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Report for Norway to the OECD

Anne Balke Staver, Kristian Rose Tronstad, Mathilde Uttersrud Hjelle and Vilde Hernes

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Abstract: Each year, Norway contributes to the OECD's reporting system on changes in migration flows, migration policies, and integration policies. This report covers developments from 2025 and the first half of 2026. The reports from Norway and other member countries serve as an important source for the preparation of the international report International Migration Outlook.

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Preface

This report has been commissioned by the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) as Norway's official contribution to the OECD's SOPEMI network, which monitors international migration trends and policies. The report provides a comprehensive overview of Norway's migration and integration efforts, addressing key developments, policy changes, and statistical analyses of migration. It covers the period January 2025 up to July 2026, and includes updates on selected key developments from fall 2026.

The project was led by Anne Balke Staver, who also served as the editor of the report. Significant contributions have been made by Kristian Rose Tronstad (chapter 3 and 4), Mathilde Uttersrud Hjelle (chapters 1.4 and 2.2.6-2.3.3) and Vilde Hernes (chapter 1.5.3). The remainder of the report was authored by Staver. She would additionally like to extend thanks to Marianne Millstein for useful input.

We extend our thanks to the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Ministry of Research and Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, and the Directorate of Immigration for valuable input on parts of the report relevant to their remit. We have also relied on the work of the Directorate of Integration and Diversity, whose staff authored last year's report.

It is our hope that this publication serves as a useful resource for policymakers, researchers, and others interested in understanding Norway's migration and integration policy.

Oslo, November 2026

Kristian Tronstad
Head of research

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Summary

Migration Trends

Immigration to Norway continued to fall in 2024 and 2025. This continues the decrease from the very high levels seen in 2022 and 2023. Registered immigration was 66,100 in 2024 and 55,200 in 2025, down from 86,600 in 2023. Emigration stayed more stable, at around 32,000 to 34,000 per year. As a result, net migration fell sharply: from 52,600 in 2023 to 34,100 in 2024 and 22,300 in 2025. This is a decrease of more than half in two years.

The fall in overall migration is closely linked to displacement from Ukraine. Immigration of Ukrainian citizens fell from 20,300 in 2024 to 12,800 in 2025, while emigration of Ukrainian citizens more than doubled, from 2,400 in 2024 to 5,500 in 2025. Apart from Ukraine, the top source countries of immigration to Norway by citizenship in 2025 were Poland, Sweden, Syria, Germany and India.

In 2025, family immigration became the largest category of non-Nordic immigration for the first time since before the war in Ukraine. It made up 31.7% of the total, up from 23.3% in 2024 and 20.5% in 2023. Protection continued its steep fall: from 50.9% of total immigration in 2023, to 43.9% in 2024, to 33.8% in 2025. Labour immigration remained at around a quarter of the total.

The number of police-executed forced returns has remained relatively stable over the past several years, with 2,388 in 2025.

The foreign-born population, measured as having a country of origin other than Norway, has increased more than six-fold since 1990 and more than doubled since 2010, reaching 987,120 as of 1 January 2026. From 2025 to 2026 its growth has slowed to two percent, after several years of higher growth. Ukraine has become the second-largest country-of-origin group (after Poland), a sharp rise from 36th place as recently as 2020.

The number of Norwegian-born to two foreign-born (immigrant) parents has grown more than thirteen-fold since 1990, from just over 17,000 (0.4% of the population) to 238,507 as of January 2026 (4.2% of the population).

Key Policy Changes in 2025 and 2026

During 2025-2026, Norway made several significant changes to its immigration and integration policies.

Most notably, during 2025 requirements for a permanent residence permit were amended and tightened. Instead of participating in language and social studies classes and passing tests in social studies and Norwegian at A1 level in the CEFR framework, applicants must now complete a test of oral Norwegian at A2 level and a test in social studies. Course participation is no longer required. This amendment facilitates automated processing. Additionally, requirements must generally be met at the time of application.

Labour immigration policies have remained in place, but the government is preparing to consider labour immigration reform and has named a commission which will investigate future labour market needs and immigration policies. It has strengthened efforts to prevent social dumping and protect workers at risk. During 2026, rules for tuition fees for international students were amended and many universities have reduced these significantly. Practice changes were also made to make it easier for doctoral students to seek skilled work in Norway after graduation, to facilitate recruitment of researchers.

The income requirement for sponsors in family immigration cases was increased. Additionally, the exemption from application fees where the sponsor is a child was revoked, and child sponsors are now eligible to pay an application fee amounting to half of that for adults. These amendments should be understood in light of debates over family reunification possibilities for unaccompanied minors.

In the area of international protection, an important issue during the period has been preparation for implementation of those parts of the European Pact on Asylum and Migration which are applicable in Norway due to the Schengen cooperation and “Dublin framework” for responsibility for asylum case processing. The resettlement quota has been further reduced, due to the existing pressure on municipal services from the large influx of displaced persons from Ukraine.

Norway has continued to provide temporary collective protection to displaced persons from Ukraine in accordance with national legislation, but eligibility has been further restricted. Since 2024 Norway has designated “safe zones” in Ukraine and persons from these areas no longer qualify for temporary collective protection. In April 2026, Norway largely stopped providing temporary collective protection for men between the ages of 18-60. Persons who do not qualify for temporary collective protection can have their asylum claim considered on individual grounds. Such claims are in large part refused. Ukrainians may receive repatriation support.

Some adjustments have been made to the Introduction Programme for refugees, both with regard to the target group, length and content. While temporary amendments for Displaced persons from Ukraine have been phased out, some of these changes have been mainstreamed and made permanent. In particular, there is a clear orientation toward practice in the workplace. A new integration declaration was also introduced in 2026, which will be signed by applicants from January 2027.

New strategies have been adopted in several areas: combating trafficking, increasing returns, and preventing racism. Norwegian development assistance for refugees and affected host populations is significantly oriented toward Ukraine and surrounding countries, through the Nansen Support Programme.

Public Debate and Opinions on Immigration

Norway held Parliamentary elections in September 2025, and the election campaign was dominated by issues concerning cost of living, inequality and taxation. Immigration and integration issues have been higher on the political agenda during the year following the election.

The government presented a new governing agenda, The Government’s Plan for Norway, in December 2025. The plan describes the objective of a "controlled, fair and sustainable" immigration policy, explicitly stating that Norway "cannot receive more than we are able to integrate", and outlines an integration policy with clear expectations and requirements. This question about integration capacity has been a recurring feature of the debate.

A prominent theme of discussion has been secondary migration among refugees, that is, refugees relocating from the municipality where they were first settled to another municipality, often a larger urban centre. The government has amended its criteria for refugee dispersal and settlement to take these patterns into account, and is considering legal options for restricting secondary migration.

Family immigration has been high on the agenda. A particular flashpoint has concerned family reunification for unaccompanied minors, even though there are relatively few such

instances. A majority made up of opposition parties in Parliament wishes to further increase the income requirement for family reunification to around NOK 500,000, and would also want this threshold to apply to minors, who are exempted today. The government has argued against extending the income requirement to this group on grounds of refugees' right to family reunification.

Domestic security concerns have been high on the agenda, especially in relation to young persons implicated in international criminal networks and recruited to carry out violent acts.

Ukraine remains high on the agenda. After two years of declining arrivals, Norway saw a renewed increase in Ukrainian arrivals in autumn 2025, driven in part by a change in Ukrainian legislation permitting men aged 18–22 to leave the country. Norway has in 2026 restricted collective protection for Ukrainian men between 18-60.

The most recent Integration Barometer survey, which measures attitudes toward immigration and integration among a representative 3,000-person sample, finds a marked shift toward more restrictive public attitudes. The share of the population who think Norway should admit more immigrants has fallen to 17 per cent, the lowest level recorded since the question was first asked in 2017. Attitudes differ between different kinds of immigration, however, and a majority considers labour migration to be a net positive while attitudes toward asylum seekers are more negative. The survey finds a growing generational and gender divide, with a particularly marked restrictive shift among young men. Even with these restrictive changes, attitudes in Norway remain relatively positive in a European perspective.

1 Major developments in migration policies

1.1 Migration to Norway

Norway has three main legal migration pathways:

- Citizens of Nordic countries enjoy free mobility within The Nordic Passport Union. Established in 1954 and implemented in 1958, the passport union enables citizens of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden to travel freely across borders without a passport or visa. [1] This agreement also allows Nordic citizens to live, work, and study in any member country without requiring permits.
- Citizens of EU and EFTA countries benefit from the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, which facilitates free movement between member states through the implementation in Norwegian law of EU Directive 2004/38[2]. This pathway provides broad rights for EU/EEA nationals to live, work, and study in Norway. They must register with authorities if staying longer than three months but do not require a work permit.
- Third-Country Nationals: Non-EU/EEA nationals must apply for specific permits to live or work in Norway. These permits include work, family, education, and protection permits. In most cases, applicants are required to apply before coming to Norway, and they may require an entry visa.

1.1.1 Legislation

The *Immigration Act* of 15 May 2008 regulates the right of foreign citizens to enter, reside and work in Norway. The *Immigration Act* and the corresponding *Immigration Regulation* entered into force on 1 January 2010. Both the Immigration Act and Regulation have gone through significant revisions, especially following the high arrivals of asylum seekers in 2015.

According to the regulations, following an individual assessment, citizens of third countries[3] may qualify for one of the following main residence permit categories:

- Labour, for persons who have a concrete job offer
- Family, for persons with close family ties to somebody residing in Norway
- Students, trainees, and participants in an exchange programme
- Refugees and persons who qualify for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds

A permanent residence permit is normally granted after three or five years of continuous residence with a permit qualifying for permanent residence. See 1.7 for more.

[1] Schengen- og Dublin-samarbeidet – regjeringen.no
[2] These rights apply to citizens of EU Member States, along with three EFTA countries—Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway—form the EEA Contracting Parties, commonly referred to as the EEA States. To differentiate from Switzerland, which is also an EFTA member but not part of the EEA Agreement and has a separate agreement with the EU covering free movement.
[3] Countries not covered by the EEA Agreement or the EFTA Convention.

1.1.2 Actors

In Norway, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security is responsible for most aspects of immigration policies, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion is responsible for integration policies as well as labour immigration policy.

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) processes applications for residence permits, permanent residence and citizenship. It is also responsible for overseeing asylum reception centres, and it makes decisions on rejection and expulsion of foreigners. Finally, it is the appeals unit for decisions made by the Foreign service or the Police (e.g. visa issuance and certain types of immigration decisions delegated to the Police). The Immigration Appeals Board (UNE) processes appeal against UDI's decisions. The National Police Immigration Service (PU) completes initial registration of asylum claims, investigates asylum seekers' travel routes and identities, and implements final negative decisions. It coordinates deportations from Norway and currently operates Norway's Immigration Detention Centre.

While UDI oversees and finances reception centres, their operation is contracted out to municipalities, private providers or NGOs. Some of the centres are given additional resources to provide suitable living conditions for asylum seekers with special needs. Unaccompanied minor asylum seekers between the ages of 15 to 18, are accommodated either in special sections of a regular reception centre or in a separate reception centre. As of July 2022, reception centres for unaccompanied minors are supervised by the County Governor (*Statsforvalteren*), rather than by UDI. The child welfare authorities are responsible for accommodating unaccompanied minors younger than 15 years in centres financed by and run under the supervision of the Ministry of Children and Families.

The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) is responsible for settling refugees in municipalities and coordinating integration measures, which are further detailed in chapter 2.

1.2 Labour migration

Third country nationals who wish to work or operate their own business in Norway must obtain a valid residence permit. A general requirement for all work-related residence permits is that wage and working conditions for the job in question should correspond to those for Norwegian workers in similar positions.

The main categories of work-related permits for immigrants from outside the EU/EFTA member countries are:

- *Skilled worker*: Individuals with higher education or vocational training equivalent to Norwegian upper secondary education may qualify for a residence permit, provided their skills are relevant to the job. New permits are issued without a labour market test unless the annual quota of 6,000 permits is exceeded. Skilled workers can sponsor family members for reunification or joint immigration to Norway, and they may become eligible for permanent residence after three years. They may change employers without a new permit if they still work in the same type of position.
- *A skilled service supplier, posted worker, or independent contractor* performs temporary assignments in Norway for a foreign employer or their own business abroad. Independent contractors work under contracts with Norwegian establishments. They may sponsor family members for reunification if the assignment exceeds six months, or if the skilled service supplier is employed in an international

company, but they do not qualify for permanent residence. Workers employed and paid by a Norwegian-registered employer are classified as skilled workers.

- *Skilled Self-Employed Persons*: Skilled self-employed individuals with essential roles in establishing or operating a business in Norway may qualify for a residence permit. They can sponsor family members for reunification and apply for permanent residence.
- *Seasonal Workers*: Permits are issued for up to six months for specific seasonal jobs with no eligibility for family reunification or permanent residence. Permits are tied to a specific job and employer.
- *Jobseeker Permits*: Researchers and recent graduates from Norwegian institutions can obtain a 12-month permit to seek employment as a skilled worker. During this period, they can work in any job but must meet financial requirements for the permit. Skilled workers from visa-free countries may obtain a 6-month job seeker permit (during which they cannot work), and subsequently apply for a skilled work permit in-country if they succeed in finding relevant employment.
- *Students*: Students with a study permit can work part-time (up to 20 hours weekly) during term and full-time during ordinary holidays.

The overarching framework of labour migration policies in Norway has remained relatively stable for many years, but some adjustments were made in 2025, and the government is preparing to consider labour migration policies more broadly.

Adjusted salary thresholds

The Directorate of Immigration revises salary thresholds for residence permits for skilled workers regularly in order to reflect current wage levels. Wage levels as of September 2026 are as follows:

- In sectors with a collective agreement, the wage must be in line with the collective agreement.
- If there is no collective agreement, the salary must be at least NOK 624,700 per year pre-tax if the position requires a master's degree, and at least NOK 545,400 if the position requires a bachelor's degree.[4]

Action plan to combat social dumping and work-related crime results in new legal provisions for foreign workers

In August 2025 the government renewed its Action plan to combat social dumping and work-related crime for another three-year period. Key measures include strengthened rights for employee of digital platforms, plans to amend the immigration rules to prevent exploitation of foreign workers, and stricter penalties for employers in cases of exploitation.[5] Following on from this latter measure, Parliament voted in amendments to the Immigration Act Section 108a on 1 June 2026. The Section now has expanded and stricter penal provisions against the exploitation of foreign workers who are in a particularly vulnerable situation because they lack a legal residence permit or because they have a temporary residence permit.[6] The new

[4] Directorate of Immigration - Pay and working conditions in Norway – UDI. Because these thresholds are set by UDI and not enshrined in the Immigration Regulations, it is difficult to find historical data. The numbers which are current as of September 2026 are higher than the threshold reported in the previous SOPEMI report, reflecting an adjustment in spring 2026.
[5] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Kraftigere innsats mot arbeidslivskriminalitet og sosial dumping - regjeringen.no.
[6] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Status for oppfølging av handlingsplan mot sosial dumping og arbeidslivskriminalitet - regjeringen.no.

rules entered into force 15 September 2026, and offer stronger legal protections for individuals subject to exploitation that fall outside of the scope of existing human trafficking legislation.

Recent research underlines the importance of these interventions. Researchers at Fafo were commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion to map severe exploitation in the "grey areas" of the Norwegian labour market, looking at phenomena such as social dumping and trafficking in persons for the purposes of forced labour. While it is impossible to quantify the scope of these phenomena, they estimate that around 100,000 workers could be at risk, especially where they are in a situation of dependency. The report emphasises the importance of non-profit organisations and unions, and that access to housing and basic financial support is important to make it possible to break out of dependency and possibly enter into legal proceedings against employers.[7]

Facilitations for doctoral candidates seeking employment in Norway

Doctoral candidates who complete their studies in Norway can apply to remain in Norway to seek skilled employment on a specific job seeker permit with maximum 12 months' duration (Immigration Regulations Section 6-29). On June 17 2025 the Ministry of Justice and Public Security instructed the Directorate of Immigration to amend its practice with regard to the income requirement for doctoral candidates applying for this permit, so that applicants would have to demonstrate adequate means of subsistence for three months rather than twelve months.[8] The purpose of this amendment is to facilitate the international recruitment of researchers, and it is in line with the objectives outlined in the White Paper *Secure knowledge in an uncertain world* which the Ministry of Research and Education presented on 21 March 2025. The White Paper concerns the future of the Norwegian research system.[9]

New commission will investigate future labour migration needs

On April 26, 2026, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion announced that it would constitute an expert commission which will investigate Norway's future labour immigration needs, consider experiences from other European countries and propose possible changes to labour immigration policy.[10] The Commission was formally appointed by the King in Council on 5 June 2026, and it includes members from organisations in working life as well as academic experts. It is led by Thomas von Brasch, who is head of financial prognoses in Statistics Norway. The commission will complete its report by the end of 2027.[11]

The Ministry of Labour and Social inclusion has also recently commissioned several research projects on labour immigration policy, including a comparative report on labour immigration policy in various European destination states expected in early 2027.[12]

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[7] Annette Brunovskis et al (2026) Gråsoner i arbeidsutnytting: Mellom sosial dumping og menneskehandel til tvangsarbeid, Fafo. Research report. A comprehensive summary is available in English.
[8] Ministry of Justice and Public Security GI-06/2025 – Instruks om underholdskravet for doktorgradskandidater som skal være arbeidssøkere – praktisering av utlendingsloven § 58 (krav til underhold og bolig) - regjeringen.no.
[9] Ministry of Research and Education Meld. St. 14 (2024–2025) Report to the Storting - Sikker kunnskap i en usikker verden - regjeringen.no,.
[10] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Regjeringen vil ha en full gjennomgang av behovet for arbeidsinnvandring - regjeringen.no (press release). The legislative changes (Lov om endringer i utlendingsloven mv. (straff for utilbørlig utnyttelse av utlendinger) follow from Prop. 80L (2025-2026) - regjeringen.no (Bill).
[11] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Arbeidsinnvandringsutvalget er klart - regjeringen.no.
[12] Arbeidsinnvandringspolitikk i utvalgte land – Fafo.no

1.3 Bilateral agreements on the recruitment of foreign workers

Norway does not currently maintain formal bilateral agreements specifically for recruiting foreign workers. Recruitment primarily occurs through the European Economic Area (EEA) framework, which facilitates the free movement of labour within the EU/EEA. For workers originating from outside the EU/EEA, Norway relies on its national immigration and employment legislation rather than specific bilateral arrangements, requiring applicants to obtain work or residence permits designed for skilled workers or other defined categories.

1.4 International/foreign student policy

International students from EU/EFTA countries planning to stay in Norway for more than three months register with the police.[13] Registration is free for citizens of the EU/EFTA. Admission to an accredited institution or upper secondary school is required, along with proof of self-sufficiency for themselves and accompanying family members. A European Health Insurance Card or private health insurance is mandatory.[14]

Non-EU/EFTA students must apply for a study permit, which costs NOK 5,400 for those over 18 and NOK 2,700 for minors.[15] Applicants must be admitted to a full-time programme at a university, specialised university institution or college and demonstrate sufficient financial means, currently set at NOK 15,488 per month or NOK 170,368 per academic year (excluding tuition)[16]. Students with a study permit can work part-time for up to 20 hours per week and full-time during ordinary holidays. After graduation, they may apply for a temporary 12-month permit to seek skilled employment.

Qualified skilled workers needing additional education or practical training for professional recognition in Norway can apply for a residence permit for up to two years to fulfil the necessary requirements.

Changes to tuition fees for international students

Since the autumn semester of 2023, incoming international degree students in higher education from outside the EU/EEA area have been required to pay tuition fees in Norway. Universities and university colleges have been obliged to charge fees that cover the full cost of the education. The result has been high tuition fees and a decrease in the number of international students in Norway. A sharp decline in the number of incoming international students sparked debate among higher education institutions, as well as concerns about Norway's ability to attract foreign talent.

Following these discussions, the Government presented a legislative proposal to remove the requirement of cost-covering tuition fees. Changes to the Universities and University Colleges Act were subsequently adopted by the Parliament and entered into force from August 1st 2026. The changes give the higher education institutions, from the autumn semester of 2026, increased flexibility in determining and lowering the tuition fee levels for international students from outside of the EU/EEA. Universities and university colleges will

[13] Directorate of Immigration, Students who are EU/EEA nationals – UDI.no
[14] NOKUT, Higher education institutions – Nokut.no
[15] Directorate of Immigration, Fees – UDI.no
[16] Directorate of Immigration, Study permit – UDI.no

have to cover the difference between the old, high tuition fee and the new, lower tuition fee themselves.

Several universities have already announced cuts in international students' fees for the 2026-27 academic year, such as the University of Agder, the University of Stavanger, the University of South-Eastern Norway, Oslo Metropolitan University and the Norwegian University of Life Sciences. Others, such as the University of Oslo, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) and the University of Bergen have decided not to lower their tuition fees in 2026.

Amended regulations for folk high schools

Folk high schools are residential schools where students are not graded through exams and do not receive a degree or formal qualification for attending. International students pay the same tuition fees as Norwegian students. Media outlets have reported a recent growing interest in Norwegian folk high schools among international students.[17]

As of August 2025, new legislation governing Norwegian folk high schools entered into force, including a new Regulation to the Folk High School Act. Section 5 of the Regulation states that no more than ten per cent of the students at a folk high school may be citizens of countries outside the EEA and the United Kingdom. The restriction only applies to foreign nationals needing a study permit to reside in Norway. The Ministry may grant exemptions in special cases. A separate provision applies to Svalbard, where no more than ten per cent of the students may be internationals, regardless of nationality grouping.[18]

1.5 International protection

1.5.1 Asylum seekers and refugees

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) processes asylum applications in accordance with the Immigration Act and the Immigration Regulations. A refugee within the definition of the Act (Section 28) is a foreigner who falls under Article 1A of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, *or* who is entitled to protection pursuant to Norway's other international obligations, such as the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR).

Individuals who seek asylum must present themselves in Norway or at its border and demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution on account of one of the so-called convention reasons (ethnicity, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group), *or* face a real risk of being subjected to the death penalty, torture, or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment upon return to their home country or country of residence. This entails that the refugee definition in Norwegian legislation generally encompasses persons who qualify for subsidiary protection in accordance with EU legislation (Qualification Regulation 2024/1347). If the applicant does not meet these criteria, UDI will consider whether they qualify for a residence permit on humanitarian grounds.

[17] Kraftig økning av kinesiske søkere til folkehøgskoler i Norge - aftenposten.no (newspaper article)
[18] Directorate of Education and Training, § 5 Utenlandske elever - udir.no

The 2024 proposal to enshrine the right to seek asylum, made by a group of six members of Parliament, was referred to the Parliament's Constitutional committee in October 2025, and has not yet been debated.[19]

Implementation of the EU Pact on Asylum and Migration

During 2025 and 2026, Norway has been preparing to implement key elements of the new European framework for asylum and migration (hereafter the Pact).

The aspects of the Pact that touch upon Schengen-related issues apply in Norway, as well as Eurodac and the parts of the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (AMMR) that replace the "Dublin rules" for allocation of responsibility for examining asylum applications. Norway is not bound by the solidarity mechanism in AMMR. Norway is bound by the following five acts in the Pact:

- The Screening Regulation (Schengen relevant)
- The Eurodac Regulation (Dublin framework)
- Parts 3, 5 and 7 of the Asylum and Migration Management Regulation (Dublin framework)
- Crisis and Force Majeure Regulation Articles 12 and 13 (Dublin framework)
- European Asylum Agency (EUAA) Regulation (Norway is an associated member of the EUAA)

In addition, Norway is in the process of assessing the implementation of the Return Border Procedure Regulation (Schengen Relevant).[20]

Their implementation into Norwegian law has required several legal changes, budgetary allocations as well as operational preparation. Many of the necessary legal amendments were proposed by the Government in two pieces of comprehensive legislation in March 2026 and voted through in Parliament before the deadline on June 12, 2026.[21]

At the operational level, much of the work related to screening will take place at the National Arrival Centre for Asylum Seekers. The centre was established in 2015 to provide faster case processing during the initial phase, and with the exception of the early phase of arrivals from Ukraine, it is where all asylum applications are handled upon arrival. UDI is responsible for the overall functioning of the centre, and case workers make decisions in applications that are prioritized while the applicants are at the centre. The National Police Immigration Service is responsible for initial registration and screening. The centre is run by a private provider on contract from UDI, similar to other asylum seeker reception facilities.

Changes to asylum case processing and decisions

The Directorate of Immigration and Immigration Appeals Board can decide to suspend case processing for certain countries or suspend the duty to return if the situation in a given country is changing. In such cases, no deportations will be carried out and persons may remain in Norway in spite of a final negative decision. It is also generally possible to request renewed consideration of the case.

The duty to return to Gaza was suspended on 18 October 2023 in light of the war between Hamas and Israel. This suspension was formally lifted on 24 September 2025, however

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[19] Dokument 12:23 (2023-2024) .stortinget.no (proposal for a constitutional amendment)
[20] Norway is not bound by the Asylum Procedures Regulation and does not have a national asylum border procedure.
[21] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Prop. 37 LS (2025–2026) (Bill) - regjeringen.no, and Prop. 73 LS (2025–2026) (Bill) - regjeringen.no.

because of the situation in Gaza everyone would qualify for a protection permit so this was a formality as it would not apply to anyone.[22]

The duty to return to Syria was suspended in 2011 in light of the war. This suspension was finally lifted on 22 January 2026.[23] This also opened the door for the police to carry out forced returns, however there were currently no persons for whom this was an immediate possibility. Around the same time, UDI resumed case processing which had been suspended on decision of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security since June 2025 in light of the post-war situation.[24]

UDI and UNE suspended the duty to return to Iran on 20 January 2026 in light of the widespread protests. On 20 April 2026, the suspension was extended until 20 September 2026 in light of both the protests and the war with the United States which broke out in the meantime.[25] UDI and UNE suspended the duty to return to Lebanon on 18 March 2026 in light of the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel.[26] The suspension was extended until 18 September 2026.[27] The duty to return to Lebanon was also suspended from 31 October 2024 to 1 May 2025.[28]

Amended rules for cessation of protection when a refugee has travelled to his or her home state

In 2016, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security issued instructions to the UDI on the application of cessation of refugee status to persons who travel to their home state in contravention of the requirements associated with their residence in Norway. Travel to the home state can indicate that the refugee has reavailed himself or herself to the protection of that state. In December 2025, the Ministry issued an amendment to these instructions in light of recent legal developments and to clarify certain points of law.[29] The instruction aims to ensure that the UDI begins cessation and revocation proceedings when a refugee travels to the home state in violation of the terms of his or her residence permit, and that refugee status ceases unless it would be a violation of Norway's international legal obligations to revoke it. However, as the instructions clarified, there may be legitimate reasons to travel to the home state, such as a short visit to a dying relative, and travel in and of itself is not an adequate reason to withdraw a permit.

Cessation of refugee status (Immigration Act Section 37) can occur at any time, but if the person has obtained a permanent residence permit in Norway, that residence permit cannot be revoked unless the person has knowingly provided incorrect information or failed to disclose matters of material significance to the administrative decision (Immigration Act Section 63). Neither of these legal bases for cessation or revocation require a proportionality assessment. The authorities must in any case always consider whether there is a risk of persecution in case of possible return, and consider whether there could be a violation of the non-refoulement principle (Immigration Act Section 73). If refugee status is withdrawn, the

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[22] Directorate of Immigration - UDI og UNE opphever suspensjonen av utreiseplikten til Gaza. Fremdeles vil ingen måtte returnere dit - udi.no

[23] Directorate of Immigration - UDI og UNE opphever suspensjonen av utreiseplikten til Syria - udi.no.

[24] Directorate of Immigration - UDI gjenopptar behandlingen av asylsøknader fra Syria - udi.no. UDI's country guidance note has been updated and is available in Norwegian at udiregelverk.no.

[25] Directorate of Immigration - UDI og UNE forlenger suspensjonen av utreiseplikten til Iran - udi.no

[26] Directorate of Immigration – UDI og UNE suspender utreiseplikten til Libanon - udi.no

[27] Directorate of Immigration –UDI og UNE forlenger suspensjonen av utreiseplikten til Libanon - udi.no

[28] Directorate of Immigration - Opphever returstopp til Libanon - udi.no

[29] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - GI-11/2025 – revidert instruks om tolking av utlendingsloven §§ 37 og 63 når flyktningen har reist til hjemlandet i strid med forutsetningene for opphold i NorgeGI-11/2025 – revidert instruks om tolking av utlendingsloven §§ 37 og 63 når flyktningen har reist til hjemlandet i strid med forutsetningene for opphold i Norge - regjeringen.no.

person could obtain refugee status on new grounds, or a permit on humanitarian grounds. In such cases, the “clock” toward permanent residence is reset.

Revocation of temporary rules concerning church sanctuary

In 2023 a temporary rule was introduced into the Immigration Regulations (Section 8-13) concerning church asylum/sanctuary for failed asylum seekers who had spent at least five years in sanctuary in a church or similar religious establishment. The provision made it possible for such individuals to obtain a residence permit on humanitarian grounds. This rule was revoked on 24 March 2025.[30]

1.5.2 Resettlement refugees

Norway accepts an annual quota of refugee for resettlement. The overall quota is determined by Parliament, and the Ministry of Justice and Public Security determines priorities within the quota, in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Labour and Inclusion and based on recommendations from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UDI and IMDi. UNHCR priorities are based on the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement. Guidelines from the Ministry of Justice and Public Security set out the specific procedure for consultations with various Norwegian government agencies (e.g. police agencies and the Ministry of Heath), as well as overarching principles that should be taken into consideration (UNHCR Projected Global Resettlement Needs, needs of first countries of asylum, possibilities for multilateral cooperation to resolve a refugee situation, presence of vulnerable refugees, reception capacities in Norwegian municipalities). Based on these and other criteria, an annual quota is determined. Norway accepts medical evacuation cases and emergency resettlement cases within the overall annual quota.

There are also selection criteria within these groups, including need for protection and resettlement, and prioritisation of women, children and vulnerable groups. UDI processes individual cases. Cases presented by the UNHCR are given priority, but other actors may also present candidates for resettlement: Norwegian NGOs present in the relevant area, other international organisations, international courts with which Norway has an agreement to resettle witnesses, Norwegian foreign service stations, and the Norwegian chapter of PEN (specifically for the International Cities of Refuge Network). Unused spots in the quota can be carried over in a rolling three-year system. Selected refugees are normally resettled directly in a Norwegian municipality upon arrival.

Refugees selected for resettlement to Norway attend the Norwegian Cultural Orientation Programme (NORCO), currently facilitated by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).[31] NORCO consists primarily of a pre-departure orientation (PDO) course. This course, conducted in the refugees’ host countries prior to departure, provides essential information about life in Norway. Participants are grouped by age, and each group follows a tailored curriculum with varying durations to ensure age-appropriate content.

The NORCO programme also involves the organisation of Country Information Seminars (CIS) for municipalities that will receive the resettled refugees, in order to inform them about the arriving refugees’ country of origin and cultural backgrounds. Sessions typically cover the

[30] Ministry of Justice and Public Security.Forskrift om endring i utlendingsforskriften (opphevelse av midlertidig bestemmelse om kirkeasylForskrift om endring i utlendingsforskriften (opphevelse av midlertidig bestemelse om kirkeasyl - regjeringen.no
[31] IOM – NORCO Programme - iom.int.

reasons for displacement, health and security challenges encountered during transit, cultural norms, and potential integration issues.

2025-2026 Resettlement quotas

The resettlement quota has been reduced in recent years in light of the high number of displaced persons from Ukraine and the existing pressures on municipal integration services. For 2025, Parliament reduced the quota from 1,000 to 500 places, 100 of which were reserved for medical evacuation cases from Gaza. 200 slots were reserved for refugees evacuated from Libya via Romania, or from Tunisia (mainly Eritrean and Sudanese). 100 places were set aside for Afghan refugees in Turkey, and initially another 50 for Syrian refugees in Turkey and/or Jordan. These slots were later replaced adding to the number of Afghan refugees in Turkey. The remaining 50 were unallocated. The overall quota also included 10 unaccompanied minors travelling with family members. In addition, 97 unused slots from 2024 were carried over and distributed between the situations in Libya and Turkey. A selection mission to Jordan in late 2024 had been stopped due to change of the regime in Syria, leaving those slots unused.

The medical evacuations from Gaza took place as part of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), at the behest of the World Health Organisation (WHO). The initial decision, made in 2024, was to accept 20 patients, and up to 100 persons total including family members. Due to operational difficulties which meant that only 6 patients and 20 family members were able to exit the Gaza strip during 2024, the remainder of the quota was rolled over to 2025.[32] In total, 685 resettled refugees arrived in 2025, reflecting the lag between offers and actual travel. The biggest nationalities were Sudanese, Afghans and Palestinians (see also chapter 4.1.4)

Parliament decided to further reduce the resettlement quota for 2026, allocating 100 resettlement places. Of these, 80 slots were set aside for Afghan refugees in Turkey, with particular focus on women at risk. The remaining 20 slots were unallocated and could be used for emergency cases. Up to five slots could be used for unaccompanied minors.[33]

Right to propose candidates for resettlement extended to labour unions

On 28 August 2026, the Ministry of Justice and Public Security amended Section 7-6 of the Immigration Regulations in order to extend the right to propose refugees for resettlement. Various NGOs and international organisations are already able to submit candidates. According to this new amendment, confederations of labour unions (*hovedorganisasjoner*) can now also submit candidates for resettlement. The amendment is intended to improve access to international protection for labour union representatives at risk of persecution.[34]

1.5.3 Displaced persons from Ukraine

In March 2022, following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Norwegian government introduced temporary collective protection for displaced persons from Ukraine under Section 34 of the Immigration Act. The legislation aligns with the EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), as adopted by the European Council (EU Directive 2001/55/EC). The Norwegian

[32] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - GI–03/2025 Revidert instruks om medisinsk evakuering og mottak av pasienter fra Gaza for behandling i Norge innen rammen av EUs ordning for sivil beredskap (UCPM) - regjeringen.no.
[33] Ministry of Justice and Public Security Kvoten for overføringsflyktninger 2026 – kvotebrevet (letter from the ministry to the Directorate of Immigration, received by the authors after personal communication.-
[34] Ministry of Justice and Public Security. G-05/2026 – Ikrafttredelse av endringer i utlendingsforskriften § 7-6 om forslagsrett til kvoten for overføringsflyktninger - regjeringen.no

regulations grant collective protection permits for one year at the time. As the war in Ukraine was still ongoing in 2025 and 2026, the Norwegian government extended the collective protection for displaced persons from Ukraine for a fourth year in March 2025, and a fifth year in March 2026, on the same terms and procedure as previous years.[35] In order to be able to do so, the Storting (Parliament) amended Section 7-5 of the Immigration Regulations.

After the outbreak of the full-scale invasion in 2022, Norway initially maintained rather liberal policies for displaced persons from Ukraine. After Norway experienced a rise in arrival numbers during the fall of 2023, there was a restrictive shift in policies towards displaced persons from Ukraine, and the government implemented a series of restrictive and structural changes to its temporary protection scheme for displaced persons from Ukraine.[36] The following restrictions have been implemented in 2025-26:

The introduction of "safe zones" in Ukraine

In September 2024, immigration regulations were amended so that the collective protection scheme no longer applies to applicants who have had permanent residence in an area of Ukraine considered safe by the Norwegian immigration authorities (UDI and UNE). Initially, six oblasts in Western Ukraine were defined as safe. In January 2025, the authorities carried out additional safety assessments, adding another eight oblasts in the western and central parts of Ukraine to the list. Application for protection from individuals from these 14 oblasts are now assessed according to the rules for individual asylum, rather than collective protection. These rules do not apply to patients who have been evacuated from Ukraine to Norway, nor do they apply to close family members of displaced individuals already under the collective protection scheme. Lastly, individuals that have already been granted temporary collective protection, and who have resided in an area in Ukraine that the Norwegian authorities subsequently defined as safe, can still have their permit extended.

Restriction on eligibility for collective protection for men aged 18 and 60

In April 2026, the Norwegian government was the first European country to introduce restrictive provisions for collective protection for male applicants of conscription age (Denmark and the EU introduced similar decisions in June 2026, but with different criteria). The Norwegian rules imply that male persons displaced from Ukraine between the ages of 18 and 60 will, with certain exceptions, no longer receive collective protection in Norway (in Denmark and the EU the equivalent age restriction is between 23 and 60 years). The new restriction will only apply to new applicants and will not affect those who already have temporary collective protection in Norway. Exemptions apply for men who are documented as exempt from, or clearly unable to perform in military service, persons evacuated under the medical evacuation ('medevac') scheme, and men who will have sole care for accompanying children or children in Norway.[37]

The government has maintained that restrictions were necessary because Norway has received a relatively high share of arrivals from Ukraine compared to other (especially Nordic) countries, and that Norwegian municipalities reported pressure on services and a shortage of housing. The Minister of Justice and Public Security, Astri Aas-Hansen also

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[35] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - The first Ukrainians to arrive will have their residence permits extended again - regjeringen.no

[36] Danielsen, Åsne, og Vilde Hernes. 2026. «Turning Scandinavian integration policies upside down? A comparative analysis of the Scandinavian governments' responses to the influx of displaced persons from Ukraine». *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 52(2):367–87. doi:10.1080/1369183X.2025.2565908.

[37] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - The Government Tightens the Rules for Displaced Persons from Ukraine: Men Aged 18 to 60 Will No Longer Receive Temporary Collective Protection - regjeringen.no

argued that “We also believe it is important that as many as possible remain in Ukraine to contribute to the defence effort and keep Ukrainian society functioning.” [38]

Men in the target group will still be allowed to apply for asylum, but practice within the immigration administration shows that very few qualify for protection on an individual basis.

Restrictions on appeal rights for collective protection and asylum interviews

Effective 1 July 2026, the Norwegian government implemented two procedural changes for collective protection holders. First, a person with a temporary collective protection permit will no longer have the right to appeal against a refusal to extend this permit. The Norwegian collective protection permits are given one year at a time. According to the new rules, if a person is refused a renewal, they will not have an appeal option.

Second, the government also changed the regulations for individual protection, which will particularly affect Ukrainians applying for *individual* protection. UDI will no longer need to interview asylum seekers if 1) country information and the processing of previous cases show a very high probability that the application will be rejected, and 2) UDI believe that they have enough information in the case concerned to be certain of the outcome. UDI informs that this applies to the vast majority of applications for individual protection from Ukraine (UDI 2026).[39]

Extension of temporary protection and transitional arrangements

The Norwegian government has maintained that displaced persons from Ukraine are to return to Ukraine when the war ends. In September 2026 it suggested that temporary protection would be extended to the end of March 2028. It also proposed rules by which displaced persons from Ukraine who are employed and earn a certain level of income would be able to apply to stay on a work permit. The level of income proposed in the public consultation is at least 2.8G or 3G (multiples of G, the so-called basic amount in the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme, which amount to NOK 382,337 and NOK 409,647, respectively), to be determined. Nuclear family members of the worker would also be able to stay, but in that case requiring a combined income level of 3.2G for the household, equivalent to the income required to sponsor a partner for family immigration (see chapter 1.6). Persons who qualify for such a work permit would then qualify for permanent residence after three years. It is estimated that approximately 20 per cent of the displaced persons from Ukraine are part of households that would fulfil these income requirements, but these estimates are uncertain.[40] The deadline for the public consultation of these measures was in the beginning of November 2026.

Integration measures for displaced persons from Ukraine

Unlike in many other European countries, displaced persons from Ukraine in Norway have been granted access to integration measures that are largely similar to those of other refugees.[41] However, there have been some modifications to the rights and obligations of

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[38] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - The Government Tightens the Rules for Displaced Persons from Ukraine: Men Aged 18 to 60 Will No Longer Receive Temporary Collective Protection - regjeringen.no

[39] Directorate of Immigration. New case processing rules for collective protection and exemptions from the requirement for an asylum interview - udi.no

[40] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Høring - Forslag til særordning om overgang til annen oppholdstillatelse på grunnlag av arbeid for fordrevne med kollektiv beskyttelse – regjeringen.no

[41] Hernes, V., & Łukasiewicz, K. (2026). Restrictive, liberal, selective or universal? A cross-national analysis of European countries’ policy response to forced migrants from Ukraine. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *52*(2), 343–366. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1369183X.2025.2565907

displaced person from Ukraine, which were initially regulated in a temporary act for temporary protection holders.

In June 2025, the Storting (parliament) adopted a series of changes to the integration regulations and the Integration Act (see chapter 2.2.4 for more details), which also have implications for displaced persons from Ukraine. However, the revisions did not alter the access displaced persons from Ukraine have to Norwegian language and societal orientation classes. This group still has the right to attend Norwegian language classes for one year (which is a shorter period than for other refugees in Norway), and they do not have societal orientation classes as an obligatory element in the introduction programme.

1.6 Family migration

Family immigration to Norway typically occurs through family reunification or family establishment with a reference person who is a Norwegian citizen or is legally resident with a permit that qualifies for family reunification. Applicants of a family permit are often the spouse, cohabitant, or child of someone living in Norway. However, other categories, such as parents of children residing in Norway, individuals intending to marry someone in Norway, foster children, or full siblings, can also apply. The regulations also allow for other family members to seek family immigration on humanitarian grounds. Family immigration rules apply to various groups, including Norwegian citizens, refugees, labour migrants, and others holding residence permits that qualify for family immigration. The requirements vary based on the type of family relationship and the circumstances of both the applicant and the reference person.

As a general rule, the reference person must meet an income requirement which is adjusted annually based on the development of the basic amount. Children may also serve as reference person, for example on behalf of their parents. If the reference person is under 18 years of age, an exemption from the income requirement applies.[42]

For spouses, cohabitants or fiancés, additional conditions apply. Both parties must be at least 24 years old in cases of family establishment. This requirement does not apply if a) the marriage was entered into or the cohabitation was established before the time of the sponsor's entry into Norway, or b) the parties have entered into marriage or lived in an established cohabitation in Norway while both have held a residence permit or Norwegian or Nordic citizenship. Exception may also be made if there is obvious reason to conclude that the marriage or cohabitation is voluntary.[43] In case of spouses, the marriage must not be forced or entered into mainly for immigration purposes. There are specific rules for family *establishment* for refugees (post-flight spouses). In order to sponsor a spouse, cohabitant who have or are expecting a child together, or a fiancé, the person in Norway must have been in work or education for four years.

Increased income requirement for family immigration

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security announced changes to the income requirement for family immigration on 10 January 2025, which entered into force as of 1 February 2025.[44] The minimum income required was increased by approximately NOK 65,000 to approximately NOK 400,000. The income requirement is set as a multiple of G, the so-called

[42] Directorate of Immigration - The requirement for four years' employment or education in family immigration cases - udi.no.
[43] Directorate of Immigration - Requirement to be at least 24 years old in applications for family immigration - udi.no.
[44] Ministry of Justice and Public Security. G-01/2025 - Ikrafttredelse av endringer i utlendingsforskriften – heving av underholdskravet til 3,2 ganger grunnbeløpet i folketrygden - regjeringen.no

basic amount in the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme, and was technically raised from 2.7G to 3.2G. There is a marginal adjustment of the monetary value of the requirement annually as the value of G changes. As of September 2026, 3.2G is equivalent to NOK 436,957. During 2026, there were debates in Parliament in which a majority wished to raise the threshold further (to 4G). On this, see 3.1.

Changes to application fees for family immigration permits

The Immigration Regulations set application fees for different types of immigration permits. Family immigration permits have different rates, depending on the sponsor and what kind of family member the applicant is (e.g. reduced rates for refugee sponsors who seek reunification with pre-flight spouses). Application fees were previously not applied to child sponsors. As of 1 January 2026, child sponsors are obligated to pay an application fee amounting to half of the fee payable by adult sponsors, with certain exemptions that were further expanded as of 1 April 2026.[45]

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security instructed the Directorate of Immigration in November 2025 to apply exemptions from all application fees for family immigration applications concerning persons subject to medical evacuations from Gaza.[46]

Clarification of rules when foreigners who have a Norwegian child face expulsion

In 2024 the Ministry of Justice and Public Security issued instructions to the Directorate of Immigration with criteria for when to consider expulsion of foreigners who acted in breach of the Immigration Act and who have minor children in Norway, and when to consider an alternative to expulsion (additional waiting time before qualification for permanent residence). Alternatives to expulsion should be applied when there are insurmountable obstacles to carrying out family life in the other country. In 2025, these instructions were formally incorporated in the Immigration Regulations (new Section 14-1a). These rules originate in a Parliamentary decision from 7 December 2023, and they ensure the child's right to family life.[47]

1.7 Access to permanent stay

A permanent residence permit in Norway is normally granted after three or five years' residence in Norway, provided that the third country national fulfils language and social studies requirements, and has been self-supporting for the past 12 months. The minimum residence period (three or five years) depends on the type of first permit, with a longer qualification period for persons with protection permits. Temporary protection permits such as those routinely issued to displaced persons from Ukraine do not qualify for permanent residence. The requirements for permanent residence have been amended during the reporting period.

[45] Minsitry of Justice and Public Security - Forskrift om endring i utlendingsforskriften (innføring av gebyr for barn - lovdata.no and Forskrift om endring i utlendingsforskriften (unntak fra gebyr for barn i visse tilfeller - lovdata.no

[46] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - GI-09/2025 - Instruks om unntak fra gebyr for familiemedlemmer til medisinsk evakuerte personer fra Gaza og deres følgepersoner - regjeringen.no

[47] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - G-02/2025 Ikrafttredelse av endringer i utlendingsforskriftens regler om utvisning av utlending som har barn i Norge - regjeringen.no.

Amended permanent residence requirements

The language requirement for permanent residence was amended in 2025 (in force 1 September 2025). It was simplified in structure so that it focuses on the oral Norwegian language test, rather than the completion of courses in accordance with the Integration Act. At the same time the requirement itself was raised from A1 level to A2 level in the CEFR framework. The requirements apply to individuals between the ages of 18-67 (which are also the target group for language courses, see 2.2.3.) Besides raising the level of Norwegian required, the move towards only counting the final tests facilitates case processing in the Directorate of Immigration and allows for more automation.[48]

There are exemptions in place for persons applicant who provide documentation of sufficient proficiency through formal education, such as a grade of 2 or higher in Norwegian or Sámi in adult education, primary, lower secondary or upper secondary school, through completion of relevant university studies, or fulfilment of language requirements for higher education. Exemptions may also apply for persons who cannot complete the requirement for e.g. health reasons.

The social studies requirement was also amended to focus on the final exam (completed in a language the applicant understands), rather than the completion of the course. Exemptions from this test maybe granted for health reasons, or based on documented academic achievement in social studies at school or university level.

From 1 September 2025, all requirements for permanent residence permit in Norway must also be fulfilled at the time the application is decided—except for the income requirement, which can be met either when the application is submitted or at any point before a formal decision is made. This means that applicants should wait to submit their application until they are certain that all other requirements (residence period, language test, social studies test, not exceeding the allowed absence limit, maintaining a clean criminal record) are met. Persons who do not meet the requirement can apply to renew their temporary residence permit. This requires that they still fulfil the requirements for this permit (e.g. remaining in the family relationship that forms the basis of their family reunification permit, or in employment that still qualifies them for their labour migration permit.)

1.8 Citizenship and Statelessness

Access to Norwegian nationality is regulated by the Norwegian Nationality Act and Regulations. While there are various exemptions for different groups, the main rules for access to nationality by application are that the applicant must

- have clarified his/her identity
- be 12 years of age or older
- live and intend to remain in Norway
- have, or fulfil the conditions for, a permanent residence permit pursuant to the Immigration Act

[48] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Strengere norskkrav for rett til permanent oppholdstillatelse - regjeringen.no. See also Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Forskrift om endring i utlendingsforskriften (permanent oppholdstillatelse - regjeringen.no.

- have stayed in the country for at least eight of the past eleven years, with a shorter minimum residence period (six of the past ten years) for applicants who have had sufficient income during the past year, for those who are refugees (seven years) and for those who were minors when they arrived in Norway (five of the past seven years)
- meets the requirements for proficiency in spoken Norwegian and has passed the citizenship test
- not have been punished or subjected to any other reaction for a criminal offence, or if this is the case, the applicant must have waited until the waiting period is over

Minimum required residence for naturalisation for stateless persons

Stateless persons benefit from some exceptions to the naturalisation rules, in accordance with Nationality Act Section 16. A stateless person who is over 18 years old can, in accordance with Section 16, qualify for citizenship after at least three years' residence on permits that each had a duration of at least one year. When the minimum residence period for permanent residence for refugees, people with residence permits due to strong humanitarian considerations, or the family members of those groups was extended from three to five years in 2021, this created a discrepancy for those persons who were stateless and a part of one of these groups, since they also had to qualify for a permanent residence permit. UDI adjusted its naturalisation practice to require five years' minimum residence for stateless persons. Since Norway's formal recognition of Palestine in 2024, exemptions in place for stateless persons no longer apply to those who are considered citizens of Palestine.

If a stateless person is born in Norway, the main rules for naturalisation do not apply. According to an instruction to the UDI issued by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security in 2016, stateless persons born in Norway may apply for Norwegian citizenship if they live in Norway on a permanent basis, have lived in Norway continuously for the last three years, and has not stayed abroad for longer than a total of seven months during these years. If the person is no longer a minor when applying for citizenship and has been sentenced to imprisonment for a term of five years or more, or have been convicted for crimes against national security (fundamental national interests), they might have to wait longer before they can be a Norwegian citizen.

A stateless child born in Norway, who is under the age of one with parents who have permanent residence permits, fulfil the requirements for permanent residence permits or have parents who for the last three years have been registered as an EU/EEA national or had a residence card as a family member of an EU/EEA national, may also apply for Norwegian citizenship.

In March 2025, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion issued an instruction to UDI which held that stateless persons would, yet again, qualify for naturalisation after three years provided that they fulfilled the other requirements for permanent residence pertaining to identity, language and social studies testing and conduct. [49]

In June 2026, the Government proposed several changes to the Nationality Act. Some of these are technical changes aimed at facilitating automation, but there are also proposed changes to the minimum residence requirements. Instead of 8 years out of the past 11 years, the new proposed main rule is 8 years' continuous residence. A new minimum residence period of 7 years is proposed for two groups which have had an accelerated path to naturalisation (spouses of citizens, who faced a minimum residence period of five years, and

[49] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion – Instruks om avklaring av praksis om botidskravet for statsløse - regjeringen.no

stateless persons with three). This would put these groups on par with refugees, for whom the minimum residence requirement for naturalisation is seven years.[50] A legal residence period of five years, or seven years without a residence permit, is proposed for stateless persons born in Norway. For children under the year of one, regulations following the Instruction from 2016 are proposed. These changes remain under consideration.

Amended instructions for revocation of citizenship in cases of false information

In 2019 the Storting decided on changes to the rules on revocation of Norwegian citizenship in cases of false information, to shield minors from revocation of citizenship in instances where their parents or grandparents had supplied false of incomplete information, except in cases where the person did not have a strong connection to Norway and where it would not be a disproportionate intervention. Following a 2025 report which investigated the Directorate of Immigration's practice in revocation cases, the Ministry issued more detailed instructions for the proportionality assessment in such cases in January 2026. These instructions were intended to clarify in which instances it would be proportional to revoke citizenship (e.g. use of false identities and having committed certain kinds of serious crimes).[51]

1.9 Borders, Visas, and Schengen

As part of the Schengen cooperation, Norway adheres to and applies EU/Schengen visa policies. It enforces the EU's external borders at the land border with Russia in the High North, as well as at e.g. airports. As such, Norwegian rules for visa-free travel have been changed in line with decisions made at European level. Vanuatu was removed from the list of states with visa waivers on 3 February 2025. Visa free travel was also suspended for holders of Georgian diplomatic, service and official passports as of 6 March 2026. Norway also adjusts its visa processing in line with EU developments, e.g. by adhering to common rules for processing times.

Entry into force of new European Entry-Exit System

Starting 12 October 2025, and fully operational at all border crossing points from 10 April 2026, Norway applies the new European Entry/Exit System (EES) to register the crossing of external borders by third-country nationals admitted for a short stay on the territory of the Schengen Member States. Also in October 2025, the revision of the Schengen Borders Code entered into force which among other measures introduced a new transfer procedure allowing for the transfer of irregularly staying third country nationals apprehended in the internal border areas back to the member state from which they arrived. The revision also amended the rules governing the temporary reintroduction of controls at internal borders.

Support for a more strategic use of EU Visa Policy

In June 2025, Norway signed onto an initiative by several EU Member States to call for a more strategic approach to EU visa policy to combat irregular migration and abuse of visa rules. The initiative was spearheaded by Sweden and co-signed by ministers from Belgium, Austria, Czechia, Estonia, France, Luxembourg and Iceland.[52] In June 2026, Norway joined a

[50] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Regjeringen vil skjerpe og oppdatere statsborgerloven - regjeringen.no.
[51] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Revidert instruks om tolkning av statsborgerloven § 26 – tilbakekall av statsborgerskap på grunn av uriktige opplysninger - regjeringen.no.
[52] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Norge ønsker å bruke felles europeisk visumpolitikk for å bekjempe irregulær migrasjon og misbruk - regjeringen.no.

call, supported by 11 EU Member States, for a more restrictive and harmonised practice for visa issuance across the Schengen Area to citizens of the Russian Federation.[53]

Process toward reform of the National Police Immigration Detention Centre and Family Detention Centre underway

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security is preparing for a transfer of responsibility for operations of the National Police Immigration Detention Centre and Family Detention Centre from the National Police Immigration Service to the Norwegian Correctional Service, planned for 1 January 2027. This work, which was announced in the 2026 national budget, is ongoing, but in October 2026 the Government submitted a legislative proposal to the Storting with several amendments to the Immigration Act containing the legal basis relating to this change. In addition, the proposal will establish a clear regulation governing restrictions that may be imposed on persons during their stay at the detention centre.[54]

1.10 Irregular migration, unaccompanied minors, and trafficking in human beings

Norway supports more strategic use of visa policy to prevent irregular migration, see 1.9, as well as the comprehensive new EU rules that follow from the Pact on Asylum and Migration.

During the reporting period, Norway has introduced an application fee for family reunification cases where the sponsor is under 18 (typically an unaccompanied minor refugee), see 1.6.

New strategy to combat trafficking in human beings and new national rapporteur function

In May 2025, the government launched a new national strategy against Human Trafficking for the period 2025-2030. The strategy, led by the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, cuts across five ministries and involves 18 measures across four areas: 1) coordination, 2) prevention, 3) support and protection, 4) prosecution.[55] One of the measures is to name a national rapporteur function, and in March 2025 it was announced that the Norwegian National Human Rights Institution would take on the role of Independent Rapporteur covering Norway's obligations relating to two Council of Europe conventions: the Istanbul Convention (violence against women and domestic violence) and the Trafficking in human beings convention. This work officially began in 2026.[56]

In June 2026 the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) issued its evaluation report for Norway covering the 2022-2026 period. The report recognises the recent advances Norway has made in this area, and points out several areas where improvement could be made. Notably, it flags the lack of comprehensive national data collection on potential victims of trafficking as well as recommending further steps to protect labour migrants and asylum seekers and to identify child victims of trafficking.[57] Recent efforts addressing foreign workers at risk of exploitation are outlined above, see 1.2.

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[53] Ministry of Justice and Public Security, Norge ønsker strengere og mer harmonisert visumpraksis for russiske borgere i EU - regjeringen.no.
[54] Ministry of Justice and Public Security -. Regjeringen foreslår lovendringer for overføring av driften av utlendingsinternatet til kriminalomsorgen - regjeringen.no. See also Prop. 2 L (2026–2027) - regjeringen.no (bill).
[55] Ministry of Justice and Public Security – Ny strategi mot menneskehandel - regjeringen.no.
[56] National Human Rights Institution- NIM er tildelt ansvaret for monitorering av Norges forpliktelser etter Istanbulkonvensjonen og Menneskehandelskonvensjonen - nhri.no.
[57] GRETA (Council of Europe) - Evaluation Report Norway - coe.int.

1.11 International agreements regarding readmission and/or the return of foreigners

Norway has a strong focus on reducing the number of asylum seekers who do not require protection and ensuring the effective return of individuals without legal residence. A central component of this strategy includes enforcing strict penalties for anyone facilitating illegal entry or stay, with those involved in organised illegal migration facing prison sentences of up to six years.

Norway also places a significant emphasis on voluntary returns through programs like Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR), which are implemented both bilaterally and multilaterally in cooperation with transit and destination countries. Norway provides financial incentives to encourage voluntary return, including cash benefits and special assisted return programs for certain countries. This support is part of a broader strategy to motivate individuals to return voluntarily rather than face enforced removal. Special provisions are made for unaccompanied minors, who are handled through a collaborative process between the Directorate of Immigration and the National Police Immigration Service. There is also a system for voluntary repatriation (*tilbakevending)* which is offered to refugees who *have* a legal residence permit, but wish to return to their home country.

Norway has established readmission agreements with 31 countries and continues to engage with others. Additionally, Norway's diplomatic efforts are further bolstered by the presence of Immigration Liaison Officers stationed at embassies in key third countries. These officers help foster cooperation and manage return processes, particularly in countries with weaker administrative systems. To strengthen these efforts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Justice have developed action plans specifically targeting countries that pose challenges in terms of return.

Since 2025, foreigners who face expulsion for breaches of the Immigration Act, but who have Norwegian family members with whom they cannot exercise family life in their home country, can be prescribed a longer residence period before they qualify for permanent residence as an alternative to expulsion. See chapter 1.6.

Return Strategy for 2025-2030

The Government issued a new return strategy for 2025-30.[58] In the current situation, there are relatively few persons in Norway with an obligation to return, but they represent a demanding target group and require targeted measures. Norway's return policy focuses on both bilateral cooperation with countries of origin, and European cooperation to facilitate returns out of the Schengen Area, and both approaches remain high on the agenda in the current strategy. The strategy also emphasises coordination among Norwegian domestic actors, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, linking development assistance with return cooperation.

Instruction to ensure faster expulsion of criminal offenders

In January 2026 the Ministry of Justice and Public Security issued instructions to UDI which gives UDI the opportunity to decide on an expulsion of a foreigner in line with EEA rules who is deemed to represent an extraordinary crime risk due to his or her connection to organised crime, even if the person does not have a criminal conviction.[59] In May 2026 further

[58] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Return Strategy 2025 – 2030 - regjeringen.no (document in English translation).
[59] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Raskere utvisning av kriminelle - regjeringen.no

clarifications were issued concerning expulsion of minors.[60] These efforts reflect ongoing concerns over youth crime and organised crime, see- 3.1.

Budgetary increase to support repatriation to Ukraine

Persons wishing to return to Ukraine can apply for voluntary repatriation (*tilbakevending)* as well as assisted voluntary return (*assistert retur*). During 2025, the number of Ukrainians applying for repatriation support increased, and the funding for this programme was raised accordingly.[61] In 2025, UDI received 3,510 applications for repatriation report and registered 2,596 departures. During the first half of 2025, 1,508 applications were received and 1,054 departures registered.[62] The support amounts to NOK 2,500 for travel expenses and NOK 15,000 in repatriation support. Displaced persons from Ukraine with a return decision can apply for support to assisted voluntary return. However, there are currently operational issues that limit the access to return with such support.

1.12 Migration and development

Norway contributes to coordinated, sustainable and long-term responses to refugee and displacement situations around the world. The 2021 Government platform promised at least NOK 5 billion to strengthen efforts aimed at refugees, displaced persons and host communities without weakening ordinary development assistance aimed at poverty reduction. This commitment is referred to as the Solidarity Fund (*solidaritetspotten*). From 2023, budget allocations related to these efforts were highlighted in their own budget chapter (chapter 153: Refugees, displaced persons and host communities). Funding related to displaced persons and migration also gets disbursed through the chapters on humanitarian assistance (chapter 150) and through regional allocations (chapter 159). As of 2025-2026, the 2021 commitment of additional funding has been fulfilled.

In 2025, funds supporting refugees, displaced people and host communities disbursed through chapter 153 decreased compared to funding levels in 2024, from around 4 billion NOK to around 2 billion NOK. Funds included earmarked support via UNHCR, IOM and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) which provides assistance to Palestinians in the region. Norway supported UNRWA with a total of NOK 280 million in 2025.[63] Additional funding was drawn from regional allocations. Ukraine and neighbouring countries are important recipients of assistance, detailed below. Other priority areas were displacement situations in North Africa and selected Sub-Saharan countries, as well as displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh. Norway also increased support in 2025 to Syria, with new allocations to UNHCR efforts to assist returnees.[64]

The 2026 national budget saw an amendment of the budget structure, with the removal of chapter 153, but support for displaced persons continues, especially through major UN organisations. Norway's core support to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was maintained at the same levels as in 2025, but there is some reduction in other allocations. Regional allocations have, for their part, increased from 2025,[65] and Ukraine and neighbouring countries remain a key priority, see below. Norway also entered into a two-year

[60] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Innstramming: Utvisning av kriminelle mindreårige EØS-borgere - regjeringen.no.
[61] Ministry of Justice and Public Security – Prop 1 S (2025-26) - regjeringen.no (Bill).
[62] Statistics supplied directly by the Directorate of Immigration.
[63] Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Økt støtte til FNs organisasjon for palestinske flyktninger (UNRWA) - regjeringen.no.
[64] Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Norge støtter Syria i en skjebnetid - regjeringen.no.
[65] Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Prop. 1S (2025-26) - regjeringen.no (Annual budget bill).

agreement with UNRWA in January 2026 to give the agency core support of NOK 175 million in 2026 and 2027 and an additional NOK 100 million for 2026 to assist the organisation.[66]

During 2026, the Minister for International Development has launched a project to rethink Norwegian development contributions in a changing international environment, called Project Turning Point (*Vendepunkt*). The effort will result in a White Paper (*Stortingsmelding*) in 2027. The government's intention is to view development and migration more in conjunction regionally and bilaterally, where contributions to development, stabilization, and reconstruction are considered in relation to migration, return, and the role of the diaspora. Themes of discussions so far has been a focus on job creation in the Global South, as well as root causes of migration.

Nansen Support Programme

Norway's extensive support to Ukraine is primarily channelled through the Nansen Support Programme, which was launched in 2023 and is administered by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD). Through this programme, Norway has committed to a seven-year support package for Ukraine (2023-30). Since 2024, the "floor" is a commitment of NOK 15 billion per year, and since the most recent extension of the programme it totals NOK 274.5 billion for the full period (combining civilian and military support). The civilian component of the programme was NOK 12.5 billion for 2025 and NOK 15 billion for 2026. In 2025, the civilian component included NOK 2.9 billion for humanitarian assistance as well as 500 million to support Moldova. For 2026, the humanitarian assistance was increased to NOK 3.5 billion. Support to Moldova was reduced to NOK 350 million.[67] From this overall budget, Norway provides significant funding to e.g. UNHCR's work in both Ukraine and Moldova. In 2025 the support for refugees in the region amounted to NOK 3 billion, divided among UN organisations, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), NGOs and efforts carried out by the Norwegian military and Norwegian Directorate for Civil Protection.[68]

Investment in Africa

Norway has announced it will invest 3 billion NOK for the 2026-2028 period through the African Development Fund (ADF) to support economic growth and robustness against future crises. The Fund supports capacity building and investment in critical infrastructure across the continent, supporting green growth and resilient economies. Among its objectives are addressing the root causes of forced migration flows.[69]

[66] Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Norge inngår ny toårig avtale med UNRWA - regjeringen.no.
[67] Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Slik fordeles de sivile Nansen-midlene for 2026 - regjeringen.no.
[68] Ministry of Foreign Affairs - 3 milliarder kroner i humanitær støtte til Ukraina - regjeringen.no
[69] Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Norge styrker bidraget til Afrikafondet - regjeringen.no.

2 Major developments in integration policies

The main goal of Norwegian integration policy is to provide refugees and other immigrants with incentives and opportunities to participate in the Norwegian labour market and social life. This goal is considered important both for the immigrants themselves and to maintain a robust and sustainable welfare system. The main target populations for integration policies are refugees and their family members, as well as family immigrants.

The Government set out a new governing framework in 2025, in lieu of previous coalition governments' platforms, called Plan for Norway, see also 3.1. In this framework, it specifies its priorities in integration policy as "setting demands and providing support in connection with integration". The Government "wants people who come to Norway to settle to be met with clearer demands and expectations as regards learning Norwegian, finding work and being part of Norwegian society", and during 2026, to this end, the government announced it would "strengthen incentives to work for newly arrived immigrants and step up efforts to combat negative social control." [70] It also announced its intention to introduce a new integration declaration, described in chapter 2.2.4.

2.1 Integration policy framework

2.1.1 Actors

The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion is responsible for policies and measures that aim to increase labour participation and participation in society in general. The Ministry is also responsible for coordinating integration policy across sectors. The Department of Integration[71] has a special responsibility for the settlement of refugees, grants to municipalities for integration work and the Integration Act, the Nationality Act and the Interpreter Act.

The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi[72]) implements the government's integration policies. In addition to settlement of newcomers, this work covers broader efforts relating to integration in work life and society at large, efforts against negative social control, forced marriage and genital mutilation, managing various grant schemes in the area of integration, serve as the professional authority for language interpretation in the public sector, and produce research, statistics and good practice guides related to integration. The directorate is tasked with strengthening the competence of municipalities, sector authorities, and other collaborative partners in the field of integration and diversity.

The Directorate for Education and Training (Udir) is the executive agency for the Ministry of Education and Research, and is responsible for kindergartens, as well as primary and secondary education.

The Norwegian Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (HK-Dir) is a national agency under the Ministry of Education and Research and is responsible for recognition of foreign education and training, and for providing information and advice relating to the recognition of foreign education, training, and vocational qualifications. This responsibility was transferred

[70] Government of Norway - The Government's Plan for Norway (2025–2029) Security and opportunities - regjeringen.no (English translation).
[71] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - The Department of Integration - regjeringen.no
[72] Directorate of Integration and Diversity - IMDi.no

from the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) to HK-Dir in 2023. HK-Dir also administers Norwegian language testing for immigrants.

The municipalities have the main responsibility for implementing the integration policies locally, along with non-governmental organisations and in cooperation with counties.

Since 2021, counties also have formal integration responsibilities, including recommending refugee settlement numbers for municipalities, offering career guidance to introduction programme participants, and providing Norwegian and social studies training for those in full -time upper secondary education.

2.1.2 Legislation

The Norwegian integration policies build on some core legislation and measures.

- The Integration Act: This law regulates the introduction program, Norwegian language training, and social studies for newly arrived immigrants. It also contains provisions concerning responsibilities of the municipality and the counties.
- The Norwegian Nationality Act: The law regulates how persons can become Norwegian nationals and how they may lose their Norwegian nationality.
- The Interpretation Act: The law covers interpretation services in the public sector which implies a duty for public agencies to use qualified interpreters when this is necessary to ensure the rule of law or to provide proper assistance and services. There is an exemption from the law regarding qualified interpreters which will remain in force December 31, 2026.

The Education Act also regulates various measures relevant to integration policy, both for children and adults. A new Education Act entered into force in 2024, and it introduced so-called modular education for adults (*modulstrukturert opplæring*), which makes primary and secondary education for adults more flexible and easier to combine with employment or participation in the Introduction programme for refugees.

2.2 Integration policies and changes

2.2.1 Early integration efforts in reception centres

Asylum seekers over the age of 18 who live in an asylum reception centre have a statutory right and obligation to take part in Norwegian language instruction in accordance with the Integration Act. The language programme consists of 175 hours of training and is to begin shortly after the individual arrives in Norway. A programme for social studies instruction was also introduced in 2022. It consists of three modules. Residents are to complete twenty-five hours at the reception centre, while those who are granted protection are to take the remaining 50 hours after they are settled in a municipality. Displaced persons from Ukraine are exempted from these provisions.

Children staying in an asylum reception centre are not legally entitled to kindergarten placement. However, municipalities are strongly encouraged to make kindergarten places available for them. Since 2021, UDI has offered a grant scheme that reimburses municipalities for their expenses if they provide free kindergarten places to children living in reception centres, including those in emergency accommodations.

Children (aged 6-15) of asylum seekers who are awaiting a decision on their application have the right to attend school if it is likely that they will be granted a residence permit, or if processing the application will take more than three months. Those between 16 and 18 have the right to preparatory education (aimed at those who have not completed Norwegian primary school or an equivalent abroad) in the host municipality, or upper secondary education in the county where the host municipality of the reception centre is located. Those who receive a rejection of their residence permit application are only entitled to upper secondary education until the date of the final decision on their application.

For adults who have been granted a residence permit listed under Section 9 of the Integration Act, the host municipality where the reception centre is located has a mandate to gather information on their educational background, work experience, professional qualifications, language skills, and other relevant skills. The aim is to ensure that settlement and integration measures, including the Introduction Programme, are tailored to each person's needs and potential. Displaced persons from Ukraine are exempted from these provisions.

Asylum seekers may be granted a temporary work permit while their application is being processed if they have attended the asylum interview (with certain exceptions), hold a valid passport, and have not yet received a decision from UDI or have been granted a suspension of enforcement while their case is under review by UNE. They cannot obtain a temporary work permit if they lack a valid passport, have not attended the interview, are subject to transfer under the Dublin Regulation, have received a rejection of their asylum application, or have been issued or warned of a deportation order.

Lastly, asylum seekers have the same access to healthcare as everyone who lives in Norway, for example doctor's appointments, hospital treatment and some types of medicine. The right to healthcare applies from the day one arrives in Norway requesting protection. One may also apply to have medical expenses or medical treatment covered by UDI if they are essential to one's life and health.

Early start to integration efforts

As part of the June 2025 amendments to the Introduction Programme (described below), a provision was introduced to the chapter governing early integration in reception centres which holds that for individuals who have been granted a residence permit listed under Section 9 of the Integration Act , the host municipality where the reception centre is located can offer standardised elements from the introduction programme, such as courses in life skills or digital skills.[73] This amendment entered into force 1 January 2026, and is intended to facilitate a smoother transition to settlement.

2.2.2 Settlement

Norway practices a model of settlement of refugees which is based on cooperation between central authorities and municipalities, with significant local autonomy. The central government, represented by IMDi, requests municipalities to settle a number of refugees every year, based on a needs assessment which is carried out in consultation with the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) and upon recommendations from the Counties. This work follows a set of criteria which has evolved over time, but which have emphasised factors such as dispersal across the country, municipal capacity, refugees'

[73] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Lov om endringer i integreringsloven mv. (økt arbeidsretting og formell opplæring i introduksjonsprogrammet - lovdata.no.

results in the introduction programme, and the goals of rapid and targeted settlement in places where refugees have possibilities for integration into the labour market or education. Local governments decide whether they accept IMDi's request, and how many refugees they agree to settle.

During the first few years following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, settlement criteria were simplified and refugees were settled in all Norwegian municipalities. There is also a possibility of "agreed self-settlement" between an individual refugee and a municipality.[74] This was used to a greater extent than before during the early phase of arrivals from Ukraine.

Municipalities that agree to settle refugees receive an integration grant for five years. Refugees who move within five years of settlement may be referred back to that municipality if they seek welfare benefits in another municipality.

Adjusted settlement criteria

In October 2025, the government announced amendments to the settlement criteria, which aim to take better into account local issues relating to segregation and areas at risk, as well as pressure on municipal services stemming from secondary migration of refugees, which was a significant political debate during the reporting period (see 3.1).[75]

The new criteria, effective from 2026, have three overarching principles, and the new adjustments concern, in particular, the matter of dispersal:

1. Refugee settlement should be controlled and dispersed
    a. To regions across the country and municipalities big and small
    b. With a certain continuity
    c. Municipalities should avoid settlement in vulnerable or segregated areas
    d. Secondary migration of refugees should be taken into account
2. Refugee settlement should be targeted
    a. Emphasising opportunities for education and employment
    b. Taking into account available services in the municipality
3. Refugee settlement should be rapid

2.2.3 Norwegian language training and social studies

The target group for Norwegian language training and social studies is newly arrived adult immigrants between the ages of 18 and 67 with a residence permit that constitutes the basis for permanent residence. This also applies to foreign family members of immigrants in Norway and to family members of Norwegian and Nordic nationals.

The legislation distinguishes between those who have a "right and obligation" to take language classes, and those who only have an obligation. This distinction, in practice, means that the former group get free language classes, whereas the latter have to pay the cost. The main group who has to cover their own fees are third-country labour immigrants.

Those residing in Norway based on the EEA/EFTA-agreements are not covered by the Integration Act, and they are not entitled to free tuition in Norwegian language and social studies, nor are they obliged to participate in such training.

[74] Directorate of Integration and Diversity - Bosetting av flyktninger som finner bolig på egenhånd - imdi.no
[75] Minitry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Strengere signaler for bosetting av flyktninger i norske kommuner - regjeringen.no.

During Norwegian language training, the participant should reach a minimum level of Norwegian language proficiency, and each have an individual “Norwegian goal” (target level of Norwegian language skills after the courses). The right and obligation to language training apply until the participants have reached their “Norwegian goal”, with a maximum duration of three years for participants with less than upper secondary education (+approved leave). Those with upper secondary education or higher education have a maximum of 18 months of training (+approved leave). For those who have to pay for their own courses, this obligation is not open-ended, but capped at 225 hours.

Further, participants should attend 75 hours of social studies within one year. The goal of the scheme for Norwegian language training and social studies is that an adult immigrant, after the first years in Norway, should sufficiently master Norwegian to be able to find employment and participate in society. As soon as possible after settling in a municipality, eligible immigrants are expected to enrol in language training. The municipality has a concurrent obligation to offer them a place within a set period.

Having achieved a certain level of Norwegian language and having basic knowledge about Norway are requirements for obtaining a permanent residence permit and for Norwegian citizenship, irrespective of country of origin. As of 1 September 2025, the required level of Norwegian in order to qualify for permanent residence was increased from A1 to A2 on the CEFR scale, however there is no longer *also* a requirement to have attended a certain number of hours of language classes.[76] Exemptions from this requirement can be made e.g. for adult immigrants who are illiterate or who cannot complete the required language instruction for health reasons, see 1.7.

Rules for displaced persons from Ukraine

Displaced persons from Ukraine have the right to a maximum of 12 months’ Norwegian language training. From 2023, municipalities could apply for funding to extend language training by an additional six months. This possibility of extension was removed in the 2026 national budget.[77]

Expert commission will investigate Norwegian language tuition and suggest improvements

In April 2026, the government constituted an expert commission which will investigate Norwegian language training with the purpose of finding ways to improve language training and ensuring that a higher proportion of immigrants transition into the labour market. The commission is led by Kristin Holm Jensen of the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), and unites academic experts, second language teachers, and representatives of local and regional government, members from organisations in working life and employers. The commission will issue its recommendations in June 2027.[78]

2.2.4 Introduction programme

The objective of the Introduction Programme is to provide each participant with fundamental skills in the Norwegian language and to prepare them for employment or further education as well as participation in Norwegian society. The target group for the Introduction Programme is refugees and their family members, in addition to persons granted residence on

[76] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Strengere norskkrav for rett til permanent oppholdstillatelse - regjeringen.no.
[77] IMDi - Tilskudd til utvidet norskopplæring for fordrevne fra Ukraina avvikles - Imdi.no.
[78] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Ekspertutvalg skal se på norskopplæringstilbudet for innvandrere - regjeringen.no.

humanitarian grounds and their families. The rights and obligations of individuals under the Integration Act only apply to those between the ages of 18 and 55 who are settled by an agreement between IMDi and the municipality.

The Integration Act differentiates the scope and contents of the introduction programme so that the participants are offered a programme that is adapted to their background and individual programme goals. The participants must undergo skills mapping and career guidance before starting the programme (offered by the county). The Introduction Programme may last from a few months to several years, and the duration of the programme will vary depending on the participants' educational background, competence, and their individual programme goals. Participants who have already completed upper secondary education will be given a shorter programme period. The legal provisions concerning programme duration were amended during the reporting period, and are detailed below.

In addition to language training, social studies, and work or education-oriented measures, every participant must participate in a *life skills course*,[79] and parents with children under the age of 18 must participate in a *parental guidance course*.

Civil society, immigrant organisations, and other NGOs, as well as local and regional authorities, are all essential actors in developing and implementing the integration policy. There is support for various national and local integration initiatives through government grants organised by IMDi.

Temporary amendments to the introduction programme for displaced persons from Ukraine

In June 2022, the Storting passed the *Act on temporary changes in legislation because of the arrival of displaced persons from Ukraine*.[80] The act had a sunset clause (July 1, 2026), and encompassed temporary changes in many different acts, including the Integration Act. Some provisions have since been mainstreamed and amended, see below.

In principle, all protection beneficiaries in Norway have the right and obligation to participate in the introduction programme. To make it easier for the municipalities to quickly settle displaced persons from Ukraine granted temporary protection, several temporary changes to different laws were implemented. Statutory requirements were reduced, such as those in the Integration Act that regulate the duration and obligation to participate in the Introduction Programme and Norwegian language training.[81] Key adjustments included:

- A right, but not an obligation, to participate in an introduction programme for six months, with the possibility of extension for up to six months.
- For those who do not have an education at the upper secondary level, the programme could last for up to three years, with the possibility of an extension for up to one year.
- The programme should consist of work- or education-oriented elements, an offer of Norwegian language training, and parental guidance (for parents with children below 18 years). The other obligatory elements (empowerment course, career guidance, and competence mapping) were not made obligatory initially.

[79] The life skills course was evaluated by researchers at Fafo in 2026. The report includes an English summary. Rebecca Nybru Gleditch et al (2026) Livsmestring i introduksjonsprogrammet
Standardisert intensjon og mangfoldig iverksettelse. Fafo-report 2026:17 (fafo.no)
[80] Original legislatiive text - lovdata.no
[81] Prop. 107 L (2021–2022) (bill) – regjeringen.no cf. chapter 9.1.

- A right to Norwegian language training after settlement applied for one year from the time courses began, with the possibility of six months' extension, for participants with at least upper secondary education. Those without education at a lower level could receive further expansions.
- No right or obligation to receive education in social studies.

In the initial phase, displaced persons from Ukraine could opt to participate in the introduction programme part-time. In June 2024, this possibility was abolished, and displaced persons from Ukraine (along with other refugees), may only participate part-time if this is due to capacity challenges in the municipality.

From July 2024, some temporary changes were made to the introduction programme for displaced persons from Ukraine. After the first three months in the introduction program, work-related elements for participants with an end goal of labour market participation, should on average constitute at least 15 hours a week of programme time.[82] The minimum requirement for work-related elements is fulfilled by practice at a workplace, part-time work, short professional or industry courses, labour market measures under the direction of NAV, or other similar measures. The municipality could also deny participation in the introduction programme for people who have a job or a job offer on an almost full-time basis.

June 2025 amendments to the Introduction programme

In June 2025 Parliament adopted a series of amendments to the Integration Act which entail that while the temporary rules for displaced persons from Ukraine no longer apply, some of these adjustments have been introduced to Integration Act on a more general basis. Displaced persons from Ukraine now generally participate in the introduction programme on par with other refugees, except for the fact that social studies continues to not be mandatory for displaced persons from Ukraine. Many of these amendments entered into force 1 January 2026.

The upper age limit of the target group for the introduction programme was expanded from the age of 55 to 60. It has still not been determined when this amendment will come into force, and it remains voluntary for municipalities to offer a full introduction programme to this group.[83] Recent research suggests that municipalities do so on a case by case basis for those who are deemed to be motivated and relatively "close" to being ready to work in Norway.[84]

As of 1 January 2026, immigrants in the target group for the introduction programme who are employed or have an offer of employment of 30 hours a week or more are no longer eligible for or obligated to participate in the programme. Their eligibility and obligation is reinstated if the employment relationship ends or the offer of employment expires within two years of settlement in the municipality. The eligibility and obligation to complete courses in Norwegian and social studies remains for this group and must be completed alongside work.

The June 2025 changes also involved amendments to the length of the programme. The length of the Introduction Programme is mainly determined by two factors: the education level of the participant, and the programme objective. Generally, participants with higher education levels have shorter programmes, whereas the programme can be longer if the objective is, e.g. to complete upper secondary education. Initially, the programme duration for

82 New Section 14a in the Integration Act – lovdata.no.
83 Directorate of Integration and Diversity - Informasjon om endringer i integreringsregelverket - imdi.no.
84 Danielsen, Å.; Kårtvedt, L.E.; Leirvik, M.S.; Myhre, M.H.; Myrvold, T.M.; Staver, A.B.; Tvedt, K.; Tønnessen, M. (forthcoming). Integrering av nyankomne flyktninger i eldre arbeidsalder. NIBR Report, Oslo Metropolitan University.

persons with education at upper secondary level or higher was three to six months, with the possibility of six months' extension. As of 1 January 2026, the maximum programme duration is 12 months, with no possibility of extension. There is no longer a minimum duration established in law.

The maximum programme duration for persons with education at below upper secondary level was extended by one year for those whose objective it is to complete upper secondary education (maximum four years with one year extension). If the objective is to complete *parts* of upper secondary education, the maximum duration is three years with the possibility of one year extension. If the programme objective is to find employment, the maximum duration is two years, without possibility of extension. For participants who are under age 25, and who have not completed upper secondary education, the primary programme objective should be to do so.

The Government has also introduced clear rules on the content of the Introduction Programme where the programme objective is to find employment. For participants with education at minimum upper secondary level, they should have at least 15 hours per week of employment related activities. For participants with education below upper secondary level, this requirement comes in at the seven-month-mark. These rules apply from 1 January 2026.

A new integration declaration

On 30 May 2026 Parliament voted to amend Section 16 of the Integration Act. This amendment replaces the former *Integration contract* with a new *Integration declaration.* At the same time as the integration plan (which sets out the objectives for the introduction programme, e.g. "employment" and the target level of Norwegian) is established in dialogue between the participant and the municipality, the participant will sign a declaration which sets out his or her obligations as a participant in the Introduction programme as well as key rights and duties applicable to everyone in Norway.[85] The amendment is expected to enter into force 1 January 2027. There are no sanctions associated with this measure, but any violation of Norwegian legislation could have consequences, and attendance in the Introduction Programme is required in order to receive the Introduction benefit (see chapter 2.2.5). Parliament has asked the government to consider a) whether the target group for the declaration should be broadened to include groups of immigrants beyond those who take part in the Introduction Programme, and b) different kinds of sanctions for violations of the declaration, including related to access to permanent residence and citizenship, and c) consequences for failing to complete obligations related to integration, including financial sanctions and in severe cases consequences relating to the person's residence permit.[86]

2.2.5 Introduction benefits

Participants in the programme are entitled to an introduction benefit. The benefit is twice the basic amount (G) in the National Insurance Scheme (*Folketrygden*), which in 2026 is equivalent to NOK 22,758 per month or NOK 273,098 per year. The benefit is taxable. All participants in the introduction programme receive the same benefit, with a few exceptions. Participants under the age of 25 who are living with one or both parents receive one-third of the benefit. Participants under the age of 25 who do not live with their parents receive two-

[85] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, Nye krav til flyktninger vedtatt: – Skal være tydelige fra start - regjeringen.no. A Norwegian-language sample version of the Declaration is available from the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - regjeringen.no.
[86] Innstilling fra kommunal- og forvaltningskomiteen om Endringer i integreringsloven (integreringserklæring) – stortinget.no

thirds of the benefit. The benefit can also be docked if the participant is receiving other kinds of benefits, or in case of absenteeism.

In 2026, the government has launched a proposal for an overhaul if the introduction benefit which has elicited significant public debate, see 3.1.

2.2.6 Assessment and recognition of foreign qualification

The scheme for general recognition of foreign higher education, run by HK-Dir, includes verification and is primarily aimed at occupations for which there are no legal qualification requirements.[87] Decisions on general recognition help employers understand and trust the value of foreign higher education qualifications. There is also a fast-track assessment service to help employers and recruitment agencies understand foreign higher education qualifications when they are in the process of recruiting new staff. Such assessments are made free of charge and within five working days.[88]

Immigrants with higher education from abroad can also apply for academic recognition of their qualifications from higher education institutions with relevant study programs. Such recognition concerns both partial and full study programs and degrees. Academic recognition is most relevant for immigrants interested in further studies in Norway.

Regarding the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons, or persons in a refugee-like situation, HK-Dir is responsible for an interview-based recognition procedure for people with insufficient or unverifiable documentation of their higher education (the UVD-procedure). This implements Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

In 2021 and 2022, the system of ‘automatic recognition’ was extended to more countries, including Ukraine. Automatic recognition is not a formal recognition, but downloadable statements by country on how specific degrees are normally assessed.[89] Experience shows that in many cases, such a document is sufficient for a job application. For the countries for which automatic recognition has been available for some time, there is a clear reduction in the number of applications for general recognition.

Currently, the recognition scheme for upper secondary vocational education and training comprises 28 Norwegian craft and journeyman's certificates. The scheme for recognition of vocational education and training gradually expands to new qualifications and countries. Applications for corresponding qualifications from Denmark, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Sweden, and Finland are processed as of 2025. The latest occupational additions to the scheme in June 2025 were Vehicle body repair technician and Industrial piping technician.[90]

For most professions and occupations, no specific official recognition is required before a person can take up work in Norway. However, for around 170 professions, the qualifications required are regulated by law and regulations. This means that the recognition of professional qualifications is required for individuals who want to practice these professions in Norway. Examples of such professions are nurses, teachers, and electricians. For such professions, recognition or authorisation must be given by the competent recognition authority. In Norway, there are 18 different recognition authorities for professional

[87] Further information is available from the Directorate of Higher Education and Skills – hkdir.no.
[88] Directorate of Higher Education and Skills - Information Sheet on Fast-Track Assessment - hkdir.no
[89] Directorate of Higher Education and Skills - Automatic recognition - a quicker alternative - hkdir.no
[90] Directorate of Higher Education and Skills Utvidelse av godkjenningsordningen for utenlandsk fag- og yrkesopplæring - hkdir.no

qualifications. HK-Dir is the assistance centre for the EU Professional Qualifications Directive in Norway and provides information to professionals about the directive, Norwegian legislation, and regulated professions.

New Appeals Board for recognition of foreign qualifications

As of January 2026, an Appeals Board will review appeals against decisions on the recognition of foreign education and professional qualifications in Norway, including vocational education, tertiary vocational education, higher education, teaching qualifications, and qualifications for leadership positions in kindergartens. The members of the Appeals Board have been appointed for the period from 1 January 2026 to 1 January 2030.[91]

Changes related to specific foreign qualifications

Since January 2025, the Norwegian Act Relating to Lawyers and Other Providers of Legal Assistance made Master at Law ("Jurist") a legally protected professional title. Persons holding foreign legal qualifications must obtain recognition of their professional qualifications from the Supervisory Authority for Legal Services (*Advokattilsynet*) before they may lawfully use the title in Norway.[92] EEA and Swiss lawyers who establish themselves permanently in Norway must register with Advokattilsynet. Once registered, they are generally entitled to practise law in Norway and are subject to the same rights and obligations as Norwegian lawyers, unless specifically exempted by law.[93]

The Ministry of Health and Care Services intends to introduce a change in practice under which Danish Clinical Basic Training (KBU) and similar foreign postgraduate clinical training programmes completed after medical school may be recognised as fulfilling parts of the Norwegian Foundation Year 1 training programme (LIS1). The training programme must meet the following requirements: 1) be completed as part of a formal, structured training programme that includes mentoring, supervision, and assessment, in the same manner as Norwegian specialist training, 2) be completed with a minimum duration of 12 months.[94]

Reception and integration of displaced persons from Ukraine in higher education

Several higher education institutions have implemented measures to welcome and integrate displaced persons from Ukraine. The measures include language courses (in Norwegian and English) for Ukrainian students, and meeting places and support for Ukrainian researchers and academics. The institutions have also mapped their existing programme portfolio to find programs or modules (taught in English) that are suitable for newly arrived refugees.

To help higher education institutions accommodate refugee students, the Government funded up to 1,000 additional study places from 2022. However, demand was lower than anticipated, with only 540 students enrolled in these places in 2022.[95] The allocation was subsequently reduced to 500 places in 2023 and 277 places in 2024, and the scheme has now been phased out as planned in 2026.[96]

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[91] Appeals Board for the Recognition of Foreign Education and Professional Qualifications - Om Klagenemnda for godkjenning av utenlandsk utdanning og yrkesgodkjenning - klagenemndssekretariatet.no

[92] Supervisory Authority for Legal Services- Om utenlandsk juridisk utdanning og ikrafttredelse av advokatlov og ny advokatforskrift. - tilsynet.no

[93] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Prop. 61 L (2023–2024) - regjeringen.no

[94] Ministry of Health and Care Services - Godkjenning av dansk klinisk basisutdannelse (KBU) og andre utenlandske opplæringsprogrammer etter endt medisinstudium – Regjeringen.no

[95] Ministry of Finance Prop. 78 S (2021–2022) - regjeringen.no (budget bill)

[96] Ministry of Research and Education. Orientering om statsbudsjettet 2024 for universitet og høgskular - regjeringen.no

2.2.7 Early childhood education and care

The Kindergarten Act regulates the activities of kindergartens and guides the daily operation of the kindergarten and the educational facilitation of children's everyday life. All children who reach the age of one year of age by the end of November have the right to attend kindergarten as long as they have a permanent residence permit and a registered permanent address in a municipality. While Parliament has voted to ensure that children born in December get the same right to attend kindergarten the month they turn one year old,[97] the necessary regulatory changes have not yet been made.

The maximum monthly fee for attending kindergarten was reduced in august 2025 and is now NOK 1,200 for one child. For people living in the least central municipalities the maximum monthly fee is NOK 700, and kindergarten is free for all children in some municipalities in the northern part of Norway. There are discounts for siblings, including free kindergarten for the third sibling and upwards who attends kindergarten at the same time. The fee is the same for everyone, and not adjusted by income. However, there are national subsidy schemes for low-income families:[98]

- A national subsidy scheme where low-income families do not pay more than six percent of their income for a full-time kindergarten place.
- A national subsidy scheme where children aged 2-5 years from low-income families have the right to 20 hours free core time per week in kindergarten.

Children from asylum seeking families do not have a right to attend kindergarten until their asylum application has been accepted and the family has a permanent address in a municipality. However, children staying in an asylum centre may enter a kindergarten if places are available in the municipality where the centre is located. A government grant finances full-time places for all children in asylum centres aged one to five regardless of the status of their asylum application. The grant is intended to cover the municipality's expenses. Access to kindergarten services is considered an important form of support for parents living in asylum reception centres and enables participation in Norwegian language courses and other activities. Furthermore, it can help provide a sense of normality in children's daily lives and have a positive impact on their development, well-being, and Norwegian language acquisition. The asylum reception centre may contact the municipality to assess, on a case-by-case basis, whether it is appropriate and feasible to offer a kindergarten place.[99]

In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Research adopted a provisional regulation allowing for the establishment of temporary kindergartens and the temporary expansion of already approved kindergartens in response to the arrival of people displaced from Ukraine. The temporary legislative changes have been prolonged until July 2028.[100] These measures, along with related temporary provisions in the Education Act, are intended to ensure that municipalities can continue to provide adequate kindergarten and education services in the event of a large influx of displaced persons from Ukraine.

Some provisional amendments to the Kindergarten Act were introduced following the arrival of displaced people from Ukraine. These changes allow the Ministry to approve temporary kindergartens and provide funding for them when needed. They also make it possible to

[97] Dokument 8:108 S (2024-2025) Representantforslag om lovfestet rett til barnehageplass for barn født i desember, innen utgangen av måneden de fyller ett år - stortinget.no (private member's motion).
[98] Directorate of Education and Training - Foreldrebetaling for barnehageplass og moderasjonsordninger - udir.no
[99] Directorate of Education and Training - Regelverk for nyankomne barn under skolealder - udir.no
[100] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Prop. 51 L (2025–2026) Midlertidige endringer i lovverket som følge av ankomst av fordrevne fra Ukraina (videreføring m.m.) – regjeringen.no

grant exemptions from certain organisational requirements for kindergartens that receive such approval.[101]

In the 2026 National Budget, the Government aims to strengthen municipalities' preventive efforts for children and young people. To support this goal, the Government has allocated NOK 520 million to a cross-sectoral grant scheme, which may include increasing kindergarten participation among children from linguistic minority backgrounds and supporting measures that strengthen the language development of children from linguistic minority backgrounds in kindergarten.[102]

The Norwegian Government is partly financing area-based urban initiatives in areas in cities where some areas have major challenges in living conditions. Municipalities participating in the initiative can receive grants to strengthen staffing in kindergartens. The municipality decides how the funds are allocated across both public and private kindergartens, with no requirement to divide funding according to ownership type. The purpose of the grant is to increase pedagogical staff and/or overall staffing levels in kindergartens located in the targeted areas. Municipalities must inform eligible private kindergarten providers about the scheme. Priority may be given to kindergartens that:[103]

1. Have many children from low-income families who benefit from national fee-reduction schemes.
2. Have a high proportion of children from linguistic minority backgrounds.
3. Meet other locally identified needs and priorities.

2.2.8 Primary and secondary education

Central aims of Norwegian education policy are to provide equitable opportunities for all children and reduce social disparities. In order to reach these aims, the education system must provide learning opportunities that are tailored to students with different kinds of needs, such as speakers of minority languages and students requiring special educational support.

The main legislation for this area is the Education Act, the Act Relating to Universities and University Colleges, and the Integration Act. The Education Act covers education for adults in need of primary and secondary education. The statutes have supplementary regulations on many issues that are important for educational integration for migrants and for speakers of minority languages.

According to the Education Act section 2-1, children and young persons are obliged to attend primary and lower secondary education and have the right to a public primary and lower secondary education. The right to primary and lower secondary education applies when it is probable that the child will reside in Norway for a period of more than three months. These rules apply to every child, including children of asylum seekers, unaccompanied minors seeking asylum, and irregular immigrants.

The Education Act sections 3-6, 5-1, 18-2, and 6-5 define the rights to primary, lower, and upper secondary education and possibilities for adapted education in Norwegian.

Youth who have completed lower secondary school in Norway or a comparable education in another country, have the right to upper secondary education. The application deadline for

[101] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. Prop. 51 L (2025–2026) - regjeringen.no (Bill)
[102] Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training - Tiltak for å styrke språkutviklingen blant minoritetsspråklige barn i barnehage – udir.no
[103] Directorate of Education and Training - Tilskudd til økt pedagogtetthet og grunnbemanning i barnehager - udir.no

admission to upper secondary school is February 1 or March 1 each year, but the County Governor must also take into consideration applications received after the deadline. Some counties also provide activities for youth prior to attending upper secondary school. For the municipalities to be better able to respond to the refugee situation due to the war in Ukraine, the Government suggested some temporary legislative changes, which the Parliament approved in 2022.[104] These measures were initially introduced for 2022 and 2023, subsequently extended throughout 2024 - 2026, and have now been prolonged until July 2028.[105]

Three temporary amendments to the Education Act have been adopted. Firstly, the absolute deadline for fulfilling the right to a full primary education has been extended from one to three months. The requirement that this right be fulfilled as quickly as possible remains unchanged. All children are obliged to attend school when they have been in the country for three months. The temporary legislation means that the municipalities have more time to prepare and provide full-time education according to the Education Act. In a survey conducted in autumn 2025, the vast majority of municipalities indicated that they were able to meet this requirement. Schools in rural areas generally faced greater challenges due to staffing shortages, and some report difficulties in accommodating students at the nearest available school.[106]

Secondly, the Ministry has been granted the authority to extend the three-month deadline by regulation if necessary in situations involving a very large influx of people displaced from Ukraine, although this provision has not yet been used.

Lastly, an exception has been introduced to the requirement for consent from the pupil or their parents for newly arrived pupils to receive education in separate groups, classes, or schools (introductory education). This exception applies when such arrangements are necessary to ensure an adequate educational provision in situations involving a very large influx of displaced persons.[107] For pupils who have recently arrived in Norway, the local authority may organise their education in separate groups, classes, or schools. This applies to both primary, lower, and upper secondary schools. If some or all the education is to take place in such an introductory group, class or school, this must be stipulated in the decision to provide adapted language education for the pupil. This decision may only be made if it is considered in the pupil's best interest. Education in a specially organised facility may last for up to two years. A decision may only be made for one year at a time. For this period, the teaching may deviate from the curriculum defined for the pupil in question to the extent it is required to provide for the needs of the pupil. Due to the temporary legislation, decisions pursuant to this section do not require the consent of the pupil or his/her parents or guardians.

In the 2026 National Budget, the Government aims to strengthen municipalities' preventive efforts for children and young people. To support this goal, the Government has allocated NOK 520 million to a cross-sectoral grant scheme. Municipalities may apply for funding for both universal and targeted measures within, among other areas, maternal and child health services, school health services, kindergartens, schools, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav), and child welfare services.[108]

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[104] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion – Prop 107L (2021-2022) – regjeringen.no (bill) / Original legislative text – lovdata.no
[105] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Prop. 51 L (2025–2026) - regjeringen.no (bill)
[106] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Prop. 51 L (2025–2026) - regjeringen.no (bill)
[107] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Prop. 51 L (2025–2026) - regjeringen.no (bill)
[108] Ministry of Children and Families - Regjeringen klar med nytt kommunalt forebyggingsprogram for barn og unge - regjeringen.no

Furthermore, the Government has allocated NOK 170 million to inclusion initiatives run by voluntary organisations, as well as municipal inclusion measures such as youth mentors who help young people complete their education, homework assistance programs, and free leisure and holiday activities.[109] The aim is to support children and young people who are at risk of falling behind.

"*Fleksibel opplæring*" (Flexible education) is a national initiative providing online bilingual subject teaching from NAFO (the National Centre for Multicultural Education[110]) at Oslo Metropolitan University. This programme delivers instruction in mathematics, science, and basic English in both Norwegian and the student's native language (or another known language) via a digital platform. The lessons, taught by bilingual teachers, follow the standard curriculum and include weekly real-time teaching sessions. Since 2024, the programme provides instruction in languages such as Somali, Arabic, Tigrinya, and Ukrainian. However, the languages offered may vary in the future based on demand.

The programme targets recently arrived students in primary, secondary, and adult education, aiming to bridge gaps in understanding and help learners develop subject-specific vocabulary in Norwegian. This service is useful for schools unable to find bilingual teachers and is intended to supplement traditional classroom teaching. Instruction is organised in 45-minute sessions, tailored to the needs of the school and students[111].

Education for children and youth from Ukraine

Several measures have been initiated to assist the municipalities in their work to provide good quality education for newly arrived children and youth from Ukraine. Both the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training and the National Centre for Multicultural Education (NAFO) have initiatives aimed at improving education for newly arrived students. NAFO offers bilingual instruction with support in Ukrainian in basic Norwegian language learning and mathematics for students from Grade 5 through upper secondary education. Since the programme was established, and up to spring 2026, 1,400 students from Ukraine have been offered participation in the Flexible Education programme, including 210 students during the 2025- 26 school year.

NAFO has developed a training package on trauma reactions that affect learning and has provided schools with training in Safe Learning, a trauma-informed programme that teachers can implement in their classrooms. NAFO has also developed a wide range of digital resources in Ukrainian and Russian (including morsmal.no, Bildetema, and LEXIN), as well as support materials for teachers working with newly arrived students. In addition, NAFO coordinates a network for teachers who teach newly arrived students and a network for bilingual teachers.

NAFO and Oslo Metropolitan University (OsloMet) have received financing for developing measures for better staffing and more competence in kindergartens and schools for better to meet the needs of Ukrainian children and students. This includes a introduction course to Norwegian kindergartens and schools for persons with foreign pedagogical education. In 2025 the number of participants was 194. This is a popular course with a high number of applicants.

[109] Ministry of Children and Families - Deler ut 170 millioner kroner – regjeringen.no
[110] National Centre of Multicultural Education nafo.oslomet.no
[111] National Centre of Multicultural Education - Fleksibel opplæring – tospråklig opplæring på nett – nafo.oslomet.no

2.3 Anti-discrimination policies and diversity programmes

2.3.1 Legislation

The legal framework on anti-discrimination and equality has been strengthened over the last 25 years, with a focus on ensuring equal rights and prohibiting discrimination on multiple grounds. The key piece of legislation is the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (2018)[112], which replaced several previous laws which addressed discrimination related to various grounds of discrimination. The aim of this Act is to promote equality and prevent discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, belief, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other categories. Hate speech and racism is addressed with criminal provisions in the Penal Code (Sections 185-186)[113] through sections addressing discriminatory acts and hate crimes.

In accordance with the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act all employers have a duty to make active efforts to promote equality and to prevent discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and belief. This includes a duty to seek to prevent harassment, sexual harassment and gender-based violence. The equality efforts shall encompass the areas of recruitment, pay and working conditions, promotion, development opportunities, accommodation and the opportunity to combine work with family life.

As of 1 January 2026, Norway's anti-discrimination efforts were strengthened with the incorporation into Norwegian legislation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).[114]

2.3.2 Actors

Since 2014, the Directorate for Children, Youth, and Family Affairs (Bufdir) has overseen equality and non-discrimination efforts related to ethnicity, religion, and belief. It coordinates the Forum on Ethnic Discrimination, a platform for government actors to prevent ethnic discrimination in public services, and holds dialogue meetings with immigrant organisations and national minorities. The directorate also implements government initiatives against racism and maintains an online resource with data on the living conditions and equality of ethnic and religious minorities.[115]

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO) works proactively to promote genuine equality, offering advisory services to individuals, employers, and public bodies. LDO monitors that Norwegian law and administrative practice are in accordance with CERD, but also CEDAW, and CRPD.[116] LDO is also tasked with supervising public authorities and employers' equality work, including their activity duty and duty to issue a statement pursuant to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, and can conduct follow-up visits to ensure proper implementation.[117] The Anti-Discrimination Tribunal is an independent public administrative body that, with a few exceptions, makes decisions in specific complaints regarding violations of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination.[118]

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[112] Act relating to equality and a prohibition against discrimination (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act) - Lovdata.no
[113] The Penal Code - Part II. Criminal acts - Lovdata.no
[114] Ministry of Justice and Public Security CRPD gjelder som Norsk lov fra nyttår - Regjeringen.no-.
[115] Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) - bufdir.no
[116] The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud - ldo.no
[117] Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud Act § 5 - lovdata.no
[118] Anti-Discrimination Tribunal - diskrimineringsnemnda.no

The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) plays a central role in promoting diversity and integration in Norway. IMDi is responsible for implementing government policies related to integration, with a focus on improving the inclusion of immigrants and ethnic minorities in society. This includes supporting initiatives that foster diversity and prevent discrimination.[119]

2.3.3 New policies and measures – Equality and discrimination

In 2023, the Government announced its Action Plan to Prevent Racism and Discrimination 2024–2027. The plan specifically addresses discrimination in the workplace and in the labour market, as well as racism and discrimination affecting young people, and includes municipal and local initiatives. The midterm evaluation of the action plan shows that, as of June 2025, the majority of the measures have either been completed or are underway. Of the 50 measures included in the action plan, 13 have been completed, 32 are ongoing, and 5 have not yet been initiated. [120]

The government has also launched targeted action plans in several areas, which should be seen in light of the overarching efforts against discrimination:

1. Action plan to combat Anti-Muslim racism 2025–2030[121]
2. Action Plan Against Antisemitism 2025-2030[122]
3. Action plan to combat harassment and discrimination of the Sámi 2025-2030[123]

Fight against extremism

The Government launched 45 national measures to combat and prevent extremism in 2025. One of these measures is the establishment of a new national centre for efforts to counter radicalisation and violent extremism.[124] These measures have been developed in response to the findings of the Extremism Commission's report (Official Norwegian Report 2024:3), which outlines measures that collectively contribute to combating and preventing extremism.[125]

EU Anti-Racism Strategy 2026

In January 2026, the European Commission published its Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030, building on the previous strategy covering 2020-2025. The strategy aims to strengthen the implementation and enforcement of the EU's anti-discrimination legislation, remove barriers, and promote inclusion at all levels of society.[126] As Norway is linked to the EU regulatory framework, these developments also influence the framework conditions for anti-discrimination efforts in Norway.

The three main areas of the strategy include:

1. Ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of EU anti-discrimination legislation. Particular attention will be given to digital and algorithmic discrimination and hate speech.

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[119] The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) - imdi.no
[120] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Handlingsplan mot rasisme og diskriminering – ny innsats 2024-2027 - regjeringen.no
[121] Ministry of Culture and Equality - Action plan to combat Anti-Muslim racism 2025–2030 - regjeringen.no
[122] Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development - Action plan against antisemitism 2025-2030 - regjeringen.no
[123] Ministry of Culture and Equality - Action plan to combat harassment and discrimination of the Sami 2025-2030 - regjeringen.no
[124] Ministry of Culture and Equality - Regjeringen styrker innsatsen mot ekstremisme - regjeringen.no
[125] NOU 2024: 3 (regjeringen.no)
[126] EUs nye strategi mot rasisme 2026-2030 - stortinget.no

2. Continue efforts to remove barriers and promote inclusion in education, employment, healthcare, and housing.
3. Strengthen partnerships to tackle racism across all levels of society.

Furthermore, the Commission proposes increasing support for civil society organisations working to combat racism, within its next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028-2034), through the AgoraEU programme.

The implementation of the proposed measures will be monitored by the Commission, which will present a mid-term evaluation regarding the implementation and enforcement of EU anti-discrimination legislation.

Grants for measures against racism, discrimination, and hate speech

The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) administers the grant scheme for measures to Combat Racism, Discrimination, and Hate Speech on behalf the Ministry of Culture and Equality. The purpose of the scheme is to support local, regional, and national initiatives and activities that combat racism, discrimination, and hate speech based on ethnicity. It also aims to promote anti-racism, diversity, and dialogue, while increasing knowledge and awareness of these issues among the majority population.

The allocation for the scheme in 2026 is NOK 26.4 million. This includes an additional allocation of NOK 2 million.[127]

The regulations governing the scheme were revised in 2026 in three key areas:

> Section 9: Regarding provisions on eligibility requirements for receiving grants.
>
> Section 10.1: Regarding provisions concerning transactions with related parties.
>
> Section 12: Regarding provisions on sanctions for non-compliance with the regulations.

IMDi administers the grants for the Development of Qualification and Integration Measures. The aim of the scheme is to improve the quality and outcomes of municipalities' and county authorities' qualification and integration efforts, with the aim of increasing immigrants' participation in employment, education, and society. The grant scheme follows the budget resolution as adopted by the Norwegian Storting. IMDi allocates a total of up to NOK 53.5 million in grants across the priority areas. Both municipalities and county authorities may apply for funding under the scheme, depending on the priority area.[128]

In 2026, the following four priority areas of the grant scheme have been highlighted:

1. Innovative solutions within the Introduction Programme and Norwegian language and social studies training.
2. Development of measures that provide mental health support.
3. Establishment of municipal, inter-municipal, or regional welcome services.
4. Efforts to promote diversity and combat racism and discrimination.

[127] Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs - Tilskudd til tiltak mot rasisme, diskriminering og hatefulle ytringer - Bufdir.no
[128] Directorate of Integration and Diversity - Tilskudd til utvikling av kvalifiserings- og integreringstiltak - imdi.no

Reformed grant scheme for volunteer organisations' work on integration and diversity

Furthermore, IMDi allocates a funding scheme for voluntary organisations as grant authority on behalf of the Norwegian Parliament. The objective of the grant is to increase diversity, participation, and a sense of belonging in local communities and within voluntary organisations, including by combating social exclusion, racism, and discrimination. The target groups of the grant scheme are persons with an immigrant background, residents of asylum reception centres, and the wider local community.

Under this scheme, the applicant must be a voluntary organisation registered in the Register of Voluntary Organisations (*Frivillighetsregisteret*). The municipality may act as a partner organisation in the project. The 2026 funding allocation is NOK 41.5 million.[129]

A new regulation governing this grant scheme will apply from 2026. While funding was previously awarded as individual grants, with the recipients specifically named in the budget proposal, it was announced in the Proposition to the Storting No. 1 S (2024-2025) that grants will be converted into a competitive, application-based scheme from 2026 and will be governed by regulations. The new regulation provides a more precise and accessible regulatory framework, with a clearer alignment between objectives, criteria for measuring goal achievement, application requirements, and reporting requirements.[130] In April 2026 it was announced that ten centres received a total of NOK 33.6 million.[131]

Expert commission on immigrants' health

In June 2026, the government announced a new expert commission which will examine immigrants' and descendants' use of health care services and how this affects labour market participation and inclusion. The aim is to support equal access to healthcare services as well as ensure that as many as possible can participate fully in the labour market. The commission is led by Dr. Bushra Ishaq, and unites experts from the medical and social sciences as well as civil society representatives. The commission should issue its recommendations by the end of 2027.[132]

2.4 Measures countering negative social control

The Norwegian government considers efforts against negative social control to be a central pillar of integration policy. Negative social control is understood in Norwegian policy as "pressure, surveillance, threats, or coercion that systematically restricts someone's life choices or repeatedly prevents them from making independent decisions about their life and future".[133] It is often paired with efforts to combat honour-based violence, which is "violence and violations triggered by the family's or group's need to maintain or restore honour and reputation".[134]

[129] Directorate of Integration and Diversity - Tilskudd til integreringsarbeid i regi av frivillige organisasjoner - imdi.no
[130] Forslag til ny forskrift om tilskudd til integreringsarbeid i regi av frivillige organisasjoner (forskriftsfesting av tilskudd til nasjonale ressursmiljø mv.) - regjeringen.no, (proposal submitted for public consultation).
[131] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion – 33,6 millioner til nasjonale ressurssentre for integrering - regjeringen.no.
[132] Ministry of Health and Care Services – Utvalg om innvandrerhelse - regjeringen.no.
[133] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Combating Negative Social Control and Honor Based Violence in Norway - regjeringen.no
[134] Ibid.

There are several specialised support services committed to the prevention of negative social control and the provision of assistance for individuals who may be subjected to negative social control and honour-motivated violence.

The Expert Team is a national inter-agency team which assists the national general service system in cases involving negative social control and honour-motivated violence, including with instances of forced marriage, involuntary stays abroad and female genital mutilation. The team provides training and guidance aimed at the ordinary service system and voluntary organisations that interact with victims and persons at risk in their work. They also provide direct guidance to victims on how and where to seek assistance.

Special representatives at the Norwegian foreign missions in Ankara, Amman, Islamabad and Nairobi, provide consular assistance to individuals experiencing negative social control, honour-motivated violence, involuntary stays abroad, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. They also contribute to training within the foreign service and the service system in Norway to prevent individuals from being sent abroad against their will.

Diversity advisors are deployed at selected lower and upper secondary schools in all the country's counties, in addition to selected adult education centres, as a preventive measure. They provide advice and guidance to pupils and make them aware of their rights and choices. They also run trainings for staff in various support services. Schools without Diversity advisors, as well as other services, can receive training from a special team within the Directorate of Integration and Diversity.

The government has also established specialised schemes for individuals who are at risk of or have been subjected to forced marriage, honour-motivated violence and/or negative social control, in addition to the above-mentioned specialised services. This includes the national housing and support service for individuals at risk and in need of accommodation, a scheme for covering expenses to return to Norway in case of involuntary stays abroad, a mentoring scheme for victims, and regional networks for competence enhancement.

Action plan against negative social control and honour-motivated violence

In May 2025 the government announced its action plan, In Charge of Your Own Life – Strengthened Efforts against Negative Social Control and Honour-Motivated Violence 2025-2028. . The plan emphasises that the "freedom to make decisions about one's own life is a fundamental right in Norway".[135] It cuts across the remit of eight different ministries and covers four priority areas: 1) legal safeguards, 2) prevention, 3) competence enhancement, and 4) involuntary stays abroad.

New legislative framework

In March 2026, following from commitments in the above-mentioned action plan, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion presented a legislative proposal as part of its efforts to combat negative social control and honour-based violence. The legislation establishes a legal framework for these efforts and seeks to ensure a more coordinated efforts across agencies.[136] It provides a legal basis for sharing personal information across services. The legislation was voted through in May 2026.

[135] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - In Charge of Your Own Life – Strengthened Efforts against Negative Social Control and Honour-Motivated Violence 2025-2028 – regjeringen.no. (The plan in its entirety is available in English).
[136] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Prop. 69 L (2025–2026) – regjeringen.no (bill).

Action plan to prevent children being sent against their will to Somalia

The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has developed a crosscutting action plan to prevent children being sent against their will to Somalia (2026-7). It is the first time foreign policy and domestic policy tools are applied in this united manner. The plan involves 12 measures which cover a) prevention in Norway, b) support to Somali authorities, c) establishment of formal intergovernmental dialogue on prevention and assistance. This will make it possible to reach children who have already been taken to Somalia. The plan involves stakeholders such as Norwegian-Somali NGOs and religious groups.[137]

Exit ban to prevent involuntary stays abroad

In order to prevent children from being subjected to involuntary stays abroad, the Storting adopted changes to the Child Welfare Act, the Penal Code, the Passport Act and the National Identity Card Act in December 2025.[138] If there is a risk of the child being taken abroad in a situation where they might be subject to forced marriage, female genital mutilation, violence or abuse, Child Welfare Services may impose a travel ban. The legislation was proposed based on an increase in such cases reported by the Expert Team and Diversity advisers during 2024.[139]

[137] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Regjeringen lanserer innsatsplan for å hindre at barn sendes ufrivillig til Somalia - regjeringen.no.
[138] Norwegian Parliament - Endringer i barnevernsloven, straffeloven, passloven og ID-kortloven (utreiseforbud ved fare for skadelig utenlandsopphold mv.) – stortinget.no See also Prop. 159 L (2024–2025) – regjeringen.no (bill)
[139] Ministry of Labout an Social Inclusion - Utreiseforbud: Regjeringen vil stoppe skadelige utenlandsopphold for barn - regjeringen.no

3 International migration in the public debate

3.1 Media and political discourse

A systematic and empirically grounded analysis of the immigration and integration discourse is inherently complex, and there is no straightforward way to give a comprehensive or unbiased account of the media and political discourse over time. The overview presented below is therefore primarily based on selected events, government communications, parliamentary proposals and recent research.

Immigration did not dominate the campaign ahead of the September 2025 parliamentary election; cost of living, inequality and taxation were the issues that mobilised voters. In the months that followed, however, immigration and integration moved higher up the political agenda.

A new policy framework

The governing Labour Party set out its policy direction in "The Government's Plan for Norway" (*Regjeringens plan for Norge*), presented in December 2025. The plan describes the objective as a "controlled, fair and sustainable" immigration policy, explicitly stating that Norway "cannot receive more than we are able to integrate", and it announced a set of measures for 2026, including tighter conditions for family immigration, a review of expulsion rules for foreign nationals convicted of crime, and a more active Norwegian role in European migration cooperation.[140] This framing, balancing an open, diverse society against limits set by integration capacity, has structured much of the subsequent political debate. (Integration policy directions in the *Plan for Norway* are covered in chapter 2.)

A new "integration benefit" and activity duty for refugees

One of the most consequential proposals to follow from this framework came on 23 January 2026, when the government presented what it described as the largest reform of Norwegian integration policy in more than two decades: a new, flat-rate "integration benefit" (*integreringsstønad*) that would, for the first five years after settlement, replace refugees' access to the introduction benefit, social assistance and housing allowance.[141] Benefit levels would depend on a person's marital status, age and number of children (up to three), and would decrease gradually as earnings rise, rather than being cut krone-for-krone the moment someone starts working, as happens today.

Under the current system, each Norwegian krone you earn is deducted from your benefit at a 1:1 rate, so working brings no net financial gain, since your total income stays the same whether you work or not. Under the proposed system, only part of each krone earned would be deducted from the benefit, so working would leave you with more money overall than staying on benefits alone.

Refugees who remained outside work or education after completing the "integration programme" would face a new activity duty of at least 20 hours per week, with reductions in benefit for non-compliance. The government argued the reform was necessary because refugee employment, at around 50 per cent, remains far below that of the population as a whole. The government argued that combined benefits under the current system could, in

[140] Prime Minister's Office (2025), Regjeringens plan for Norge 2025–2029" (English translation), regjeringen.no,
[141] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Ap-regjeringen varsler full omlegging: Aktivitetsplikt og kutt i ytelser for å få flere flyktninger i jobb – regjeringen.no

some cases, exceed NOK 600,000 for a single parent with two children – more than such a person could typically earn through ordinary employment.

The proposal, sent out for public consultation with a deadline in April 2026, generated debate, with commentators and several consultation respondents warning that removing access to social assistance and housing allowance could increase the risk of child poverty among larger refugee families.[142]

Secondary migration of refugees

Another theme of the period has been secondary migration among refugees, that is, refugees relocating from the municipality where they were first settled to another municipality, often a larger urban centre. What began as a concern raised by individual municipalities coping with an influx of refugees with unresolved welfare needs developed into a national policy issue. In late 2025, the government tightened the criteria it applies when requesting that municipalities settle refugees, instructing municipalities to take secondary migration patterns and existing levels of deprivation into account (see chapter 2.2.2).[143] In April 2026, following a government-commissioned legal assessment, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion stated that the state has considerable legal room to restrict refugees' freedom to relocate between municipalities, provided any measure has a basis in law, serves a legitimate purpose and is proportionate.[144] By June 2026, the government had announced it would examine two options for restricting unwanted secondary migration, including a possible relocation restriction of up to ten years for newly settled refugees without employment.[145]. The proposals have been controversial: while several municipalities and government representatives argue that unregulated relocation undermines local integration efforts and strains welfare budgets, researchers and civil society commentators have cautioned that secondary migration is often a symptom of local integration shortfalls – lack of jobs, housing or follow-up after the introduction programme – rather than a problem to be solved through mobility restrictions alone.[146] It is also worth noting that most refugees continue to reside in the municipality of initial settlement. Seven out of ten refugees still lived in the same municipality after seven years, according to a 2026 report.[147]

Tightening family reunification, including for unaccompanied minors

A closely related theme has been the tightening of family immigration rules, in particular for unaccompanied minors who have been granted asylum and who subsequently apply to bring family members to Norway. National statistics showed a marked increase in this type of family immigration in 2025, which several municipalities cited as a source of additional settlement pressure.[148] Multiple parliamentary initiatives (*Dokument 8* proposals/private members' bills) called for stricter rules, ranging from a substantial increase in the minimum income requirement for sponsors and mandatory DNA testing to establish kinship, to a complete halt to family reunification for unaccompanied minors.[149] In May 2026, a cross-party majority in parliament – comprising the Conservative Party, the Centre Party, the Progress

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[142] Rege, Maria.Regjeringens forslag om integreringsstønad kan gi økt barnefattigdom og utenforskap (opinion piece published in the newspaper Dagens Næringsliv (dn.no) See also Consultation responses available at Regjeringen.no.
[143] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Strengere signaler for bosetting av flyktninger i norske kommuner - regjeringen.no
[144] Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion - Regjeringen har mulighet til å begrense flyktningers mulighet til å flytte mellom kommuner - regjeringen.no
[145] NRK - Regjeringen vil ha ti års flyttenekt for flyktninger – nrk-no (news article).
[146] Utrop, Flyktninger flytter ikke fordi de vil bort, men fordi de vil videre - utrop.no (news article).
[147] Kjeøy, Ida et al (2025) Flytting etter bosetting Muligheter og utfordringer ved sekundærflytting blant flyktninger. Fafo report 2025:14. (Summary in English available, fafo.no).
[148] NRK Enslige mindreårige: Dobling i familieinnvandring - nrk.no
[149] Dokument 8:144 S (2025–2026) – stortinget.no. (Private member's bill).

Party and the Christian Democratic Party – secured support for raising the maintenance requirement for family immigration to roughly four times the National Insurance basic amount (over NOK 500,000 per year), a threshold that would also apply to unaccompanied minors[150].The government opposed extending the requirement to this group, arguing that children who have fled war and persecution should be able to have a safe family life in Norway, while refugee advocacy organisations argued that the right to family reunification for refugees should not depend on age[151]. Some commentators pointed to statistics showing that only a minority of unaccompanied minors who obtain protection actually go on to receive family reunification, questioning how much impact further restrictions would have in practice.[152] UDI noted, in an opinion piece, that four out of five unaccompanied minors never go on to receive family reunification, but in the few cases where it does happen, the families tend to be relatively large.[153]

Youth crime and a politically motivated killing

Domestic security concerns also featured prominently. Norwegian media gave sustained attention to youth violence linked to international criminal networks, following several incidents in which Norwegian minors were reportedly recruited by such networks to carry out violent acts. This fuelled recurring comparisons with neighbouring Sweden's experience with gang-related violence, discussions about the causes of youth marginalisation, and a set of government proposals to strengthen efforts against child and youth crime.[154]

In August 2025, the killing of a childcare-sector employee of Ethiopian descent, in an attack later described as politically motivated, prompted expressions of solidarity across the country and a public debate about lone-actor extremism, the framing of immigrants in political and media discourse, and the potential for online radicalisation to translate into violence[155]

Continued attention to Ukrainian and Syrian refugees

Ukraine remained a significant, if less dominant, part of the debate. After two years of falling numbers, Norway saw a new rise in Ukrainian arrivals in autumn 2025, partly because Ukraine changed its own rules to let men aged 18–22 leave the country. The Norwegian government had earlier begun labelling a growing number of Ukrainian regions as "safe" in the specific asylum-law sense a designation with real legal consequences, since people from those areas no longer automatically qualified for temporary collective protection and instead had to apply for asylum on an individual basis. Legal and humanitarian organisations kept criticising this practice, while the government argued it was necessary to keep the reception system manageable. Ukrainian applicants generally do not get protection on individual grounds per current practice. In response to the renewed rise in arrivals, the government proposed in February 2026, and the Storting adopted in March 2026, that Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 should no longer receive automatic collective protection either, but must instead apply for ordinary asylum, with some exceptions (such as exemption from military service or being a sole carer for children); the change applied only to new applicants.[156]

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[150] Stortinget, Innst. 230 S (2025–2026) - stortinget.no.; NRK Flertall for strengere asyl-regler: Må tjene en halv million - nrk.no (news article)"

[151] NRK, Sp vil øke inntektskravet for familieinnvandring og la det omfatte enslige mindreårige asylsøkere - nrk.no (news article)

[152] Utrop (2026), SSB-tall utfordrer familieinnvandrings-alarmen fra styringspartier (utrop.no) (news article

[153] Snorre Sæther and Minda Musk - Enslige mindreårige og familiegjenforening - fvn.no (opinion piece by the Director of UDI)

[154] Ministry of Justice and Public Security Styrker innsatsen mot barne- og ungdomskriminalitet (regjeringen.no),.

[155] NRK (2025), reporting on the killing of Tamima Nibras Juhar (nrk.no) (news article).

[156] Ministry of Justice and Public Security - Statsråd Mehls innlegg på pressekonferansen om innstramminger for ukrainske flyktninger (regjeringen.no) (statement by the minister on the designation of safe areas)

The question of whether and when Syrian refugees might be expected to return following the change of regime in Damascus in December 2024 also remained unresolved and continued to surface in public debate. The suspension of the duty to return to Syria was lifted in January 2026 (see chapter 1.5.1).

A wider European context

Finally, the Norwegian discourse cannot be understood in isolation from developments elsewhere in Europe. Centre-led governments in Denmark, Germany and France moved toward further restrictions under pressure from parties further to the right, the rise of Reform UK in the United Kingdom received considerable coverage in Norwegian media. Norwegian commentators and researchers have explicitly linked this "restrictive wind" blowing across Europe to the shift in domestic political rhetoric and public opinion described in chapter 3.2 below.

3.2 Public attitudes towards immigrants

For insights into public attitudes towards immigrants, this report draws on the Norwegian Integration Barometer, a survey of a representative sample of around 3,000 respondents conducted every other year by the Institute for Social Research (ISF) on commission from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi). The most recent edition, the Integration Barometer 2026, was fielded in November–December 2025 and published in May 2026, placing it squarely within the current reporting period.[157]

A shift towards more restrictive attitudes

The headline finding is a marked shift towards more restrictive attitudes across a range of measures. Following a temporary increase in positive attitudes after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, attitudes have returned to pre-invasion levels and, on several indicators, become more restrictive than at any point since measurement began. The share of the population who think Norway should admit more immigrants has fallen to 17 per cent, the lowest level recorded since the question was first asked in 2017, while the share favouring "considerably fewer" immigrants has risen from 19 to 30 per cent since 2017.[158] Support among the general public for their own municipality settling more refugees has fallen from a peak of 47 per cent in March 2023 to 33 per cent in the 2025 survey, a shift directly relevant to the secondary-migration debate described above[159]. The population is also less optimistic about the future: the share expecting relations between immigrants and the rest of the population to improve has declined from 53 to 47 per cent since 2023.[160]

Growing differentiation between types of immigration

A consistent feature of the 2025/26 findings is growing differentiation between types of immigration. Attitudes towards labour migration have become steadily more positive – a majority now consider labour migration beneficial to the Norwegian economy and welfare state, and support for admitting more labour migrants has increased – while attitudes towards

[157] Brekke, J.-P., Fladmoe, A., Hesstvedt, S. and Wollebæk, D. (2026), Holdninger til innvandring, integrering og mangfold – Integreringsbarometeret 2026, ISF Report 2026:4, Oslo: Institute for Social Research, commissioned by IMDi and available at imdi.no
[158] Ibid., Chapter 2 (imdi.no).
[159] Ibid., Chapter 3 (imdi.no).
[160] Ibid., Chapter 2 (imdi.no).

refugees, asylum seekers and family migrants have become markedly more critical. The gap between these two sets of attitudes has widened substantially since 2017.[161]

The perceived link between immigration and crime has also strengthened: 72 per cent agreed in 2025 that increased immigration would lead to more crime in Norway, up from 63 per cent in 2019 and 2021. The most striking change concerns Sweden. When respondents were asked about increased immigration from specific countries, Sweden went from being by far the country least associated with more crime in 2019 and 2021 to showing a 20-percentage-point rise in agreement by 2025. The authors link this to the attention given to international gang crime and so-called “Swedish conditions” (*svenske tilstander*) in Norwegian media and public debate.

Generational, gender and political divides

The survey also points to a growing generational and gender divide. Young men (under 30) have shown the largest shift towards restrictive attitudes of any demographic group: whereas in 2017 they were, together with young women, among the most positive age groups, by 2025 there was no longer a statistically significant difference between young and older men, while young women remained comparatively more positive.[162] Voting intention remains one of the strongest predictors of attitudes, with voters for the Socialist Left, Red, Green and Liberal parties, and Labour, the most positive; voters for the Conservative, Centre and Christian Democratic parties close to the population average; and voters for the Progress Party and smaller parties to its right clearly the most critical – though the report notes that attitudes shifted in a more restrictive direction across all voter groups between 2023 and 2025.[163]

Nuance and stability alongside the restrictive shift

At the same time, the report stresses that Norwegian attitudes remain nuanced and, on several dimensions, stable. Three out of four respondents believe that discrimination against immigrants occurs "to a large extent" or "to some extent", particularly in the labour and housing markets, and long-term trends in views on whether immigration is generally good or bad for Norway, or on Eastern European labour migrants' contribution to the labour market, have changed little over the past two decades.[164] New for the 2025/26 round were survey experiments examining public support for assisted versus enforced return of refugees, and testing how characteristics such as country of origin, education, family size and religiosity shape perceived integration prospects and willingness to admit specific refugees – both directly relevant to the ongoing debate on return and reception policy.[165]

Norway in a comparative, European perspective

Comparative data place these Norwegian trends in a broader European context, though with an important caveat regarding timing. The most recent full release of European Social Survey (ESS) data, from Round 11 (fielded 2023/24, final edition published in 2025), confirms that Norway continues to rank among the most immigration-positive countries in Europe, together with Sweden, Iceland and Ireland, on measures such as whether immigrants enrich cultural life and benefit the economy – in contrast to markedly less positive attitudes in, for example,

[161] Ibid., Chapter 3 (imdi.no)
[162] Ibid., Chapter 2 (imdi.no).
[163] Ibid., Chapter 2 (imdi.no).
[164] Ibid., Chapter 2 (imdi.no).
[165] Ibid., Chapter 3 (imdi.no).

Greece, Hungary and Slovakia[166] Round 12 of the ESS (fielded 2025/26) has, for the first time, selected immigration as a repeated module alongside the original 2002/03 and 2014/15 rounds, which will in due course allow for an unusually long comparative time series on this topic; however, this data collection had not been finalised or released for analysis at the time of writing, and no new ESS-based comparative findings covering 2025 attitudes are therefore yet available. The Integration Barometer authors themselves note that the shift toward more restrictive Norwegian attitudes documented above has coincided with a broader tightening of immigration debates and policy across Europe, suggesting that developments elsewhere on the continent form part of the explanation for the Norwegian trend.[167]

[166] European Social Survey, Round 11 (2023/24), Final data release, 2025 (europeansocialsurvey.org); see also comparative analysis in RFBerlin (2025), "Attitudes towards migration in Europe, evidence from the European Social Survey" (rfberlin.com).
[167] Brekke et al. (2026), Integreringsbarometeret 2026 (imdi.no), Summary.

4 Recent migration statistics

4.1 Migration flows

Immigration to Norway continued to fall in 2024 and 2025. This continues the decrease from the very high levels seen in 2022 and 2023. Net immigration as a share of the total population fell from 1.18% in 2024 to 0.98% in 2025 (Table 4.1). In 2022 it was 1.65%, and in 2023 it was 1.56%. Registered immigration was 66,100 in 2024 and 55,200 in 2025, down from 86,600 in 2023. Emigration stayed more stable, at around 32,000 to 34,000 per year. As a result, net migration fell sharply: from 52,600 in 2023 to 34,100 in 2024 and 22,300 in 2025. This is a decrease of more than half in two years.

As in previous reports, Norway remains a country with more people moving in than moving out, that is, a net immigration country. Immigration by foreign citizens is still much higher than emigration. Net migration of Norwegian citizens has stayed negative, at minus 1 900 in 2024 and minus 1 940 in 2025. This continues the long-term pattern of more Norwegians moving abroad than returning.

The fall in overall migration is closely linked to developments in Ukraine. Immigration of Ukrainian citizens fell from 20,300 in 2024 to 12,800 in 2025, while emigration of Ukrainian citizens more than doubled, from 2,400 in 2024 to 5,500 in 2025. This is the first year since the full-scale invasion began that Ukrainian *emigration* from Norway has risen sharply. It points to a growing pattern of return or onward migration among displaced Ukrainians as the war continues, even as new arrivals keep falling. This coincides with more restrictive application of temporary collective protection (see chapter 1.5.3) and increased use of repatriation support to Ukraine (see chapter 1.11).

Apart from Ukraine, the top source countries of immigration to Norway by citizenship in 2025 were Poland, Sweden, Syria, Germany and India. The largest groups of emigrants were citizens of Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Sweden and India. As before, people with Norwegian citizenship remain the single largest emigration group.

Table 4.1: Registered immigration by citizenship (2014-2025).

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Immigration	70 030	67 276	66 800	58 192	52 485	52 153	38 075	53 947	90 475	86 589	66 077	55 243
Foreign	61 429	59 068	58 508	49 774	44 406	44 570	30 818	46 604	83 281	79 493	58 814	47 996
Norwegian	8 601	8 208	8 292	8 418	8 079	7 583	7 257	7 343	7 194	7 096	7 263	7 247
Emigration	31 875	37 474	40 724	36 843	34 382	26 826	26 744	34 297	32 536	34 011	31 968	32 919
Foreign	23 320	27 384	30 730	26 623	24 526	17 570	19 860	26 009	23 122	23 831	22 809	23 731
Norwegian	8 555	10 090	9 994	10 220	9 856	9 256	6 884	8 288	9 414	10 180	9 159	9 188
Net migration	38 155	29 802	26 076	21 349	18 103	25 327	11 331	19 650	57 939	52 578	34 109	22 324
Foreign	38 109	31 684	27 778	23 151	19 880	27 000	10 958	20 595	60 159	55 662	36 005	24 265
Norwegian	46	-1 882	-1 702	-1 802	-1 777	-1 673	373	-945	-2 220	-3 084	-1 896	-1 941
Legal migrants share of total population												
Immigration (%)	1,36	1,30	1,28	1,10	0,99	0,71	0,71	1,01	1,65	1,56	1,18	0,98
Emigration (%)	0,62	0,73	0,78	0,70	0,65	0,50	0,50	0,64	0,59	0,61	0,57	0,58
Difference (%)	0,74	0,57	0,50	0,40	0,34	0,21	0,21	0,37	1,06	0,95	0,61	0,40

(Source: Statistics Norway)

4.1.1 Main reasons for immigration

In 2025, family immigration became the largest category of non-Nordic immigration for the first time since before the war in Ukraine. It made up 31.7% of the total, up from 23.3% in 2024 and 20.5% in 2023. Protection continued its steep fall: from 50.9% of total immigration in 2023, to 43.9% in 2024, to 33.8% in 2025. This reflects the ongoing decrease in new arrivals from Ukraine described above. Labour immigration stayed close to a quarter of the total, at 25.7% in 2025 and 26.1% in 2024. Education's share kept rising slowly, from 4.4% in 2023 to 7.0% in 2025, but in absolute numbers it remains lower than in the years before tuition fees were introduced in 2023 (Table 4.2.)

In absolute terms, total non-Nordic immigration fell from 73,400 in 2023 to 52,100 in 2024 and 41,000 in 2025. This continues the return towards pre-2022 levels, as the exceptional increase caused by the war in Ukraine becomes less prominent.

Table 4.2: Non-Nordic immigration by entry categories, and share of total for 2021-2025.

	Total number	Labour	Family	Protection	Education	Unknown reason/ Other
2016	51 023	14 585	16 738	15 231	4 156	313
Share of total		*28,6*	*32,8*	*29,9*	*8,1*	*0,6*
2017	42 579	14 018	16 240	7 852	4 075	394
Share of total		*32,9*	*38,1*	*18,4*	*9,6*	*0,9*
2018	37 424	15 193	12 927	4 653	4 221	430
Share of total		*40,6*	*34,5*	*12,4*	*11,3*	*1,1*
2019	38 405	16 635	12 797	4 344	4 230	399
Share of total		*43,3*	*33,3*	*11,3*	*11,0*	*1,0*
2020	25 998	12 044	8 841	2 479	2 228	406
Share of total		*46,3*	*34,0*	*9,5*	*8,6*	*1,6*
2021	39 900	18 392	12 188	4 355	4 504	461
Share of total		*46,1*	*30,5*	*10,9*	*11,3*	*1,2*
2022	76 563	17 415	17 432	35 801	5 326	589
Share of total		*22,7*	*22,8*	*46,8*	*7,0*	*0,8*
2023	73 441	17 013	15 053	37 354	3 242	779
Share of total		*23,2*	*20,5*	*50,9*	*4,4*	*1,1*
2024	52 057	13 581	12 105	22 829	3 041	501
Share of total		*26,1*	*23,3*	*43,9*	*5,8*	*1,0*
2025	40 982	10 545	12 995	13 870	2 882	690
Share of total		*25,7*	*31,7*	*33,8*	*7,0*	*1,7*

(Source: Statistics Norway 2025, Immigrants by reason for immigration – SSB)

4.1.2 Labour migration

Work-related residence permits for third-country nationals rose again in 2025. This continues the recovery seen since the low point during the pandemic. UDI granted 10,230 permits in 2025, up from 9,823 in 2024, close to the high levels last seen in 2022 and 2023 (Table 4.3). The mix of permits changed. Seasonal work permits rose from 3,746 in 2024 (38.1% of the total) to 4,431 in 2025 (43.3%). Skilled-work permits fell, both in number, from 3,877 to 3,593,

and in share, from 39.5% to 35.1%. The number of skilled work permits issued remains within the 6,000 annual quota set by the Ministry of Labour of Social Inclusion (see section 1.2). Data for the first seven months of 2026 show the share of seasonal work rising further, to 52.5% of all permits granted. This suggests the trend has continued into 2026.

Table 4.3: Work-related residence permits granted for third-country nationals and EU/EFTA registrations 2014-2026

Year	Skilled work	Seasonal work	Other	Total (third-country)	Skilled work %	Seasonal work %	Other %	EU/EFTA registrations
2014	3 737	2 531	2 245	8 513	43,9	29,7	26,4	34 244
2015	2 875	2 290	2 553	7 718	37,3	29,7	33,1	26 593
2016	2 488	2 401	2 187	7 076	35,2	33,9	30,9	23 496
2017	2 815	2 647	2 584	8 046	35,0	32,9	32,1	22 995
2018	3 771	2 905	2 428	9 104	41,4	31,9	26,7	21 195
2019	4 398	3 414	2 416	10 228	43,0	33,4	23,6	19 285
2020	2 967	2 363	1 475	6 805	43,6	34,7	21,7	12 951
2021	4 145	1 402	1 801	7 348	56,4	19,1	24,5	14 429
2022	5 731	2 860	2 107	10 698	53,6	26,7	19,7	16 970
2023	5 444	3 109	2 590	11 143	48,9	27,9	23,2	16 408
2024	3 877	3 746	2 200	9 823	39,5	38,1	22,4	NA.
2025	3 593	4 431	2 206	10 230	35,1	43,3	21,6	NA
2026 (Jan–Jul)	2 053	3 833	1 416	7 302	28,1	52,5	19,4	NA

(Source: UDI and Statistics Norway)

4.1.3 Education-related immigration

The number of permits issued for education-related immigration rose slightly, from 3,894 in 2024 to 3,925 in 2025 (Table 4.4). The mix of permits changed significantly after the au pair scheme was ended, with effect from 15 March 2024. Au pair permits fell from 283 in 2024, a partial-year figure since the scheme ended part-way through the year, to zero in 2025. Students remained the largest group, growing both in number, from 2,699 to 2,976, and in share, from 69.3% to 75.8% of the total. The number of pupils also grew, from 372 to 425 (9.6% to 10.8%), as did postdoctoral researchers, from 230 to 252 (5.9% to 6.4%).

Table 4.4: Migrants on study permits 2021-2025, and % of total each year

Year	Total	Pupils	Students	Postdocs	Au pairs	Praktikant/ gjestearbeider	Other (necessary supplementary education / legacy other)
2021	4 428	298	3 399	123	345	1	262
Share of total (%)		*6,7*	*76,8*	*2,8*	*7,8*	*0,0*	*5,9*
2022	5 630	365	3 943	293	737	18	274
Share of total (%)		*6,5*	*70,0*	*5,2*	*13,1*	*0,3*	*4,9*
2023	4 042	360	2 756	253	466	63	144
Share of total (%)		*8,9*	*68,2*	*6,3*	*11,5*	*1,6*	*3,6*
2024	3 894	372	2 699	230	283	53	257
Share of total (%)		*9,6*	*69,3*	*5,9*	*7,3*	*1,4*	*6,6*
2025	**3 925**	**425**	**2 976**	**252**	**0**	**50**	**222**
Share of total (%)		*10,8*	*75,8*	*6,4*	*0,0*	*1,3*	*5,7*

(Source: UDI)

Figures from UDI also show which were the most important source countries within each subcategory of education permit in 2025.

- In 2025, among students, China accounted for 11.7% of the total, and the USA for 8.7%. Canada, Japan and the UK came next, together adding a further 16.4%, so that these top five countries made up 36.7% of all student permits.
- For postdoctoral researchers, China accounted for 17.9% of the total. Brazil followed closely with 14.7%, ahead of the USA (11.1%) and India (8.7%). Together, these four countries made up around 52.4% of all postdoctoral permits.
- Among pupils, the USA accounted for 24.5% of the total, and the Philippines for 18.4%. Together they made up 42.8% of all pupil permits.

In 2025, across all subcategories together, China, the USA, Canada, the Philippines and the UK made up the largest shares, together accounting for about 35.1% of all education permits[168].

4.1.4 International protection

The number of persons displaced from Ukraine granted temporary collective protection continued to fall. Applications rose to 35,370 in 2023, then fell sharply to 18,412 in 2024 and 13,445 in 2025 (Table 4.5).

Ordinary asylum applications, not counting temporary collective protection, numbered 5,380 in 2023, 4,970 in 2024 and 3,628 in 2025. Applications have fallen significantly since earlier peaks, including the especially high number of 31,150 applications registered in 2015, at the height of the European migration crisis. Ukrainian citizens are the largest group of applicants for asylum in 2025, making up 33.3 % of the total, as certain groups of Displaced persons from Ukraine are excluded from eligibility for temporary collective protection and may have

[168] UDI, Utdanningstillatelser etter statsborgerskap og type tillatelse" (2025)

their application reviewed individually on the merits (see 1.5.3). The second largest group in 2025 were Syrians, followed by citizens of Eritrea, Afghanistan and Palestine.[169]

Minors seeking asylum without a parent or guardian numbered 694 in 2022, falling to 420 in 2024 and 303 in 2025.

UDI's first-instance permits granted for protection, not counting temporary collective protection, fell to 664 in total in 2025. This was made up of 510 Convention permits, 80 other-refugee permits and 74 humanitarian permits. This continues the fall from 2,190 permits in 2023 and 1,518 in 2024. The convention category remains by far the largest, as in previous years. Rejections on the merits stood at 1,361 in 2025, considerably more than to the 841 recorded in 2024, alongside a further 854 Dublin or safe-third-country rejections. Very few Ukrainian citizens have been granted permits on individual grounds (5 granted humanitarian permits in 2025), with most applications for asylum from Ukrainian citizens either denied or withdrawn. The top countries of origin of persons granted Convention status were Türkiye and Eritrea, together making up 47.6% of all Convention statuses issued.

UNE, the body that handles appeals against decisions made by UDI, granted 60 permits in total in 2025 (23 convention, 2 other refugees, 35 humanitarian), down from 89 in 2024. Rejections by UNE, including Dublin cases, numbered 1,715 in 2025.

The total number of protection permits (*other* than temporary collective protection) granted by UDI and UNE together fell from 2,338 in 2023 to 1 607 in 2024 and 724 in 2025.

Resettlement of UN quota refugees also continued to fall. Norway offered resettlement places to 1 176 refugees in 2024 and 570 in 2025, well below the 2021 level of 3 468 offers. The number who actually arrived was somewhat higher in both years, at 1 468 in 2024 and 685 in 2025, reflecting the usual time lag between an offer and an arrival. For information about the annual quotas and distribution of places, see 1.5.2).

In 2025, Syria was the largest asylum seeking country after Ukraine, but Afghanistan was the second largest country granted protection (including resettlement).

[169] Directorate of Immigration, Januar - desember 2025: Asylsøknader etter statsborgerskap og måned (udi.no)

Table 4.5: International protection in Norway 2015 to 2025, applications and permits

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Temp. collective protection (applications)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	35 095	35 370	18 412	13 445
Asylum applicants (applications)	31 150	3 460	3 560	2 656	2 305	1 388	1 656	4 919	5 380	4 970	3 628
Minors (unaccompanied, applications)	5 480	320	191	160	135	89	181	694	504	420	303
UDI (first instance): Total permits	**6 252**	**12 451**	**4 385**	**1 453**	**1 789**	**1 140**	**1 105**	**1 101**	**2 190**	**1 518**	**664**
UDI: Convention	5 411	11 560	3 832	1 333	1 647	1 011	926	1 015	1 982	1 318	510
UDI: Other refugees	673	399	149	52	47	50	136	57	119	131	80
UDI: Humanitarian	168	492	404	68	95	79	43	29	89	69	74
UDI: Collective protection	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	33 554	33 417	19 870	12 940
UDI: Rejections (realitetsbehandlet)	2 103	5 966	1 807	548	589	354	170	252	547	841	1 361
UDI: Rejections (Dublin/safe third country)	2 710	1 954	549	528	373	258	194	532	1 031	1 113	854
UNE (appeals): Total permits	**900**	**420**	**499**	**298**	**230**	**169**	**199**	**193**	**148**	**89**	**60**
UNE: Convention	199	132	145	113	83	49	74	57	50	26	23
UNE: Other refugees	107	61	79	27	25	4	5	8	8	13	2
UNE: Humanitarian	594	227	275	158	122	116	120	128	90	50	35
UNE: Rejections (incl. Dublin)	6570	6882	5752	2842	1484	1096	751	627	745	1 321	1 715
Total permits UDI+UNE	**7 152**	**12 871**	**4 884**	**1 751**	**2 019**	**1 309**	**1 304**	**1 294**	**2 338**	**1 607**	**724**
Resettlement: Offers	2 544	3 170	3 097	2 124	3 100	2 401	3 468	2 816	1 651	1 176	570
Resettlement: Arrivals	2 383	3 291	2 829	2 481	2 803	1 527	3 638	3 124	2 242	1 468	685

Source: UDI and UNE

4.1.5 Irregular migration and expulsion

Police-executed forced returns totalled 2,458 in 2024 and 2,388 in 2025, close to the 2,319 recorded in 2023. In the first half of 2026, through June, the Police carried out 1,076 forced returns. The largest categories in 2025 were expulsion (899 cases) and refused entry or stay (600 cases), followed by the Dublin procedure (517 cases) and asylum-related cases (295 cases).

On the UDI decision side, the total number of refused entry or stay and expulsion decisions kept rising: from 4,210 in 2023, to 4,518 in 2024, to 6,220 in 2025. This is an increase of about 48% over two years. Almost all of the increase came from expulsion decisions, which rose from 2,893 in 2023 to 3,302 in 2024 and 5,002 in 2025. Decisions to refuse entry or stay stayed more stable, at 1,317 in 2023, 1,216 in 2024 and 1,218 in 2025.

Looking at the grounds for expulsion in 2025, most decisions, 4,125 of 5,002, were for breaches of the Immigration Act. A further 500 were made under EEA regulations, and 368 followed a criminal conviction. This pattern has been fairly stable since 2021: breach of the Immigration Act has consistently been the largest single ground for expulsion.

Table 4.6: Forced return by the Police and decisions on refused entry/stay and expulsions by UDI (source: the Police and UDI)

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026, till June
Forced return executed by the Police	1 778	2 695	2 319	2 458	2 388	1 076
— Asylum application	96	163	209	236	295	123
— Dublin procedure	177	366	664	710	517	214
— Internal protection		60	N/A	102	77	11
— Refused entry/stay	1 505	1 343	745	635	600	237
— Expulsion		823	701	775	899	491
UDI decisions on refused entry/stay and expulsions						
Refused entry/stay	1 347	1 732	1 317	1 216	1 218	
Expulsion decision	1 210	1 894	2 893	3 302	5 002	
Total UDI decisions	2 557	3 626	4 210	4 518	6 220	
— of which, expulsion on grounds of a criminal conviction ("Straffet")	188	238	282	377	368	
— of which, expulsion for breach of the Immigration Act	746	1 293	2 300	2 449	4 125	
— of which, expulsion under EEA regulations	247	336	296	444	500	

(Source: UDI and Police)

4.2 Trends in foreign-born and foreign population stocks

The foreign-born population, measured as having a country of origin other than Norway, has increased more than six-fold since 1990 and more than doubled since 2010, reaching 987,120 as of 1 January 2026 (Table 4.7). Growth has slowed compared with the surge in 2022 and 2023. From 2025 to 2026, the stock grew by 2 per cent, closer to the more moderate growth seen before the pandemic. This means the foreign-born population has

kept increasing its share of the total population, from 3.6% in 1990, via 9.5% in 2010, to 17.5% at the start of 2026.

The share of women in the foreign-born population has varied over the years but has generally stayed below 50%, apart from 2000, when it briefly went just over 50%. At the start of 2026, the share of women was 48.9%, close to the 49.0% recorded in both 2025 and 2024. The share of women in the total population is slightly higher, and has stayed flat at 49.6% every year since 2020.

Table 4.7 also presents the immigrant population by citizenship. Its share of the total population is lower than the share by country of origin, and this gap has widened over time, from 3.4 percentage points in 2020 (14.7% versus 11.3%) to 6.2 percentage points in 2026 (17.5% versus 11.3%). This partly reflects the continuing presence of displaced persons from Ukraine, who have not yet naturalised in large numbers, and partly the high rate of naturalisation among other groups, which removes people from the citizenship count over time.

Poland remains by far the largest country-of-origin group, with 111,740 immigrants living in Norway as of January 2026. Ukraine follows with 85 461, then Lithuania (43,065), Syria (42,040) and Sweden (37,732). Somalia, Eritrea, the Philippines, Pakistan and Iraq complete the top ten. Ukraine has become the second-largest country-of-origin group, a sharp rise from 36th place as recently as 2020, as noted in the previous report. This is happening even as new immigration from Ukraine falls sharply (see section 4.1 above). Together, this shows how a large group of earlier arrivals keeps adding to the resident population, even as new arrivals decrease.

Table 4.7: Foreign-born population by country of birth and gender

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2023	2024	2025	2026
Country of birth other than Norway	150 973	238 462	459 347	790 497	877 227	931 081	965 113	987 120
% women	47,6	50,4	48,7	48,1	48,8	49,0	49,0	48,9
% total population	3,6	5,3	9,5	14,7	16,0	16,8	17,3	17,5
Foreign citizenship				604 525	610 884	633 406	645 629	637 967
% total population				11,3	11,1	11,4	11,5	11,3
Norwegian-born to immigrant parents	17 324	44 025	92 966	188 757	213 810	221 459	230 237	238 507
% total population	0,4	1,0	1,9	3,5	3,9	4,0	4,1	4,2
Total population	4 233 116	4 478 497	4 858 199	5 367 580	5 488 983	5 550 203	5 594 340	5 627 400
% women	50,5	50,5	50,0	49,6	49,6	49,6	49,6	49,6

Norwegian-born to two foreign-born parents are persons who were born in Norway, but whose parents were both foreign-born.

The number of Norwegian-born to two foreign-born (immigrant) parents has grown more than thirteen-fold since 1990, from just over 17,000 (0.4% of the population) to 238,507 as of January 2026 (4.2% of the population) (Table 3.7). The most significant increase happened between 2010 and 2020, when the share rose from 1.9% to 3.5%. Growth has continued steadily since then, reaching 4.2% in 2026, a rise of 0.1 percentage points from 2025.

As in the previous report, Pakistan remains the largest country of origin for this group, with 19 292 people, followed by Poland (18,032), Somalia (16,975) and Iraq (13,052). This ranking has remained stable and reflects Norway's longest-established immigrant communities.

4.2.1 Foreign population by nationality and naturalisation

Naturalisations granted rose sharply again in 2025, to around 35,000, up from 27,276 in 2024. This continues the strong upward trend since Norway introduced a general rule allowing dual citizenship, and approaches the 2021 peak of 41,100 (Table 4.8). The acceptance rate remained very high, at 95%.

Syria was again the largest country of origin for naturalisation in 2025, making up around 22% of all approved applications (7,628 of 35,021), followed at a distance by Poland, Sweden, Eritrea and Germany.

Permanent residence permits granted also rose, from 10,556 in 2024 to 13,175 in 2025, with an acceptance rate of 92%. This is a reversal of the declining trend described in the previous report, which had tracked a fall from 94% in 2020 to 89% in 2023.

Table 4.8: Applications and acceptance rate for Norwegian citizenship (naturalisation) and permanent residence permits, 2014-2025 (source: UDI)

	Naturalisation: Applications / Granted	Naturalisation: Acceptance rate %	Permanent residence: Applications / Granted	Permanent residence: Acceptance rate %
2014	15 336	88	15 801	94
2015	12 432	89	18 431	94
2016	13 712	91	16 837	94
2017	21 648	90	17 086	90
2018	10 241	87	14 594	91
2019	13 201	91	20 558	89
2020	19 698	94	17 981	90
2021	41 100	95	14 548	90
2022	39 369	94	10 915	88
2023	37 278	96	11 335	89
2024	27 276	94	10 556	90
2025	34 840	95	13 175	92

4.3 Main changes in labour market outcomes of immigrants

Employment among immigrants continued to rise in absolute terms in the fourth quarter of 2025, though the employment rate eased slightly for the second year running. The number of employed immigrants rose by 10,739 over the past year, to 545,068, while the employment rate fell by 0.2 percentage points, to 67.5% (Table 3.9). The non-immigrant population, by contrast, saw the number in employment fall (minus 6,916), though its employment rate also eased only slightly (79.5%, minus 0.2 percentage points). This means immigrants accounted for essentially all of the net growth in total employment over the past year (plus,3 813).

Employment among immigrants from "Europe except EU/EFTA/UK", the category that covers most of the displaced persons from Ukraine, rose sharply, both in numbers (plus 7,156, the

largest increase of any group) and in rate (plus 4.1 percentage points, to 58.3%). This is a strong reversal of the declines recorded in earlier reports, and fits with a large group of displaced Ukrainians steadily entering employment as their length of residence increases.

By contrast, employment rates fell for the Nordic countries (minus 0.7 percentage points, to 79.3%), EU/EFTA countries other than the Nordics (minus 1.6 percentage points, to 73.5%, despite an absolute gain of 1,168 employed), new EU member states after 2004 (minus 1.9 percentage points, to 73.0%, with a numerical fall of 1,733) and North America and Oceania (minus 1.8 percentage points, to 67.5%, on an almost unchanged number). Asia (64.3%, unchanged) and Africa (62.3%, plus 0.2 percentage points) held broadly steady while adding people in work (plus 2,534 and plus 1,490 respectively). Latin America and the Caribbean eased slightly to 71.4% (minus 0.6 percentage points) despite a small numerical gain (plus 372).

Table 4.9: Employed (20-66 years), by immigrant-background and world region. 4th quarter 2025

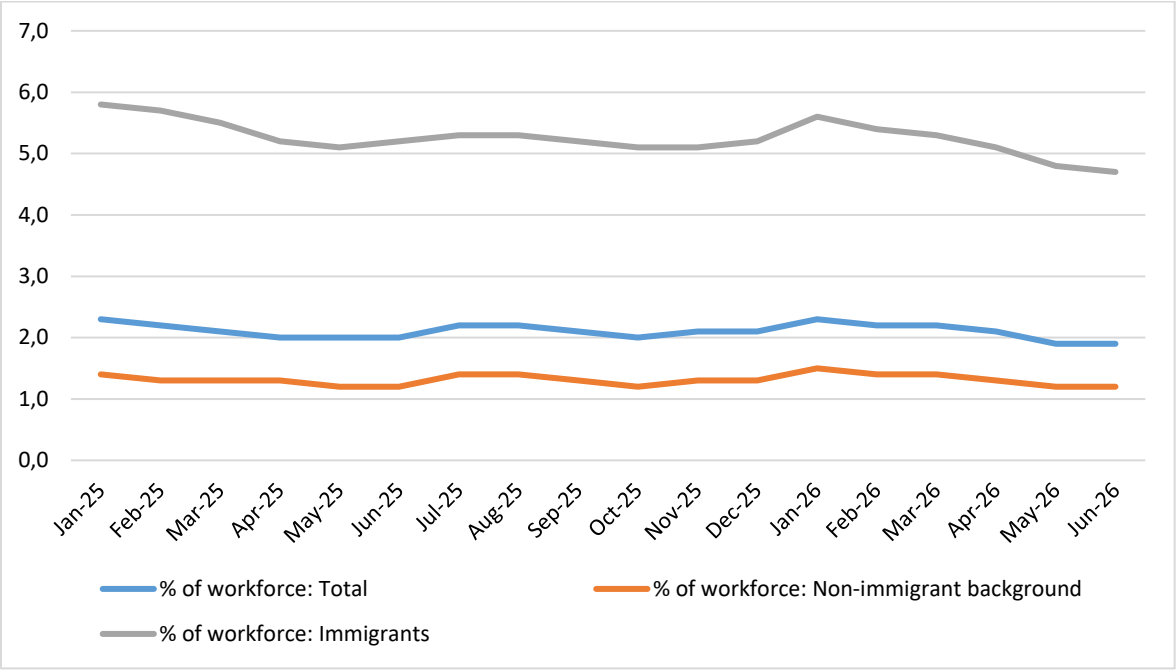
	2025: Absolute figures	2025: % share in group	Change 2024–2025: Number of employed	Change 2024–2025: Percentage points
Population in total	**2 629 264**	**76,7**	**3 813**	**-0,2**
Non-immigrant population	2 084 190	79,5	-6 916	-0,2
Immigrants, total	**545 068**	**67,5**	**10 739**	**-0,2**
Nordic countries except Norway	43 403	79,3	-247	-0,7
EU/EFTA until 2004 except the Nordic countries	56 247	73,5	1 168	-1,6
New EU countries after 2004	143 835	73,0	-1 733	-1,9
Europe except EU/EFTA/UK	66 075	58,3	7 156	4,1
North America and Oceania	8 436	67,5	-1	-1,8
Asia	150 913	64,3	2 534	0,0
Africa	57 844	62,3	1 490	0,2
Latin America and the Caribbean	18 315	71,4	372	-0,6

(Source: Statistics Norway)

Registered unemployment among immigrants continued to run some four to five times higher than among the non-immigrant population throughout 2025 and into 2026 (Figure 4.1). The immigrant unemployment rate fell steadily over the course of 2025 and into 2026, from 5.8% of the immigrant workforce in January 2025 to 4.7% in June 2026.

This is a larger proportional decrease than for the non-immigrant population, whose unemployment rate eased more modestly, from 1.4% to 1.2% over the same period.

Figure 4.1: Unemployment, in per cent of the workforce (20-66 years), by country of origin, and time/months, 2025-2026



(Source: NAV 2026)

4.3.1 Labour market outcomes for Norwegian born with immigrants' parents

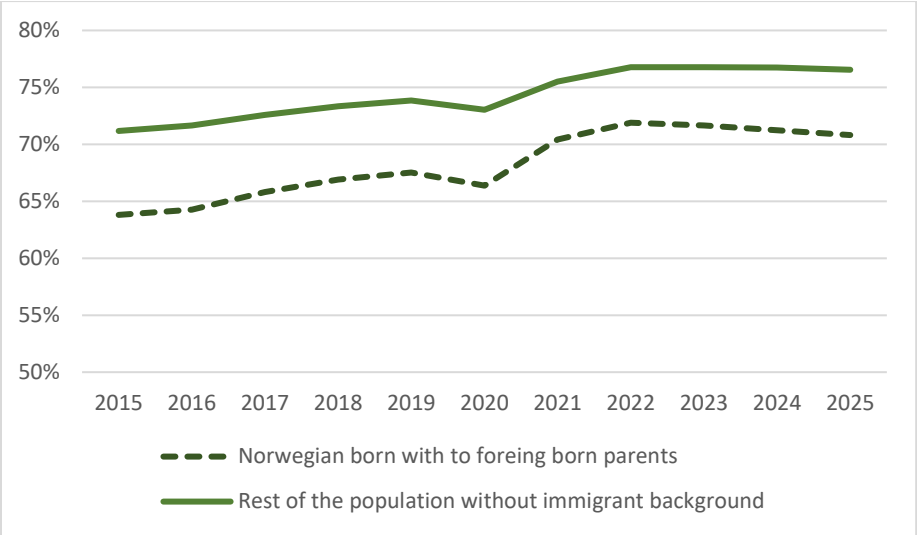
Norwegian-born with immigrant parents are still a young group, with seven in ten under the age of 20. Many of those who have reached working age are in their twenties, which makes the 20–29 age group a useful point of comparison. In 2025, 70.8 per cent of Norwegian-born with immigrant parents aged 20–29 were employed, or around 25,800 persons. In the rest of the population, the corresponding figure was 76.5 per cent (Statistics Norway, StatBank table 11711).

Over the past decade, the employment rate in this age group has risen by 7 percentage points, from 63.8 per cent in 2015. Over the same period, the gap to the rest of the population narrowed from 7.4 to 5.7 percentage points. However, the trend has not been even. The gap narrowed steadily up to 2019, widened in 2020, and fell to its lowest level of 4.9 percentage points in 2022. Since then it has widened slightly each year. This is because employment among Norwegian-born with immigrant parents in their twenties has fallen somewhat since 2022, while it has remained stable in the rest of the population.

The high level of education among both women and men is highlighted as a key explanation for the higher employment and small gender gaps compared with immigrants. Other explanations include the comprehensive school system, free higher education and family policies that support dual-earner households [170].

[170] IMDi (2026). Hvordan går det med integreringen i Norge? Indikatorer, status og utviklingstrekk i 2026, section 4.2

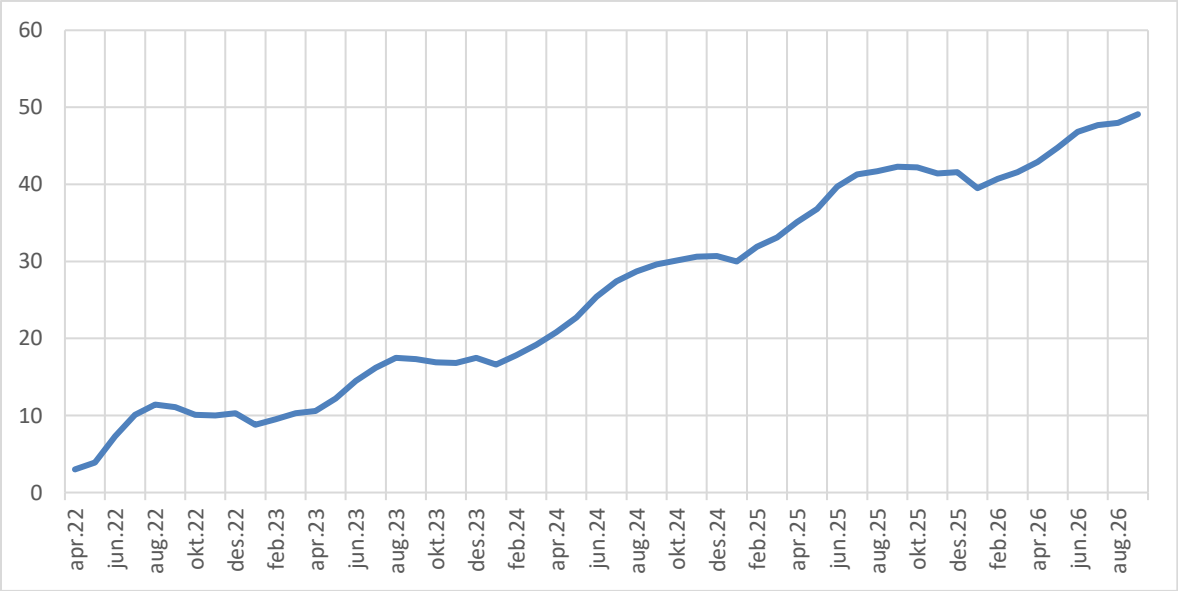
Figure 4.2: Per cent employed persons by immigration category and year, aged 20-29



4.4 Labour market outcomes for displaced people from Ukraine

The share of displaced persons from Ukraine in employment has risen markedly over the past year. In September 2026, 49 per cent of Ukrainians aged 20–66 who arrived after the Russian invasion in February 2022 were in paid employment, up from 42 per cent a year earlier. [171] The increase reflects both more Ukrainians in work and fewer new arrivals. The rapid inflow over a short period, together with participation in the Introduction Programme during the first period in Norway, helps explain why employment remains relatively low.

Figure 4.3: Per cent employed Ukrainians aged 20–66 who arrived after February 2022, number and share employed, April 2022–September 2026



[171] Statistics Norway - Hvor mange ukrainere jobber i Norge? – SSB

Employment is considerably higher among those displaced Ukrainians who have completed the Introduction Programme. In June 2026, more than 60 per cent of programme completers were in work, and the share rises with time since completion. The gender gap has also narrowed, and the employment rate for women is now only slightly lower than for men.

The majority of employed Ukrainians are women, and the group is young, with most under 40. Employment is concentrated in health and social services, retail trade, accommodation and food services, and manufacturing. Since displaced persons from Ukraine have been settled across the country, employment also varies geographically, with Vestland having the largest number in work and Troms the highest share. In total, about 32,600 of displaced Ukrainians were employed in Norway in September 2026.

Recommended sources of information

Recent statistics and publications by *Statistics Norway* on migration related issues with many sub-topics: http://ssb.no/en/innvandring-og-innvandrere

The reports usually have a summary in English, and there is an English version of most statistics.

Statistics and information on applications, permits, rules and regulations from the *Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI)* are available in English:

http://www.udi.no/Norwegian-Directorate-of-Immigration/

Recent studies commissioned by UDI and the *Ministry of Justice and Public Security*:

http://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/research-and-development-reports/

Some of the reports contain a summary or abstract in English.

Facts concerning integration policy in English published by the *Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)*: http://www.imdi.no/en/

Recent studies commissioned by IMDi: https://www.imdi.no/om-imdi/rapporter/

Some of the reports contain a summary or abstract in English.

IMDi publishes an annual report with an overview of integration indicators:

Hvordan går det med integreringen i Norge? | IMDi

There is a summary in English.

Overview of studies, ad-hoc queries and occasional papers on issues concerning migration from the *European Migration Network (EMN) Norway*:

http://www.udi.no/en/statistics-and-analysis/european-migration-network---norway/

Websites for relevant publications

Annually, there are many relevant reports, scientific articles, chapters in books and papers published in Norway or internationally by researchers based here. Much of this material can be found by checking the websites of the institutions listed below. However, this is not an exhaustive list of sites for finding relevant publications.

https://www.prio.org/research/topics/migration

https://www.samfunnsforskning.no/english/our-research/migration-and-integration/

https://www.oslomet.no/en/research/research-groups/international-studies-migration

https://www.fafo.no/en/research-areas/migration-and-integration

https://samforsk.no/Sider/Avdelinger/Mangfold-og-inkludering.aspx

https://www.uib.no/en/imer

https://www.frisch.uio.no/english/research-themes/education-sosial-security-labour/index.html