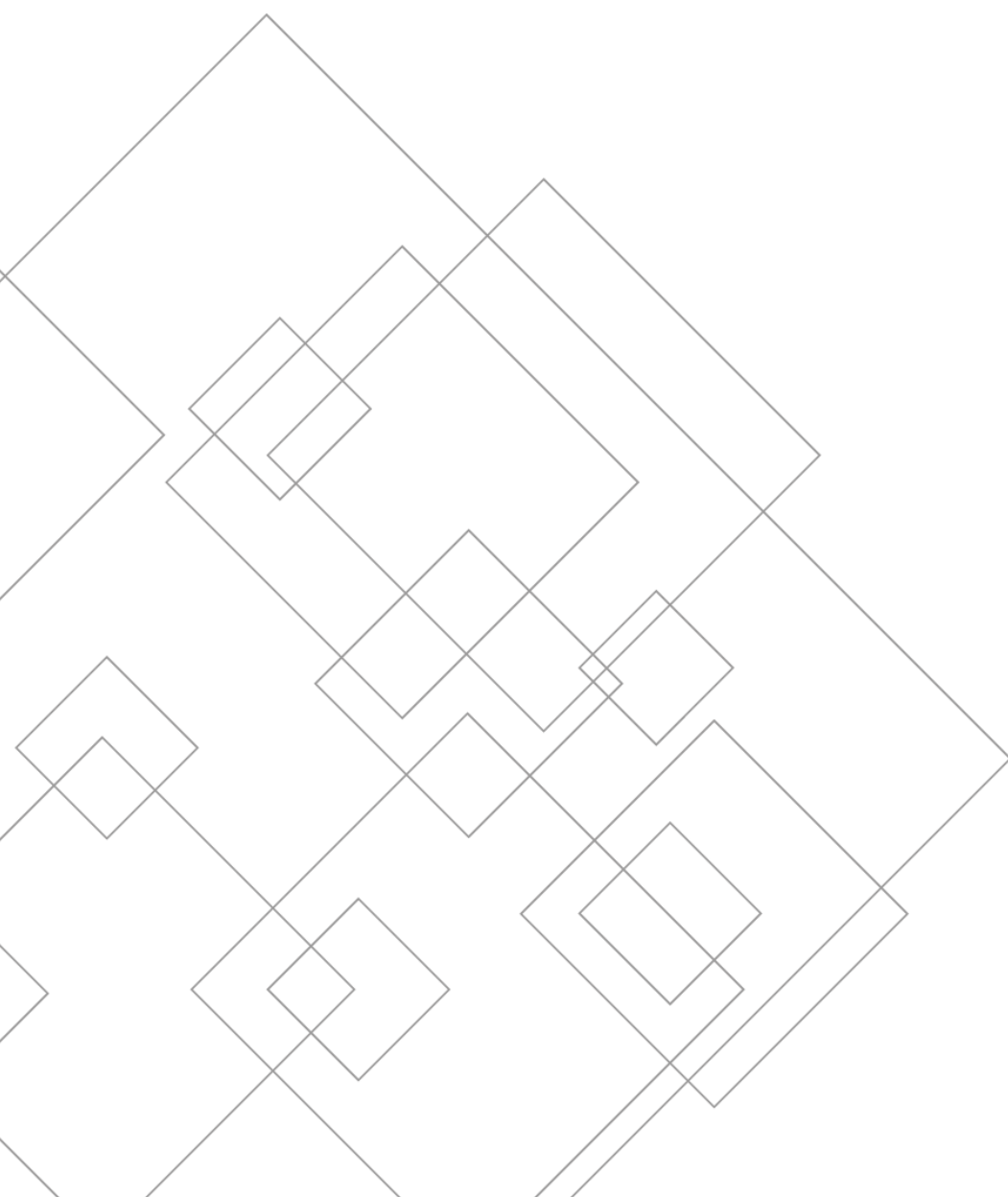


# Welcome to Norway



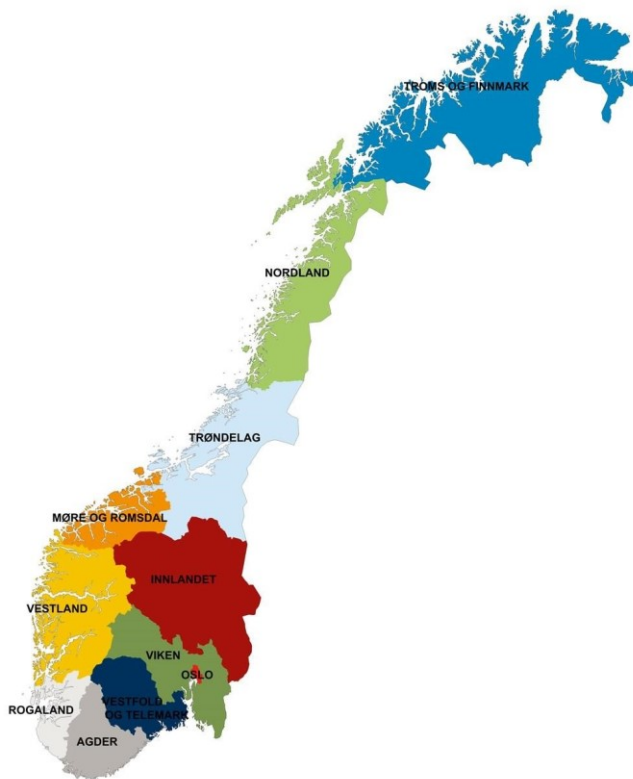
**IMDi**  
Integrerings- og  
mangfoldsdirektoratet

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# 1 NORWAY



Norway is a country with a Northern European country with a long coastline because of its elongated shape. On the west of the country is the North Atlantic Ocean, on the south, the North Sea. Norway has three neighbouring countries: Russia and Finland on the Northeast and Sweden in the East.

Norway is 385 170 km<sup>2</sup> in size including the islands of Svalbard and Jan Mayen. It is a narrow and extended country, stretching about 2,000 km from north to south. It will take you about 25 – 35 hours to drive by car from the south to the north or about 2-3 hours by plane. The widest part of the country (west to east) is about 431 kilometres while the narrowest part is just 1,6 kilometres.

Norway is mountainous, with several mountain ranges reaching from south to north. It is also known for its long coastline (2532 km). Oslo is the capital of Norway.

As at the beginning of January, 2020 the country is divided into 11 counties (*fylker*) and 356 municipalities (*kommuner*). There are around 100 cities in Norway.

## People

Norway has over 5.3 million inhabitants. The average population density is 17 inhabitants per square kilometre. The majority of the people in Norway are ethnic Norwegians. There are also Sámi and other national minority groups as well as more recent immigrant groups and their descendants. About 18.4 % of the population has immigrant background (immigrants and Norwegian-born with immigrant parents) The largest foreign groups are from Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Somalia, Pakistan, Iraq and Germany (Statistics Norway).

## Language

The official languages of Norway are Norwegian and Sami. Sami is spoken by the Sami people, who reside mainly in the north.

## Norwegian alphabets

Aa, Bb, Cc, Dd, Ee, Ff, Gg, Hh, Ii, Jj, Kk, Ll, Mm, Nn, Oo, Pp, Qq, Rr, Ss, Tt, Uu, Vv, Ww, Xx, Yy, Zz, Ææ, Øø, Åå

# 2 POLITICAL SYSTEM

Norway is a democracy and a constitutional monarchy. The constitution was adopted on 17 May 1814. The king has no political power. The power in Norway is divided into three independent entities: the legislative power, the parliament (Stortinget), the judicial power (the courts) and the executive power (the government).

## Rights

Freedom of speech is supported by the constitution and it is a cherished value and practiced in Norway. People are allowed to express their opinions freely without fear of being punished. However, there is still some limit as to what one can say and not say, e.g. encouraging others to use violence is a serious offence. It is illegal to discriminate or intimidate anyone. Human rights principles are enshrined in Norwegian laws,

and the principle of equality is an important foundation in Norwegian society. All people living in Norway have equal rights and duties regardless of gender, religion, language, ethnic background, sexual orientation or other status.

## A Welfare State & Taxes

If you have a job that brings you a regular income, taxes are deducted. Everybody with an income and/or assets has to pay a part of his income/assets to the government in the form of taxes.

The tax is a percentage that is deducted from the person's salary. The higher your income, the higher the taxes you will pay. The income from the taxes is used to cover public expenses such as schools, education, health, infrastructure, social security, etc. The tax system fuels the welfare state.

[Information about taxes is available here.](#)

There is a Social Welfare Office (NAV) in most municipalities and online at [www.nav.no](http://www.nav.no), that provides job assistance.

## National and public holidays

Saturday and Sunday are weekend for schools and in the public sector. Most supermarkets and shopping centres will close on Sundays and public holidays.

# 3 EDUCATION

The government believes that **“Children and young people must have an equal right to education, regardless of where they live, gender, social and cultural background or special needs”**.

The Norwegian school system is divided into: elementary school (**Grunnskole**), which is divided into primary (**Barneskole**), and lower secondary (**Ungdomsskole**); upper secondary (**Videregående skole**), and university colleges and universities (**Høyskoler and Universiteter**).

## Recognition of Educational Diplomas and Degrees acquired outside Norway

Diplomas, degrees and transcripts of records from foreign educational institutions, in order to be recognized by many employers, need to be evaluated and granted general recognition by the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education ([NOKUT](#)).

This process can take time, and you might not get full recognition of your foreign education. This is, to some extent, due to differences in the education systems. Make sure your documentation is sent in for evaluation as soon as possible.

Automatic recognition of certain degrees – a quicker alternative: NOKUT offers automatic recognition of certain degrees from Ukraine. Automatic recognition is a standardized statement about which Norwegian degree a foreign degree may be equated to. The statement may be downloaded and used immediately, without filing an application for recognition.

## 4 EMPLOYMENT

The Norwegian government would like to ensure that Ukrainian refugees have a good stay in Norway, and for the refugees to be able to quickly participate in the Norwegian society, and adults as soon as possible be employed or be engaged in activities.

Persons who are granted collective protection are allowed to take ordinary paid work in Norway. This presupposes that the person has been registered by the police, and that the UDI has granted collective protection.

[Job vacancies in Norway: Where to find job vacancies in Norway?](#) (nav.no)

Great value is placed on being employed in Norway. Both men and women take part actively in working life.

While working in Norway it is mandatory for you to be given a written employment contract by your employer, regardless of sector or type of work. This applies whether you are employed in a permanent or temporary position, and whether you work full-time or part-time.

The labour laws in Norway state that employment is as a rule permanent ("fast"), and the contract is valid until terminated by you or your employer. There are special exceptions to this rule, such as working in a permanent employee's place for a set period ("vikar"), or that the tasks are temporary in nature and have an end-date. You can read more about your rights and which regulations employees and employers must abide to while working in Norway at the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority.

Unions and employer organisations play an important role in the well-regulated labour market in Norway. It is common to join a union while working in Norway, and many employers encourage employees to do so. Over half of all labourers are members of a union under LO, YS, Unio or Akademikerne. Salary increases, rights, working hours and other labour agreements are negotiated and agreed upon each year in a centralised "Three-part cooperation" between the labour organisations, employee organisations and the government as broker between them. It is illegal to hinder anyone from joining a union.

Maternity and parental leave as well as childcare arrangements make it possible for women with children to participate in working life.

Norway, like most countries, experiences periods when it is difficult to find gainful employment. In periods of high unemployment, it helps to have good qualifications, but there is still no guarantee that you will find a job. It is more difficult for newly arrived foreigners to get a job than for people who are integrated into the job

market. It is particularly job seekers with no or little experience from the job market, who may spend more time in finding a job.

Many employers require employees to have some knowledge of Norwegian.

## **Tax system**

If you have income, taxes are deducted. The income from the taxes is used to cover public expenses such as schools, education, health, infrastructure, social security, etc. The tax system secures the vast benefits of our welfare state.

## **Banking system**

Holding a bank account is essential in Norway. The account is used for receiving money (example Salaries), for paying bills, and to make savings. It is also possible to send money to another account in Norway or abroad from the account.

## **Paying bills**

It is essential that bills are payed on time to avoid additional fees.

# **5 FAMILY STRUCTURE**

## **Family and marriage**

While marriage is the most common form of cohabitation, many people live together and have children without being married. Divorce is accepted by law as well as socially. Both men and women have the right to divorce. Same-sex couples may enter into marriage and adopt children.

The minimum age to marry is 18 years for both men and women. Marrying someone underage is punishable by up to 4 years in prison.

## **Women's rights**

Norwegian society aims at full equality between genders in all areas of life for example in the family, at school, in the working life, in public decision-making, welfare, religion, culture and so forth. Women have the right to divorce, own and inherit property, have their own bank accounts, and get credit or loan on equal basis as men.

There are laws that promote equality between sexes. Women's active role in the working life outside home and their economic independence is seen as being



important for achieving full equality between men and women. In the family, men and women are expected to share household work. Women and men have the same responsibilities as parents, whether they are married or not. It is typical for women living in Norway to participate actively in the social, recreational and sports activities outside home.

Women have the right to make decisions concerning their own bodies. Abortion is legal and contraception is easily accessible for both sexes. Sexual relations are to take place on mutual consent.

## **Children's rights**

Children and youth under 18 have certain rights guaranteed by law in Norway. These rights belong to all children no matter whether they are a boy or girl, what is their culture or religion, where their family comes from, what colour their skin is, whether they are healthy or sick.

There is no reason to treat any child unfairly on any basis.

All children in Norway have the right to:

- ◆ go to school
- ◆ play, have friends and rest
- ◆ receive information, say their opinion and to be heard
- ◆ feel safe and to be protected from any form of harm
- ◆ be protected from child labour

In summary, all children have the right to as good and healthy life as possible and have their basic needs met. In all decisions concerning children, the best interest of the child is the guiding principle to be followed.

## **Upbringing of children**

It is typical to involve children from a very young age in the family's decision-making process on issues that affect them. Parents are expected to listen to what children have to say and take into account their opinions. Decisions are to be taken by parents keeping in mind the best interest of the child.

All children need discipline, but it is important to keep in mind that, even mild forms of physical punishment are forbidden in Norway and can lead to fines or imprisonment and in the involvement of the Child Welfare Service. Parents who face difficulties in the upbringing of their children can ask for advice and support from the municipality and Child Welfare Service.

Immigrants participating in the Introduction Program are given parental guidance.

## **Child Welfare Services**

The task of the Child Welfare Service is to help children who are in a difficult situation. In Norway, the Child Welfare Service may intervene if it feels that a child is at risk. Public employees are obliged to report suspected child abuse or neglect to Child Welfare Service.

# **6 LAW AND ORDER**

Law governs the Norwegian society like all other societies. All the people living in Norway are required to uphold the rules and the laws that prevail.

The following constitute serious offences in Norway:

- ◆ Child and spousal abuse
- ◆ Forced marriage
- ◆ Rape (including spousal rape I.e. forcing to have sex with your spouse)
- ◆ Polygamy
- ◆ Social welfare fraud
- ◆ Purchase, sale and use of illicit drugs (e.g. khat, cocaine, pot, hashish)
- ◆ Wilful tax evasion (black market work)
- ◆ Sexual harassment and sexual relations with a minor (below 16 years)
- ◆ Purchasing of sex
- ◆ Forgery and falsification of documents
- ◆ Driving a car without a valid license
- ◆ Driving under the influence of alcohol (>0.2‰)
- ◆ Recruiting people to join armed conflicts
- ◆ Recruiting people to use violence on others because of differences in opinion

## **Violence**

The use of violence and causing physical injury to any person is illegal in Norway. It is also forbidden to threaten someone with violence. This also applies to family

members. All violence, both inside and outside the family, is against the law. The law is particularly strict with regard to violence against women and children. The same applies to psychological violence like extreme control, mental abuse, etc.

## **Tobacco**

- ◆ It is illegal to sell tobacco to persons under 18
- ◆ It is illegal to smoke in all public areas, even some outdoor public spaces. It also illegal to smoke inside any restaurants, cafes, bars or other dining establishments. Some landlords will not allow smoking inside; if so, this would be specified in the contract.

## **Alcohol**

- ◆ It is illegal to sell or serve alcohol without a permit.
- ◆ It is illegal to sell or serve alcohol to underage persons.

## **Other drugs**

It is illegal to store, buy, receive free, sell, give, send, fabricate or bring in or out of the country any kind of drugs. This includes cocaine, heroin, marijuana, amphetamine, etc.

## **Health care options**

There are both public and private health care system in Norway.

The public health care system provides immunization, hospitalization, laboratory tests, surgery and reference to a specialist when necessary. The state covers a large part of the costs through tax collections. The private health care system is not covered by the state and is often expensive.

## **Fees**

If/When you go to a doctor or buy medicine, you will have to pay a certain amount of money every time. When you reach a certain amount set by the Government (changes every year), The state (HELFO) covers the rest of the costs.

## **Emergency cases**

In case of an emergency dial 113 and state your name, your address, and the type of emergency. Remember that if you cannot speak Norwegian nor English, you

should simply say "ambulanse" and then remain on the line. Emergency care is provided regardless of the patient's ability to pay. Ambulance services provide transportation and medical assistance to people who are in need of the emergency medical care. Ambulance and emergency services should be used only when absolutely necessary.

➔ **It is possible to call 113 even if you do not have a sim card or do not have credit on your card.**

## 7 HOUSING

As a refugee, you will be provided with accommodation immediately upon your arrival. The housing standards may vary in the different municipalities. Some municipalities offer fully furnished houses and some just the basics; some might have used furniture, some might have new.

Sometimes single people may have to share a house due to lack of apartments in receiving municipalities. Each single person will have his own bedroom but will be sharing kitchen, bathroom and toilets with the others. It is required that all will agree on a set of rules, like cleaning the common areas once a week.

If you are not satisfied with your assigned housing, you may find your own accommodation. Make sure you are able to pay the rent.

**Safety:** There must be smoke detectors in the house. There should also be a fire extinguisher in good working condition at an easily accessible place.

## 8 THE NORWEGIAN MUNICIPALITY

Norway is divided into 356 municipalities. One of these municipalities has opened its doors for you and you will have a close relationship with this municipality. The municipality is responsible to provide an introduction program for you. In the municipalities, refugees are assigned a contact person who will assist you your resettlement in the municipality. Such tasks can include:

- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Information about the local health system
- ◆ Assistance with application for kindergarten
- ◆ Responsibility for the introduction program

- ◆ Advice regarding economy

## 9 THE INTRODUCTION PROGRAMME AND LANGUAGE TUITION

### Introduction programme

Anyone aged 18-55 with temporary collective protection who is resident in a municipality by agreement with the integration authorities is entitled to participate in the introduction programme if they wish to.

Participation in the introduction programme may be combined with employment. Employment may take place either outside the hours during which a person participates in the introduction programme or as part of the programme itself.

The introduction programme may include work experience or education, and language tuition in Norwegian or English. Participants with children aged under 18 must participate in parental guidance. The introduction programme may also include ordinary part-time work, a placement with an employer, career guidance and participation in a civic life programme.

Participants in the introduction programme will receive a financial subsistence allowance.

The duration of the programme will vary according to the level of education the person already has.

If a person applies for financial social assistance or requires NAV follow-up in order to get a job, the NAV office may refer the person to participate in the introduction programme.

### Language tuition

Anyone who has been granted temporary collective protection is also entitled to Norwegian tuition. Municipalities are obliged to provide Norwegian tuition to anyone who would like such tuition. Such persons are entitled to sit one free Norwegian examination, meaning that anyone who is required to document their Norwegian skills will have the opportunity to do so. Municipalities must ensure that participants are given the opportunity to sit a final examination in Norwegian free of charge.

If a participant on an introduction programme does not wish to receive Norwegian tuition as part of the programme, but would prefer to learn English instead, the municipality concerned is obliged to provide English tuition.

## 10 PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

### The police

The police exists to enforce law and order as well as to protect individuals while the military's role is limited to national defence. The military plays no domestic role. One is free to approach the police for help anytime.

The police does also have some administrative tasks in Norway such as:

- ◆ Passports
- ◆ Residency permits
- ◆ others

## 11 EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- ◆ In case of **fire** call **110**
- ◆ To call the **police** call **112**
- ◆ In case of **medical emergencies** call **113**

### Use of Interpreters

Non-Norwegian speaking residents have the right to demand the use of interpreters in all encounters with the public services if language differences pose a serious communication barrier. Use of children or other family members as interpreters is not allowed.

The use of interpreters in the public sector is regulated from 1 January 2022 in a separate law: Act on public bodies' responsibility for the use of interpreters etc.

### When using an interpreter

- ◆ The interpreter will interpret everything that is said. He or she should not leave out, change or add anything.
- ◆ The interpreter must not provide his/her opinion or advice.

- ◆ The interpreter operates under very strict rules of confidentiality.
- ◆ The interpreter is neutral.

## Relevant websites

- [www.regjeringen.no](http://www.regjeringen.no)
- [www.udi.no](http://www.udi.no)
- [www.imdi.no](http://www.imdi.no)
- [www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no)
- [www.norge.no](http://www.norge.no)