This article explores children's expression of social exclusion during playtime in an ECEC-setting in Norway. Previous research emphasize that conflicts and rejections occur in peer-relationships at a very young age (Greve, 2007; Johansson, 1999; Palmadottir, 2017), and belonging to a peer-community can be described as an existential need (May, 2013; Yuval-Davis, 2011). Social exclusion is related to context, and it concerns both the child/children who exclude and the child/children who is excluded. Children's social exclusion is therefore connected to individuals' social experiences, their feeling of belonging and personal experience of communities and their borderwork, together with the content in different peer-communities and how children express borderwork. Social exclusion occurs when belonging and personal or collective borders are threatened (Yuval-Davis, 2011). The theoretical framework is based on the ECEC-setting as a perceptual field (Merleau-Ponty, 2002), the communities' different dimensions (Tjora, 2018), belonging and politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011) and social coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Vedeler, 2007).

The empirical material in this article is a part of the research project, Politics of Belonging (2018–2020), funded by NordForsk (85644) and the University of Stavanger. The data in this article consist of 134 video-recorded observations of children's (aged 4–5) interactions during playtime. The article is based on a hermeneutical approach (Bengtsson, 2013; Gadamer, 2010; Heidegger, 2007) and the different interactions are analyzed using a thematized content analysis (Jacobsen, 2015; Van Manen, 1990).

The children express three different forms of social exclusion (direct, indirect and planned), and social coping is expressed as action/problem-focused (e.g. negotiate/make suggestions) and/or emotion-focused (e.g. crying, withdraw/social withdrawal). The article
discusses children's personal and collective exclusions and social coping, the content and borderwork in different peer-communities, and how this can be related the ECEC-settings work and understanding of social exclusion and children's experiences of belonging.

**Keywords:** social exclusion; peer-communities; social coping; belonging