreadakis, Z. (2025, March). Lessons on transferable skills and employability [Invited Presentation]. Yale Ventures, Yale University, New Haven, CT, United States. [https://www.linkedin.com/posts/zacharias-andreadakis-phd\\_it-has-been-such-a-tremendous-privilege-to-activity-7310254792621154306-Oh87/](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/zacharias-andreadakis-phd_it-has-been-such-a-tremendous-privilege-to-activity-7310254792621154306-Oh87/)

Andreadakis, Z. (2025, February). AI and its upcoming role in early childhood education [Invited Presentation]. Department of Early Childhood Education and Care, University of West Attica, Athens, Greece. <https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:7292610597601308672/>

Farestveit, C.H.H. & Thyssen, G. (2025, July 9). “Outside the gate”: A historical discourse analysis of Norwegian kindergarten teachers’ didactic practices in arenas of cultural formation. Conference paper presented at the International Standing Conference of the History of Education (ISCHE 46), Lille, France.

Roos, M., Thyssen, G., & Ødegaard, E.E. (2025, May 16). Politics, arts and historiography of education: tangled cases of dis/embodied enculturation. Symposium held at the 9th Nordic Educational History Conference, Stockholm, Sweden.

Roos, M., Thyssen, G., & Ødegaard, E.E. (2025, November 13). Symposium 50 år Barnehageloven (1975-2025). Symposium held at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences, Bergen.

Thyssen, G. (2025, September 11). Queer archives and Nordic trans\* childhoods and education: Recovering histories of transgenderism, gender nonconformity and gender queering from kindergarten upwards. Conference paper presented at the European Conference for Educational Research (ECER 2025), Belgrade, Serbia.

Thyssen, G. & Ødegaard, E. (2025, May 16). Urban-coastal art and embodied re-membering of education: “StreetWise” and “One Ocean” as two cases of collaborative activist history making. Conference paper presented at the 9th Nordic Educational History Conference, Stockholm, Sweden.

Vaghi, F. (2025, June) ‘The early years, food, and the mixed economy of welfare: whose perspectives are valued?’ Conference paper presented at the *First International Child & Family Conference*, University of Bristol.

Vaghi, F., Grindheim, L. T., Hauge, K. H., Furnes, A. S., Tollefsen, I., Oropilla, C. T. & Jorem, G. T. (2025, August) ‘Responsible economic sustainability in ECEC: preliminary findings from a scoping review.’ Conference paper presented at *Barn Conference II – Methodological humility and ethical conundrums: Collaborative explorations in Nordic Childhood Studies*, NTNU, Trondheim.

Vaghi, F. (2025, August) 'Food in kindergartens: collaborative explorations between researchers and children through slow ethnography.' Conference paper presented at *Barn Conference II – Methodological humility and ethical conundrums: Collaborative explorations in Nordic Childhood Studies*, NTNU, Trondheim.

Vaghi, F. (2025, September) 'Interpretation and translation in the anthropology of childhood.' Lecture delivered at the Faculty of Social Anthropology, University of Prishtina.

Vaghi, F. (2025, November) 'Beyond adultism: child-centred research in Early Childhood Education for Sustainability.' Lecture delivered at the Faculty of Education, University of Duisburg-Essen.

Vaghi, F. (2025, November) 'Child-centred research, with a focus on visual methods.' Workshop delivered to PhD students at the Faculty of Education, University of Duisburg-Essen.

# Presented keynotes

## International Keynotes and guest lectures

Andreadakis, Z. (2025, February 10). Career planning for doctoral candidates: Upskilling and reskilling in the age of AI [Guest lecture]. Invited Keynote Public Lecture: Technical University of Crete, Chania, Greece.

<https://www.tuc.gr/el/to-polytechneio/symbainei-sto-polytechneio/item/dialexi-anapliroti-kathigiti-zacharia-andreadaki-western-norway-university-of-applied-sciences-hvl-deytera-10022025-1900-amfitheatro-thelma-mayridoy>

Andreadakis, Z. (2025, March 5). Empowering doctoral careers: Skills for the future [Invited Keynote Presentation]. DocTalent4EU Final Event, Fondation Universitaire, Brussels, Belgium. <https://doctalent4eu.eu/2024/12/02/save-the-date-doctalent4eu-final-event-on-march-2025/>

Thyssen, G. (2025, September 16). Archive past, present, future: Silences and reparation for justice-to-come [Invited Keynote Presentation]. 4th History of Education Summer School, Leuven, Belgium.

Ødegaard, E. E. (2025, January 13). Å forstå och bruke forskning - varför, vad, och hur [Invited Keynote Presentation]. For Educational Leaders and Headmasters in Gøteborg Municipality, Sweden.

Ødegaard, E. E. (2025, July 7). An invitation to join the OMEPs World project Water and Waterscape- Children's rights to clean water [Invited Keynote Presentation]. OMEP World Assembly. Bologna, Italy .

Ødegaard, E. E. (2025, September 16). Early Childhood Education for Sustainability –Invited Chair with introduction and summing up the ESD – NET learning Webinar on Early Childhood Education for Sustainability. UNESCO.

Ødegaard, E. E. (2025, December 4). Engasjerende faglig lederkskap. Hvordan kan vi lede kultur og utdanning gjennom verksteder? [Invited Keynote Presentation] Conference “Ledelse av Legende Fellesskaber” in Billund, Denmark.

Ødegaard, E. E. (2025, November 10-21). Embedding Movement, Play and Exploration in Early Childhood Education Systems as Everyday Pedagogies for Public and Planetary Health [Invited Keynote Presentation]. IIOPE at the World's Climate Conference – COP 30, Belhem, Brasil.

Hu, A. (2025, November 7). Creating Health not Managing Decises. Invited guest lecture for kindergarten principals in Nanjing, China: Kindergarten as an agent for a sustainable society.

## Keynotes and guest lectures at national events

Ødegaard, E. E. (2025, March 11-12). Å forstå og bruke forskning (Research literacy): Hvordan kan vi som forskere bidra til kompetent deltakelse i et opplyst demokrati [Opening lecture]. NORCHILD PhD Days, University of Agder, Norway.

Ødegaard, E. E. (2025, September 13). Suksesskriterier for forbedret praksis: Pedagogisk innovasjon og retrovasjon [Invited lecture]. Master's program “Ledelse av inkluderende barnehage og skolemiljø,” Norwegian School of Economics (NHH), Norway.

Sønsthagen, A. G. (2025, November 10). Forventningar og krysspress i leiarrolla [Invited lecture for Utdanningsforbundet i Alver]. Leiarforum, Norway.

# Policy impact

UNESCO. (2025, September 9). Early childhood care and education for sustainability: ESD-Net learning webinar with Prof. Elin Eriksen Ødegaard [YouTube video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HrIJPh7rsnA>

IIOPE. (2025, November). IIOPE at the UN Climate Change Conference – Belém (Speaker: Elin Eriksen Ødegaard) [YouTube video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9OHfWtgd8U>

Produced a showcase of ECEC for Sustainability based on the Water and Waterscape project  
– a collaboration with World OMEP. This film has been screened at local and international events and will be screened in 2026.



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