

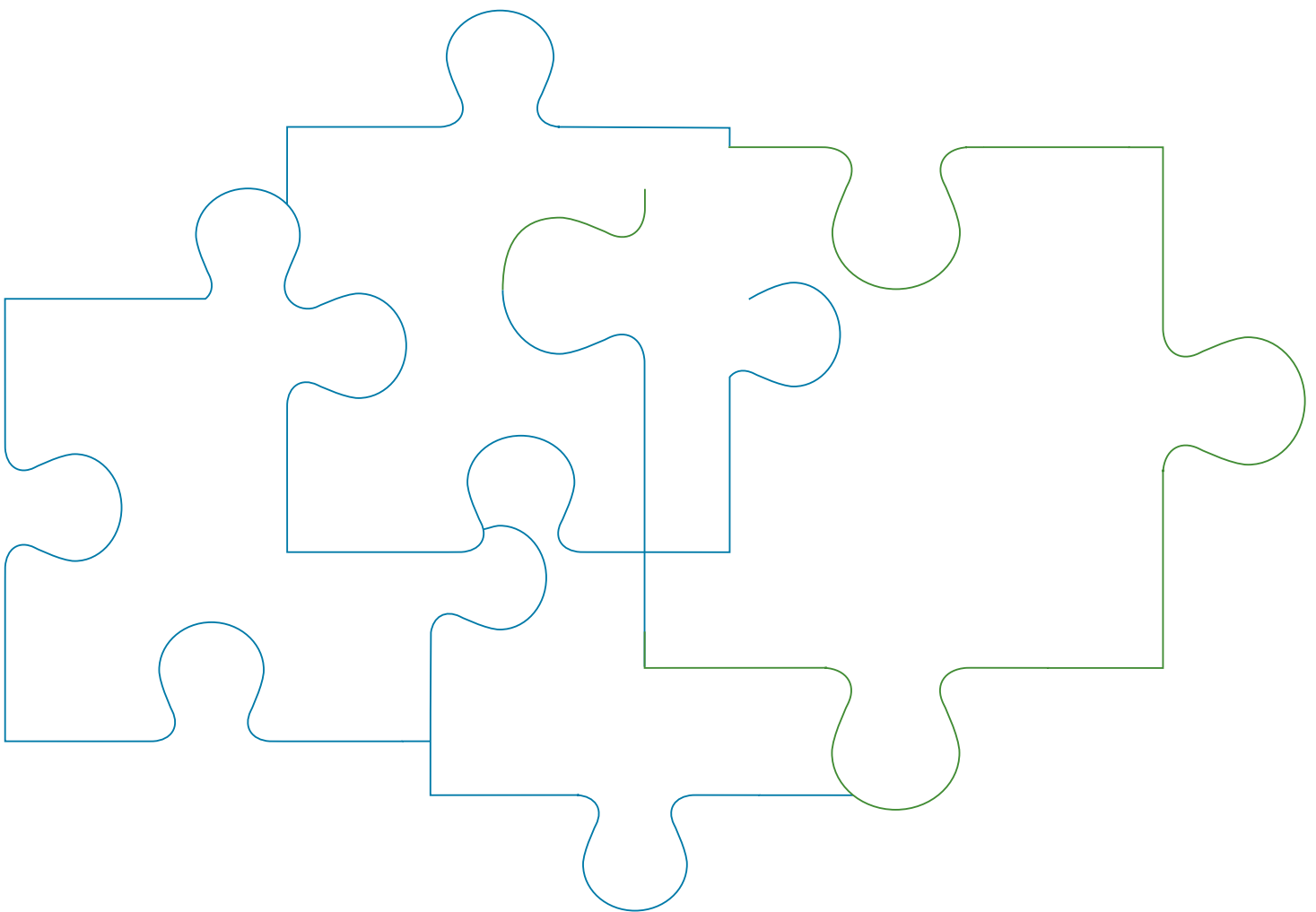


Norwegian Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs

Strategy

# Norway in Europe

The Norwegian Government's strategy  
for cooperation with the EU 2018–2021



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# Foreword

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Norwegian foreign policy starts in Europe. European countries are Norway's close allies, and the EU is our most important trading partner. There is a considerable degree of economic interdependence between Norway and the EU, for example in key sectors such as energy and seafood. We have similar views on a range of issues in international politics, including free trade and multilateralism, and we agree on the need for binding international cooperation on climate change. Our shared European interests and values form the basis for Norway's cooperation with EU institutions and member states in the international arena, not least in our common neighbouring areas.

Norway's cooperation with the EU is also important in the context of Norwegian domestic policy. The Government's policy platform states our intention to address the challenges facing Norway by restructuring the Norwegian economy, fulfilling Norway's climate commitments, promoting an inclusive labour market, ensuring that welfare schemes are effective, reducing poverty and marginalisation, and significantly stepping up efforts to promote integration. All of these areas have a European dimension.

The Government's strategy for cooperation with the EU in the period 2018-2021 has two main messages. Firstly, our cooperation with the EU must help to realise the Government's vision for our part of the world: a Europe that is secure, free, and economically strong, and where the individual countries take joint responsibility for addressing shared challenges. Secondly, the Government will pursue an effective European policy that enables us to promote Norwegian interests and our vision for Europe as successfully as possible.

The EEA Agreement occupies a unique position among the various agreements Norway has concluded with the EU to safeguard Norwegian

interests. The EEA Agreement helps to ensure economic security and predictability. It is vital for the Norwegian business sector, for Norwegian jobs, and for our ability to maintain a sustainable welfare society. Without labour from other EEA countries, many Norwegian businesses would come to a standstill. Without access to the internal market and a level playing field in the EEA, the Norwegian export industry would suffer.

Under the EEA Agreement, Norwegian citizens have opportunities they could not have dreamed of in the past, when Norway only had a classic trade agreement with the EU. Many Norwegians make use of their rights under the Agreement to cross borders, live, work, invest, and study in other EEA countries. Younger generations take these opportunities for granted. The Government sees it as one of its main tasks to increase awareness of the importance of the EEA Agreement for safeguarding fundamental Norwegian interests.

Teamwork is crucial for an effective European policy. Companies, interest groups, government agencies, and the general public all benefit from, participate in, influence, and are influenced by European cooperation. It was therefore important for the Government to consult a range of actors when drawing up this strategy. We greatly appreciate the input we have received, both spoken and written, from the business sector, the social partners, NGOs, representatives of local and regional authorities, and others. I look forward to continuing our dialogue and cooperation in the follow-up of the strategy.

**Ine Eriksen Søreide**  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs*

# Europe today

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Europe is currently undergoing significant economic, political and institutional changes. This is creating both opportunities and challenges for Norway.

## A changing Europe

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Nearly 10 years have passed since the financial crisis, and the European economy is once again picking up. Growth figures are good, and employment rates are almost back to their pre-crisis level. However, there are still considerable challenges relating to social and economic disparities in many countries, and youth unemployment levels are worryingly high in many places.

The security situation is more serious than it has been for a long time. Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the destabilisation of eastern Ukraine, with Russian support, have undermined stability in Europe. Large areas of instability in the belt stretching from the Sahel to Afghanistan have become a breeding ground for threats that can also affect our security. There have been terrorist attacks in several European cities in recent years, and the rise in right-wing extremism gives cause for concern.

*European countries have tended to respond to economic and security challenges, and to challenges at the global level, by means of binding cooperation.*

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Greater international mobility – of money, goods, people and information – is boosting economic growth and knowledge exchange. However, it also means that negative global trends, such as social and economic disparities, scarcity of resources, pollution, climate change and inadequate access to healthcare, affect Europe too.

Political polarisation is more marked than it was just a few years ago. Many people are expressing a lack of confidence in the authorities and in the ability of established political parties to respond adequately to developments in society. In certain European countries, a democratically elected majority is taking advantage of this situation to strengthen its own position without regard for the fundamental principles of democracy and the rule of law. The traditional political divide between left and right is at times being overshadowed by other divisions, such as multilateralism versus unilateralism, free trade versus protectionism, and open versus closed approaches to such issues as migration and diversity.

Although they may have widely differing views on individual issues, European countries have tended to respond to economic and security challenges, and to challenges at the global level by means of binding cooperation. These challenges are too great for individual countries to deal with alone, even though the responsibility for doing so ultimately rests with the national authorities. The EU plays a pivotal role in this cooperation, and is also leading the way internationally in areas such as climate change negotiations, efforts to address migration (both at the European level and globally), and the fight against terrorism. Ambitions are high, and a closely coordinated French-German leadership is setting the pace.

Groups of countries within the EU are deepening their cooperation in certain areas, particularly in relation to defence policy and economic policy. The issue of EU enlargement is receiving renewed political attention, as reflected in the adoption of the EU's new strategy for the Western Balkans.

While many countries are seeking to deepen and expand their cooperation, some are moving in the opposite direction. Certain member states are pushing the boundaries of what is acceptable in the EU, by challenging the values on which the EU is founded. The UK, one of the largest EU member states, has decided to leave the Union. So far, the UK's decision has led to greater unity

within the EU rather than fragmentation. However, the consequences of the UK's withdrawal process are unclear, first and foremost for the UK, but also for the EU.

## Norway in Europe

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Norway's security, freedom and prosperity depend on Europe as a whole developing in a positive direction, in a way that benefits future generations. Norway accepts its share of the responsibility for contributing to this, by engaging in binding cooperation, not least through the EEA Agreement, the Schengen Association Agreement and Norway's other agreements with the EU.

Due to Norway and the EU's shared set of values and interests, the Government's priorities are often consistent with EU policy. This is reflected in our close cooperation in multilateral forums such as the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the UN. In these settings, Norway and the EU stand side-by-side in defence of fundamental values and common rules not only in Europe but also globally.

The Government is considering on an ongoing basis, whether there is a need to further develop our cooperation with the EU. There are several developments in the EU that may create opportunities and even the need for deeper cooperation.

Firstly, the UK's withdrawal from the EU will affect European cooperation during the period covered by this strategy. The UK's withdrawal will not change Norway's relationship with the EU, but it will make it necessary for Norway to find new forms of cooperation with the UK in several areas. As a result of the negotiations between the EU and the UK on their future relationship, new arrangements between the parties are likely to be put in place, particularly in the areas of justice and home affairs and foreign and security policy. The Government will seek to ensure that Norway can also take part in closer cooperation with the EU in these areas, where this is in Norway's interests.

*Norway's security, freedom and prosperity depend on Europe as a whole developing in a positive direction.*

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Secondly, deeper cooperation between groups of EU member states may have consequences for security and economic policy, for Norway as well. The Government will seek to find ways of enabling Norway to participate in such cooperation where this is in Norway's interests.

Thirdly, practical cooperation in the EU and the development, implementation and enforcement of common rules are increasingly being dealt with by EU agencies and supervisory bodies. It is important for Norway to be able to participate in this area of European cooperation too. Through the EEA and Schengen agreements, we have found solutions that safeguard Norwegian interests. The Government will keep a look out for any new proposals to establish or strengthen EU agencies at an early stage, and will consider whether adaptations are needed.

The Government's positive attitude to European cooperation does not mean that we automatically support all EU proposals and initiatives. Our cooperation must be beneficial, must sustain arrangements that function well, and must enable us to develop new solutions where necessary.

It is particularly important for the Government to ensure that European cooperation does not undermine, but rather strengthens the Norwegian welfare model, which is based on close cooperation between the social partners and the authorities. Likewise, it is the Government's view that rather than undermining Nordic cooperation, the EU should take inspiration from the successful Nordic cooperation in several fields. The Government also emphasises the importance of considering Norway's unique needs as a long country with a small population spread over a large area. The Government's efforts to ensure that Norway can maintain its scheme for differentiated employers' national insurance contributions is one example in this respect.

# Our vision for Europe

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The Government's European policy is designed to promote the realisation of an ambitious vision: a secure, free, economically strong Europe that takes joint responsibility for common challenges.

## A secure Europe

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A secure Europe is a Europe that is able to defend itself against external and internal threats, and that breaks down divisions that can lead to conflict and instability.

Strong transatlantic ties and the security guarantee provided by NATO continue to be the cornerstones of European security. At the same time, the increasingly complex security situation in and around Europe in recent years has led to greater expectations – and a greater willingness – among EU member states to strengthen the EU's capacity to counter and respond to internal and external security threats. The EU Global Strategy reflects the EU's ambitions in the area of security and defence.

In the Government's view, closer cooperation on security and defence within the EU is enhancing European, and thus also Norwegian, security. We believe it is in Norway's interests – both our security and our economic interests – to work closely with the EU and its member states to strengthen European security and defence, further develop our cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs, and promote inclusive cooperation in Europe. Stronger European cooperation on security and defence could also help to reinforce our transatlantic ties.

### Security and defence

Since the Lisbon Treaty entered into force, the EU has invested both politically and financially in its Common Foreign and Security Policy, for example by establishing the European External Action Service (EEAS) and developing the EU Global Strategy. In 2017, a large majority of EU member states agreed to deepen their defence cooperation, by establishing a permanent structured cooperation on security and defence (PESCO), as provided for under the EU treaties.

The EU and NATO have, each in their own way, taken on a leadership role in addressing the most serious security challenges facing Europe in recent years, such as Russia's violations of international law in Ukraine and the threat of terrorism. NATO has strengthened the military defence of vulnerable member states in the east, while the EU has taken the lead in developing and implementing economic sanctions against Russia. The EU's strength lies first and foremost in its broad set of civilian and economic instruments. The EU and NATO complement each other and their combined efforts have been crucial in stabilising the situation in Eastern Europe.

EU-NATO cooperation has been considerably strengthened in recent years, and it is in Norway's interests to promote a further deepening of this cooperation. The Government will contribute to concrete efforts to follow up the joint EU-NATO declaration adopted in Warsaw in 2016.

In light of the fact that the EU is strengthening its role in the area of security and defence, the Government has identified three key tasks for the years ahead: to further develop political dialogue and coordination with the EU; to strengthen Norway's practical cooperation with the EU; and to promote favourable conditions for the Norwegian defence industry.

Under the EEA Agreement, Norway and the EU maintain a regular political dialogue on foreign policy issues. In a rapidly changing world where there is a high degree of interdependence between countries, it is vital that like-minded actors like Norway and the EU hold regular consultations at all levels to ensure a common understanding of the security situation at any time, and to coordinate their efforts. The Government will therefore further develop its dialogue with the EU on security policy issues, and will look for ways to enhance Norway's participation in European discussions on security and defence.

The earlier our dialogue with the EU takes place and the more continuous it is, the easier it will be for Norway to make a strategic contribution

to joint efforts to strengthen European security. When the EU is deciding on restrictive measures, for example, exchange of information at an early stage of the process can make it easier for Norway to implement the measures effectively and in a way that is fully consistent with the action taken by the EU. Similarly, when the EU is planning civilian and military crisis management operations, the earlier and more broadly Norway is consulted, the easier it will be for us to identify how we can best contribute.

The EU Global Strategy calls for more targeted cooperation between the EU and partner countries like Norway. The Government welcomes this and will put forward proposals for strengthening our practical cooperation.

The Government wants Norway to continue to make expertise and resources available to EU military and civilian operations. In order to make valuable contributions, Norway must be involved at an early stage of the operation planning process, for example through the EU's Military Planning and Conduct Capability, which was established in 2017.

Norway cooperates closely with the EU on civil protection and crisis management. The Government will follow the proposed revision of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism closely. Our basic position at this stage is that we will continue to take part in it. Through the mechanism, participating countries provide assistance to countries affected by natural and man-made disasters, both in and outside Europe. This enhances national preparedness to respond to civilian emergencies.

Major cyber attacks are becoming increasingly common and by definition do not respect national borders. Through Norway's participation in the European Union Agency for Network and Information Security (ENISA), the Government is seeking to strengthen European countries' capacity to prevent, address and respond to cyber threats.

The Government welcomes the fact that the majority of EU member states are now strengthening their defence cooperation. In all, 25 of the EU's member states have agreed to increase their national defence budgets, invest more in defence,

*The Government wants to further develop political dialogue and coordination with the EU, strengthen practical cooperation, and promote favourable conditions for the Norwegian defence industry.*

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and provide more funding for research and technological development. The Government will consider whether Norway should seek to participate in projects of particular interest that are being developed within the framework of this strengthened defence cooperation. At the same time, we will promote closer EU-NATO cooperation, with a view to ensuring a clear division of responsibilities between the two organisations and avoiding overlap.

It is important for Norway, in both security and economic terms, to ensure that we have the necessary military capabilities and to safeguard the interests of the Norwegian defence industry. Norway's participation in the European Defence Agency provides a good basis for doing so. This cooperation allows us to develop Norwegian expertise and promote Norwegian interests. It also provides a channel for political dialogue on issues relating to defence policy.

A European Defence Fund has been established to support collaborative research in the area of defence and to promote the joint development and acquisition of defence equipment and technology. Through the EEA Agreement, Norway is participating in the Preparatory Action on Defence Research (PADR) under the research strand of the European Defence Fund.

The Government will work to ensure that Norwegian actors are able to participate in projects financed by the Fund, both in research projects and in projects under the Fund's other strand aimed at promoting the joint development and acquisition of defence capabilities. This is important for Norwegian-owned companies, their subsidiaries and their industry partners in the EU.



## Cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs

Transnational crime, such as terrorism, violent extremism, human trafficking and smuggling, drug smuggling and cross-border economic crime, threatens our security, our values and our economic interests. No country can address these threats alone. The Government will therefore further develop and strengthen Norway's already close police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters with the EU, which is aimed at preventing, uncovering and combating transnational crime and safeguarding the rights of victims.

Prevention is the best way to combat crime. Norway and other European countries share a common interest in exchanging knowledge, cooperating on crime prevention strategies, sharing intelligence information and preventing recruitment to transnational criminal groups.

The Government will pursue a policy that helps to reduce economic and social marginalisation, which can lead to the creation of parallel societies and breeding grounds for violent extremism and other types of crime. The Government considers it particularly important that all citizens take part in working life. Educational opportunities for all are therefore vital. This is a national responsibility, but European countries can benefit greatly from drawing on each other's experience. A well-functioning internal market is essential for creating jobs and increasing employment levels.

### *To uncover, prevent and combat transnational crime, national authorities must have access to the right information at the right time.*

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The internet has made it easy for people to spread hate speech across national borders and for criminal groups to recruit new members. Anti-Semitic, Islamophobic, sexist hate speech and other expressions of hatred towards individual groups of people have no place in a secure and free Europe. The Government will participate actively in the discussion on European measures to make online platforms responsible for the content they publish.

The situation in countries beyond Europe's borders may both encourage and open up opportunities for transnational crime in Europe itself. Wars and conflicts create hardship, fuel hatred, and undermine respect for human dignity. This, combined with inadequate government control, creates opportunities for criminal groups. A joint international effort to address the challenges in Europe's neighbourhood is needed. Developing a stronger partnership between the EU, the UN and regional organisations will enable us to achieve the best results. Together with the EU and its member states, Norway will continue to contribute to efforts to stabilise countries affected by conflict and fragility in North Africa, the Sahel and the Middle East, and to increase the capacity of these countries to strengthen border controls and combat smuggling and human trafficking networks.

Foreign fighters who have returned to Europe represent a threat to our continent. This applies both to those who have not yet been identified by the authorities and to those who have been detained and are known to be radicalising and recruiting fellow prisoners. The Government will cooperate with the EU and its member states to combat the cross-border networks that are seeking to recruit new members to commit terrorist and other criminal acts.

If we are to succeed in uncovering, preventing and combating transnational crime, national authorities in Europe must have access to the right information at the right time. Norway makes use of and contributes data to the Schengen Information System, which helps national border, customs and police authorities to carry out their work. The Government considers it important to ensure that these authorities have access to the best possible information, provided that this information is necessary and proportionate for their work and that the right to privacy is safeguarded. Norway's association agreement with Europol is important in this context.

Where it is in Norway's interests, the Government will work to find ways of enabling Norway to take part in initiatives and cooperation that fall outside the scope of our existing agreements with the EU. We have initiated a dialogue with the EU on the question of Norway's participation in the EU's air passenger name record system. The Government will follow the EU's negotiations with the UK on their future cooperation in the area of justice and



home affairs to assess any implications for Norway's cooperation with the EU in this area, as well as any opportunities that may open up for us.

### **Inclusive cooperation**

Peace and stability throughout our continent is essential for ensuring security in Europe. Instability and conflict in one corner of our continent have negative consequences for all of us. For over 60 years, we have succeeded in promoting security and prosperity in Europe through binding cooperation. For countries like Norway that have benefited so much from this, it is both a moral duty and in our own interests to include other countries in this cooperation.

The Government will therefore maintain its support for European countries that are seeking closer integration with European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation structures, particularly countries that have applied for EU membership and Eastern European countries that have entered into association agreements with the EU.

All the Western Balkan countries are seeking EU membership. EU accession is a goal in itself and a process by which countries can implement much-needed economic, social and political reforms. The Government supports the EU's enlargement policy, which sets strict conditions for EU membership and supports reforms in the candidate countries.

Stability in the Western Balkan region is fragile, and the progress made so far is reversible. Weak economic development, a high youth unemployment rate, widespread corruption and lack of respect for the rule of law are contributing to ethnic and political tensions in several countries. There is a danger that internal tensions within countries could lead to tension between countries. This situation could be exploited by undemocratic and nationalist forces, and by external actors.

In cooperation with the EU, the Government will continue to promote development and stability in Western Balkans, through extensive political engagement and development cooperation. In 2018, the Government doubled its financial support to the Western Balkans. The guiding principle of our development cooperation is to support reforms that promote European integration and economic growth.

*We have succeeded in promoting security and prosperity in Europe through cooperation. It is both a moral duty and in our own interest to include other countries that wish to take part.*

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It is in Norway's interests for Turkey and the EU to enjoy a close and constructive relationship. The Government supports closer European integration for Turkey and the active participation of Turkey in European and transatlantic institutions such as the Council of Europe, the OSCE and NATO. In recent years, there have been difficult and worrying developments in Turkey, including a coup attempt, terrorist attacks, a rise in internal tensions and a weakening of the rule of law and freedom of expression. The EU and Norway share an interest in promoting a democratic and stable Turkey that is firmly underpinned by respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Norway's cooperation with the EU in Eastern Europe focuses on countries that have clearly chosen a policy of European-oriented reform and that have shown a genuine willingness and ability to translate this policy into practice. In recent years, this has applied primarily to Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. All three have entered into association agreements and free trade agreements with the EU.

One of the main aims of Norway's cooperation with these countries is to support further reforms to promote democracy, the rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights, as well as to foster the development of a viable civil society and independent media. We support the efforts of these countries to become more closely integrated with the EU, including through economic cooperation and trade. Norway's assistance to these countries complements the support provided by the EU under the association agreements and free trade agreements.

Norway and the EU share similar goals with regard to other countries in Eurasia – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and the Central Asian countries. Close contact and cooperation with the EU on issues relating to these countries, not least

those where Norway has no permanent diplomatic or consular presence is important for ensuring a common and coherent European approach.

## A free Europe

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Unless Europe is secure it cannot be free. At the same time, respect for individuals' fundamental freedoms and rights and for democratic principles is essential for achieving lasting peace and stability, and thus for ensuring our security.

The Government's foreign policy is based on liberal values. We are working to promote a Europe where the rights and freedoms of all individuals are respected. This means that all individuals are treated equally and have equal opportunities, regardless of gender, ethnicity, functional capacity or sexual orientation. We are working to promote a Europe where states respect the fundamental rules of democracy and the rule of law, and where international relations are based on international law. Further, we are promoting a Europe that fosters the development of a strong civil society. Trends in several European countries in recent years show that we cannot take respect for these values for granted.

*The Government's foreign policy is based on liberal values. We cannot take respect for these values for granted.*

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The Council of Europe and the OSCE are important defenders of the fundamental values Norway and the EU share. The EU and its member states are Norway's most like-minded partners in these organisations, and the Government will continue its close cooperation with the EU and its member states in these arenas.

### Individual rights and freedoms

One of the characteristics of the liberal world order is that the rights and freedoms of individuals are not only recognised, but also enshrined in legal texts that are binding on national authorities and limit their freedom of action.

The rights and freedoms enjoyed by individuals in Europe are set out in a number of different instruments and conventions. The UN Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights provide the overall framework and basis for many of these rights and freedoms. Others are set out in the EU treaties, and in Norway's case, in the EEA Agreement, the Schengen Agreement and our other agreements with European partners.

Through its cooperation with the EU, the Government will seek to safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals in Europe. Freedom of movement across borders has been one of the most significant results of European integration. The right Norwegians and other Europeans enjoy under the EEA and Schengen agreements to cross borders, live, work, study and have a family in other European countries has made our countries richer – in both economic and cultural terms.

The Government will defend these rights and freedoms by ensuring equal treatment of EEA citizens in Norway. Correspondingly, Norwegian citizens in other EEA countries should be able to enjoy the same fundamental rights and freedoms as the citizens of those countries.

The UK is due to leave the EU in 2019. The Government will seek to ensure that the rights of Norwegian citizens in the UK and British citizens in Norway are equivalent to those agreed for British and EU citizens in the withdrawal agreement between the UK and the EU.

In situations where the fundamental rights and freedoms set out in the EEA and Schengen agreements could have negative implications for the security or welfare of Norwegian citizens, the Government will seek to find balanced solutions. These should be proportional and, as far as possible, should take both considerations into account, within the framework provided by our agreements with the EU. The temporary reintroduction of border control at the internal borders of the Schengen area and the payment of social security benefits acquired in Norway to people resident abroad are two examples of situations when it will be necessary to find a balanced solution.

Promoting respect for human rights is one of the main goals of the Government's foreign policy. In the Government's view, the EU's accession to the

European Convention on Human Rights would help to strengthen human rights, as it would create a coherent legal framework for human rights protection throughout Europe.

We will intensify our efforts to promote civil and political rights, including in our neighbouring areas. Safeguarding the rule of law is crucial. Economic, social and cultural rights must be respected – in Europe too. Everyone has a right to a basic education, decent living conditions, and access to basic health services.

The right to health, both at the global level and in Europe, is a priority area for the Government. Norway is leading a work package on migration and health under the EU Health Programme.

The Government will maintain Norway's leading role in European efforts to combat antibiotic resistance, which poses a serious threat to public health in Europe. We are also continuing to play an active role in promoting ambitious European legislation on the production and use of chemicals, to ensure a non-toxic environment for all people living in Europe.

### **The rule of law and a strong civil society**

NGOs often give a voice to groups that would otherwise not have been heard in political decision-making processes. A strong civil society and independent media are prerequisites for a vibrant, well-functioning democracy.

In a number of European countries, NGOs are facing legal, financial or physical threats. In some countries, legislation and negative rhetoric are being used systematically to target civil society and thus restrict freedom of opinion.

The Government will continue its economic and political support for civil society in Europe, both within and outside the EU. The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights is an important partner in this work. The Government requires that all Norwegian funding for civil society in other countries is managed by an independent fund operator.

A free Europe means that all European countries are governed by the rule of law, with equality before the law and an independent judiciary. This is not only right as a matter of principle, it is also important in economic terms, since European countries need to have confidence in each

*The Government will continue its political and economic support to civil society in Europe, both within and outside the EU.*

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other's legal and political systems if their close economic cooperation is to work. If one country disregards these principles, all countries may be negatively affected.

In cooperation with the EU, the Government will seek to influence governments that are adopting legislative amendments and other measures that are not consistent with the principles of the rule of law and the European Convention on Human Rights. The Government is particularly concerned that justice sector reforms in some EU member states may increase political control over the judiciary. We share the European Commission's concern that the cumulative effect of judicial reforms of this kind could be to sideline the EU's core values – values that Norway shares and that the Government will work with the EU and the Council of Europe to safeguard and strengthen.

### **Respect for international law**

The EU, like Norway, is a staunch defender of a rules-based world order. Together, we react to violations of international law. And together, we are continuing to develop rules-based international cooperation.

Territorial integrity and political independence are fundamental principles of international law. In a free Europe, no country's borders should be violated. In a free Europe, all countries should be able to choose their own future course, including their ties to organisations such as the EU and NATO. The Government will support the EU's efforts to defend these principles. For example, we are aligning ourselves with EU restrictive measures in response to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and other violations of international law in eastern Ukraine.

The Law of the Sea is an international convention that is particularly significant for Norway, given our long coastline, the importance of our fisheries and oil and gas industry, and our traditions as a maritime nation. Under the Law of the Sea,

## *The EU is by far Norway's most important trading partner, and the EEA Agreement is our most important trade agreement.*

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Norway has the exclusive right to manage the natural resources in its sea areas, which include the Economic Zone of Norway, the fisheries zone around Jan Mayen, the fisheries protection zone around Svalbard, and the whole of the Norwegian continental shelf. The Government expects the EU to respect the fundamental principles of the Law of the Sea. We will work systematically to provide information to EU institutions and member states with a view to ensuring that there is a common understanding of these principles.

### **An economically strong Europe**

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Economic strength is essential to safeguard our security, promote our values, and maintain a sustainable welfare society. An economically strong Europe depends on a well-functioning internal market, as does economic growth in Norway.

In the period up to the next general election, the Government will focus on three main objectives in its economic cooperation with the EU with a view to promoting an economically strong Europe. These are: open, rules-based trade in the internal market and globally; a well-regulated labour market; and a forward-looking business sector.

#### **Open, rules-based trade**

The EU is by far our most important trading partner, and the EEA Agreement is Norway's most important trade agreement. Norway exports more to the European market than to Asia, the US, Canada, Latin America and Oceania together. In fact, nearly 80 % of our exports go to the EU, and more than 60 % of our imports come from EU member states.

The EEA Agreement has expanded the 'home market' for the Norwegian business sector, giving it access to a market of 500 million rather than 5 million people. Within the sectors that it covers, the Agreement has made it possible to trade throughout the EEA with a minimum of obstacles. Common rules on state aid and competition,

combined with uniform and effective enforcement of those rules, ensure predictability and a level playing field for companies operating in the EEA. This is crucial for Norway's economic interests, for Norwegian consumers, and for the state of the environment in Europe.

The Government will take its share of the responsibility for making sure that the EEA internal market functions well and that it benefits the Norwegian business sector. Firstly, the Government will seek to ensure that EEA rules promote growth both in Norway and in Europe as a whole. We will also seek to ensure that the rules are in line with Norwegian priorities, for example in terms of environmental standards, consumer protection, food safety and workers' rights.

Secondly, we will help to ensure that relevant EU legislation is incorporated into the EEA Agreement and that our national rules are in line with our obligations under the Agreement. To achieve this, we will continue to work closely with our EFTA partners in the EEA: Iceland and Liechtenstein. Unreasonable delays in incorporating new legislation into the EEA Agreement create unnecessary uncertainty and extra work for businesses. In the worst case, the result may be exclusion from the market even though equivalent domestic legislation is in place.

There will always be some delay between EU legislation being adopted and its incorporation into the EEA Agreement. However, the current backlog is very high (611 legal acts as of March 2018). Around 50 % of this backlog is legislation relating to the financial market. The delay has been caused by the prolonged negotiations on how to incorporate the legal acts relating to the financial supervisory authorities into the EEA Agreement. The Government has stepped up its efforts to move this forward, in cooperation with the other EEA/EFTA countries and the EU.

The EFTA Surveillance Authority and the EFTA Court are responsible for ensuring that the common rules are respected and enforced in the EEA/EFTA states just as the European Commission and the European Court of Justice do for EU member states. As of 2004, the EU has decentralised enforcement of the competition rules, making this largely the responsibility of the member states. The Government would like this reform to be fully incorporated into the EEA Agreement, so that the Norwegian competition authorities can cooperate with their

counterparts in EU member states on the enforcement of the EEA competition rules.

A particular challenge for the EEA in the years ahead will be finding ways to ensure that the UK's withdrawal from the EU does not have negative consequences for our cooperation within the internal market. It is important that any withdrawal and transitional arrangements do not create different conditions for citizens and companies in the countries that are to remain in the internal market. In cooperation with the EU and the UK, the Government will seek to ensure that equivalent arrangements are put in place for Norway as those agreed by the EU and the UK, in areas that are covered by the EEA Agreement or by our other agreements with the EU.

The Government is seeking to improve market access for goods that are not covered by the EEA Agreement, particularly seafood. The aim is to ensure maximum possible duty-free access to the EU market for Norwegian seafood as possible. Two-thirds of Norway's seafood exports go to the EU, and in 2017 their value amounted to more than NOK 60 billion. When Norway and the EU initiate discussions on the EEA and Norway Grants for the period starting in 2021, Norway will put forward its demands for continued market access for Norwegian seafood.

The EU and Norway have a common interest in defending and further developing the international trade system. We want to maintain and strengthen the multilateral trade regime under the World Trade Organization. We believe we are best served by a well-functioning world economy with open, free, global and well organised markets for trade and investment.

International tax issues are a high priority for the EU. The EEA Agreement has a direct impact on Norwegian tax legislation as a result of the four freedoms and the EU rules on state aid. It is in Norway's interests to support the work the EU is doing to make it more difficult to avoid tax and thus reduce the tax base. The Government will continue to follow closely the EU's efforts to ensure effective and correct taxation of enterprises that offer digital services in the European market.

### **A well-regulated labour market**

The EEA Agreement not only allows Norway to participate in the internal market for goods,

services and capital; it also ensures that Norway is part of a labour market made up of 31 countries. This is of crucial importance to the Norwegian economy. Seasonal workers from other EEA countries help to keep the wheels turning on Norwegian farms. Ports all along the coast where fish are landed and processed are dependent on foreign workers. Researchers from other countries make important contributions in our universities and university colleges. Around 10 % of the workforce in Norway are citizens of other EEA countries. The Government will maintain its efforts to make it easy for citizens of EEA countries to apply for jobs, and live and invest in Norway. Likewise, we will safeguard the right of Norwegian citizens to work in other EEA states.

As a result of common European rules, the rights of Norwegian workers have been strengthened in a number of areas, such as employment protection in cases of collective dismissal, employees' rights when business ownership is transferred, and the rules on written employment contracts. The EEA Agreement has contributed to a well-regulated labour market both in Norway and in the rest of the EEA.

*As a result of common European rules, the rights of Norwegian workers have been strengthened in a number of areas.*

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The EU is working to further strengthen workers' social rights. In November 2017, the European Pillar of Social Rights was signed by the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. The main aims are to ensure equal opportunities and equal access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and social protection and inclusion. The Government supports these aims and will help to ensure that the existing rules in this area are updated, further developed, and better enforced. A key task for the Government in this context will be to ensure that the European rules are compatible with Norway's welfare model and the institutionalised cooperation between the social partners and the national authorities.



A large European labour market can create scope for various forms of transnational work-related crime, such as money laundering, undeclared work, and other criminal offences, especially activities related to organised crime. These types of illegal activities prevent the labour market from functioning properly. The Government has therefore proposed establishing closer cooperation at European level on preventing and detecting work-related crime.

### *The Government wants closer cooperation at European level to prevent and detect work-related crime.*

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The Government wants to take part in common European efforts to combat this type of crime. We believe this work must be seen in the context of the European Commission's proposal to establish a European Labour Authority. We hope to see European pilot projects funded by the EEA and Norway Grants that are based on the Norwegian model of interagency cooperation, and we also hope to see cooperation projects involving labour authorities from the Nordic countries on joint monitoring initiatives and exchange of best practices.

#### **A forward-looking business sector**

Knowledge and innovation are crucial if we are to ensure continued economic growth in Norway. We need to develop new business ideas, new production methods and new ways of holding our own in the face of international competition. As we diversify our economy, our cooperation with the EU under the EEA Agreement will become even more important, not least our joint efforts to promote education, research and innovation at European, national and regional level.

Participation in the European Regional Development Fund (Interreg Europe) gives Norwegian municipalities, counties and regional businesses access to networks, experience and insight that can strengthen adaptability and competitiveness at the regional level.

The EU's programme for education, training, youth and sport (Erasmus+) is supporting initiatives to

enable both adults and young people to acquire the skills they need in a changing labour market. Since 1992, around 34 000 Norwegian students have received grants for exchanges with EU countries through the programme. A new Erasmus programme is due to start in 2021. In the Government's view, the new programme should continue to provide opportunities for targeted cooperation between educational institutions and the business sector. It is also important that the new programme facilitates closer coordination with the next phase of the EU framework programme for research and innovation.

Norway's participation in the EU's current research and innovation programme (Horizon 2020) gives us access to knowledge and experience that we need to meet the challenges our society is facing. It is the largest programme of its kind, providing funding of around NOK 740 billion for the period 2014-2020. It is the Government's ambition that 2 % of the funding available through the programme should be awarded to Norwegian institutions, companies, health trusts and public bodies. The Government will therefore continue its long-term efforts to increase Norwegian participation in the programme.

The next phase of the research and innovation programme is due to start in 2021. In the Government's view, it should promote economic and social transformation, with a focus on three areas:

Firstly, the new programme should support the transition to a green economy, promoting job creation and more environmentally friendly and climate-friendly production and consumption systems. This will be an important supplement to the work to develop EU legislation relating to climate change and the circular economy, i.e. closing the loop between production, consumption and waste management. Norway has been heavily involved in both the development of EU climate legislation and the revision of the EU's waste management legislation, with a focus on reducing marine litter and the spread of microplastics and hazardous substances.

Secondly, the new programme should foster innovation in the ocean-based industries. It is important that the business sector in Norway and the EU can make use of opportunities under the programme to promote ocean-based business development, sustainable food production,



development of coastal communities and environmental measures.

Thirdly, the new programme should promote job creation in the field of digitisation. It is the Government's aim that Norway should be among the first countries to make use of the opportunities offered by digitisation in all sectors. Norway is already at the forefront in terms of infrastructure development and internet capacity and coverage. We are also leading the way when it comes to access to public digital services and internet use, for example in the health and education sectors. We are in a good position to contribute to exchange of experience at European level.

A well-functioning digital economy will also require extensive legislative cooperation in Europe. The EU's Digital Market Strategy will come to an end in 2020. The Government will take part in the development of the next strategy. A key task will be to establish a competitive framework that makes it attractive to develop services and business models in the European digital market, and at the same ensures respect for copyright. The use of artificial intelligence and new technology like blockchains are other areas of importance for Norway.

The Government will work to ensure that strict requirements continue to be set for secure storage and use of personal data, in both the private and public sectors. The Government will also seek to cooperate closely with the EU on promoting consumer protection in the digital economy. Cooperation with the EU will be an important element in the white paper on consumer policy, which is to be presented in spring 2019.

## A responsible Europe

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European countries have a joint responsibility to cooperate in the face of shared challenges that they cannot tackle alone. During the period covered by this strategy, the Government will give particular priority to promoting European measures to address shared challenges relating to climate change and energy, resource management, and migration. In these areas, the Government will promote a sustainable, long-term and equitable policy that is compatible with our human rights obligations and that advances the achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

*As we diversify our economy, our cooperation with the EU under the EEA Agreement will become even more important.*

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### Climate change and energy

Making the transition to a low-emission future is one of the most important global challenges of our time. Both Norway and the EU have made a commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 % by 2030 relative to the 1990 level.

The Government is negotiating with the EU on an agreement on joint fulfilment of the climate commitment for 2030. Norway is already participating in the EU emissions trading system (EU ETS), which covers the power generation and manufacturing sectors. During the period covered by this strategy, the Government is seeking to conclude an agreement with the EU on cooperation to reduce non-ETS emissions in sectors such as transport, agriculture, buildings and waste management. The EU's proposed Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) Regulation will also have implications for Norway during this period. This legislation is intended to ensure that total greenhouse gas emissions from forest and other land categories do not exceed total CO<sub>2</sub> removals in the sector.

The Government will seek to ensure that the transport sector makes its share of emission reductions, so that we can fulfil our obligations under the Paris Agreement and Norway's 2030 climate commitment. We would like to see more stringent European emission requirements for cars, vans and heavy vehicles, as this would encourage the development of more energy-efficient vehicles, increased use of new technology and greater emission reductions in the transport sector.

We will also continue to promote the financing of innovations that can make the transport sector greener, for example electrification of shipping and the development and testing of self-driving vehicles and unmanned vessels. Norway has made significant technological advances in this field, and is therefore an attractive partner for the EU.

*Making the transition to a low-emission future is one of the most important global challenges of our time. The Government will continue to cooperate closely with the EU to fulfil our climate commitment.*

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As part of its efforts to combat climate change, the Government will take steps to promote the development and use of carbon capture and storage technology. The Government will urge countries that have not yet adopted the relevant amendment to the London Protocol to do so, so that a key legal barrier to transporting CO<sub>2</sub> across national borders is removed.

While the Norwegian electricity sector is already virtually emission-free, many EU member states are now in the process of replacing coal and nuclear power with renewable sources of energy. The transformation of European energy supply gives Norway opportunities to take part in the shift to greener energy production and energy use in the rest of Europe. Norway will maintain and further develop its role as one of the world's leading energy nations, particularly as regards renewable energy. The EU is a key market for Norwegian energy companies, which are both investing in and making deliveries to new energy projects. For example, Norwegian expertise from the offshore oil and gas industry is being used in new markets such as offshore wind power.

A well-functioning and efficient energy market – with adequate infrastructure and a predictable legal framework – is a precondition for an effective climate policy in Europe. It is also vital for security of energy supply. Norwegian gas currently accounts for around a quarter of the EU's gas consumption. The Government is promoting Norway's role as a stable and predictable supplier that can make an important contribution to security of supply in Europe.

Norway and other exporters need clear signals about the future role of gas to make the necessary investments to maintain their capacity as gas suppliers. By replacing coal with gas, and particularly gas from Norway that has a relatively low

carbon footprint, it will be possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve local air quality. Gas can also play a part in the transition to renewable energy by providing balancing power in systems where the share of production from intermittent renewable sources is increasing.

As regards the EU Energy Union, a number of proposals have been made for new legal acts and to amend existing legislation, partly designed to achieve the 2030 energy and climate targets. The Government will actively promote Norwegian interests during the development of the European energy market, and share Norway's positive experience of the integrated Nordic electricity market.

The Government is in favour of commercial gas infrastructure projects that can contribute to security of supply in Europe. One example is the planned gas pipeline from the Norwegian continental shelf via Denmark to Poland. In the development of the new energy market design in Europe, the Government is advocating that it should be possible to adjust prices in line with supply, demand, and limitations on grid capacity.

Through the EEA and Norway Grants scheme, Norway cooperates extensively with a range of EU member states in the field of climate and energy. The Norwegian Environment Agency and the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate are working closely with a number of Central and Eastern European countries on projects in various areas, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, the transformation of the energy sector, and climate change adaptation.

### **Natural resource management**

The sea areas under Norway's jurisdiction support abundant natural resources, and Norway has played a pioneering role in their management. The fish stocks harvested in Norwegian waters are generally healthy. The EU is an important political and economic actor, and a key partner for Norway in many ocean-related areas. For example, the EU and Norway have common rules for shipping, and EU programmes are an important source of funding for Norwegian research on the oceans, seas and marine resources.

In recent years, the EU has given greater priority to sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors and to marine management.

In cooperation with the EU, the Government will continue to pursue a policy that ensures a good balance between conservation and use of natural resources, and that maintains clean oceans and sustainable fisheries. The preparations for the global Our Ocean conference, to be held in Oslo in 2019, and the Prime Minister's role as co-chair of the international High-level Panel on Building a Sustainable Ocean Economy will give Norway opportunities to cooperate with the EU and promote Norwegian interests in these areas.

At the third session of the UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi in December 2017, the EU supported Norway's proposal to intensify international cooperation to combat marine litter and microplastics. The Government will seek to cooperate closely with the EU in following up the resolution put forward by Norway.

The EU is also showing great interest in the Arctic, and the Government supports the EU's application for permanent observer status in the Arctic Council. The EU's Arctic engagement makes it even more important for Norway to share our knowledge with EU institutions and member states about conditions in the region and the opportunities to be found there. We consider it particularly important to convey the message that this is not merely a remote and desolate area, but also home to vibrant local communities and towns that need sustainable business development and good living conditions. Norway has long experience of natural resource management in the Arctic that includes environmental, social and business considerations.

Norway and the EU cooperate extensively on fisheries management. In general, stock status in the North Sea is better now than it has been for many years, which indicates that cooperation on fisheries management pays off. An important priority in the time ahead will be to improve the fisheries control system for the North Sea and Skagerrak. Another of Norway's aims is to reach agreement with the EU on new management plans for shared fish stocks.

Resource control is a central element of Norway's fisheries cooperation with the EU. In recent years, particular priority has been given to combating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU fishing). The EU's commitment in this area opens

up opportunities for more cooperation in international forums and institutions on assistance in combating IUU fishing. In 2017, the EU and Norway, together with the other Arctic coastal states and four other countries with an interest in high seas fishing, concluded an agreement on unregulated fishing and research cooperation in the central Arctic Ocean. The agreement is an important contribution to global efforts to combat unregulated fishing.

When the UK leaves the EU and the EU common fisheries policy, the country will become a key stakeholder in the Northeast Atlantic fisheries cooperation. The Government has entered into dialogue with the EU and the UK on a future framework that includes the UK as an independent party.

### **A comprehensive approach to migration**

The Government will promote a common European and comprehensive approach to migration that makes use of a wide range of instruments and safeguards human rights. The Government attaches importance to addressing the needs of women and children, as they are particularly vulnerable groups during the migration process.

We will work to ensure that more countries comply with established international obligations as regards the protection of fundamental human rights and refugees. We will uphold the room for manoeuvre available to individual states in this area under international law, and consider actions that are in compliance with this framework.

*The Government will support EU measures to ensure that migration is well managed and regulated.*

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Following the migration crisis, the international community has taken a number of initiatives to discuss the global framework for cooperation in this area. The Government is participating actively in these discussions, in close cooperation with the EU and its member states.

The Government will support EU measures to ensure that migration is well-managed and regulated, and to reduce the number of migrants arriving in Europe without a need for protection or other grounds for legal residence. We also support measures to limit migrants' opportunities to travel from one European country to another.

The Government will support EU efforts to alleviate the situation in Europe's neighbouring areas. We will seek to address the root causes of displacement and migration, through the targeted use of development aid and efforts to promote conflict resolution and stabilisation. The Norwegian authorities will support international work to strengthen border controls, reception facilities and immigration systems in the countries of origin, transit and destination. Efforts to combat human smuggling and to build capacity to control migration in transit countries are particularly important.

One of the main aims of closer cooperation on migration with countries of origin and transit is to prevent irregular migration. Cooperation on migration and on return and readmission should be an important and integral part of Norway's bilateral relations with key countries of origin. This is in line with the EU's approach in this field.

Norway is participating fully in the Valletta cooperation on migration between European and African countries, established at the 2015 Valletta Summit on Migration. This is an important arena for European collaboration with countries of transit and origin. The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is the financial instrument of the Valletta cooperation, and it aims to foster stability and address the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration from Africa.

The Government is willing to consider new arrangements, within the framework of European cooperation, that enable people to apply for, and if appropriate be given, adequate protection at locations close to their countries of origin. Further, the Government is, in principle, in favour of arrangements that would make it possible, in practical terms, to refer asylum-seekers to secure third countries, for example by building the capacity of these countries to receive and process applications for asylum.

Norway has a long tradition of accepting refugees under the UN quota system, and we will continue to do so, including in the context of the new EU framework. In this way, we will contribute to international burden-sharing and to resolving protracted refugee situations. The Norwegian authorities will call for more European countries to participate in the resettlement efforts.

Norway will also support EU efforts to develop a sound integration policy. A targeted policy on integration can help to prevent the marginalisation and alienation that can pose a threat to security and stability. A sound integration policy will also promote economic growth in Europe.

The EU has made considerable progress in establishing a common European policy on asylum and migration, but practices in the EU member states vary greatly. Further harmonisation of the rules on asylum and a strengthened mandate for the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) would help to prevent asylum-seekers travelling from one European country to another. The Norwegian authorities are in favour of a revision of the Dublin Regulation to achieve fairer sharing of responsibility between countries in Europe. Norway is seeking in various ways to assist other countries that have special challenges relating to migration, for example through EASO and its operational support activities. The Government wants Norway to continue to provide assistance of this kind.

Norway is responsible for its part of the external border of the Schengen area. We also have a responsibility to contribute to the effective management of other parts of the common external border. Norway is therefore providing equipment and personnel for activities organised by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex). The Government wants Norway to continue to participate in these efforts in the years to come. In order to ensure that border crossings take place in an orderly manner, it is vital to ensure that external border controls are carried out in line with the Schengen acquis.

In order to uphold the institution of asylum and keep it effective, people without a need for protection or without other grounds for legal residence in Europe must return to their country of origin, or another safe country in the region, as quickly as possible. Returns must be carried

out in accordance with the principle under international law that refugees and asylum-seekers should be protected from expulsion to a country where they risk persecution or grave human rights violations.

The EU has intensified its cooperation with countries of origin and transit on return and readmission. The Government intends to support this approach, and will align Norway's policy closely with EU readmission agreements, where appropriate. The Government will also consider arrangements within a European framework whereby migrants without legal grounds for residence may be referred to safe areas outside their countries of origin. It is important to work in cooperation with other countries to uphold the

obligation states have under international law to readmit their own nationals.

The Norwegian authorities will promote the development of effective administrative and return procedures in Europe, to enable the swift return of people without a need for protection or other legal grounds for residence. In order to ensure an effective return policy throughout the Schengen area, it is important to strengthen the mandate of Frontex in this regard. The Government supports the EU's approach of linking visa facilitation agreements to readmission agreements, so that failure to cooperate on readmission can lead to a tightening of visa procedures for the country concerned in all EU and Schengen countries.



# An effective European policy

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Pursuing an active European policy has been a priority for successive Norwegian governments since the referendum on Norwegian EU membership in 1972. There has been broad political agreement that, even though Norway is not a member of the EU, we should be an active participant in, rather than a passive observer of, European integration. Norway will continue to participate in and contribute to European integration, and we will make full use of the opportunities we have to express our views.

One of the main messages of this strategy is that Norway must pursue a European policy that is not only active, but also effective. This means that our policy must be developed and implemented in a way that enables us to promote Norwegian interests and our visions for Europe as successfully as possible. Norway's European policy must be designed to further the achievement of Norway's foreign policy and domestic policy objectives, as set out in the Government's political platform and in this strategy.

Well-coordinated use of a wide range of tools and resources is vital for ensuring that our European policy is effective. The most important contributions the Government can make in this respect are to get involved at an early stage, show political engagement, facilitate coordination of Norway's efforts, build knowledge and further develop the channels through which we can participate in, and seek to influence, European integration.

*Norway will continue to participate in and contribute to European integration, and we will make full use of the opportunities we have to express our views.*

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## Political engagement

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As stated in the Government's political platform, we will pursue a European policy that seeks to increase Norwegian influence over decisions that affect Norway's interests. This is a political priority that all Norwegian government ministers should work to achieve.

Membership of the EU clearly offers the greatest opportunities to participate in, and exert an influence on, European integration. However, there is a stable, high level of support in Norway for our form of association with the EU – through the EEA Agreement and our other agreements with the EU. Our efforts to increase Norwegian participation and influence in relevant processes take place within this framework.

### Early involvement

We stand the greatest chance of gaining acceptance for our views if we formulate and promote our positions at an early stage of the EU policy development process. It is easier to influence the substance of a proposal when it is being developed by the European Commission than when it has already become the subject of negotiations in the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. Within the EEA, it is precisely during this preparatory phase of policy development, when new initiatives are being formulated by the European Commission and by EU agencies and supervisory bodies, that Norway has the best channels for communicating its views. All Norwegian government ministers are responsible for ensuring that the Government develops clearly-defined positions at an early stage of discussions in EU institutions and between member states on issues that are of particular importance to Norway.

The Government also emphasises that the European dimension must be integrated into Norway's national policy development. Action at the European level is often needed to achieve national objectives. The Government will therefore play an active role in developing European cooperation



in areas where we think this is necessary, as we have done, for example, through our initiative to strengthen European efforts to combat work-related crime and our active engagement on the issue of antibiotic resistance.

### Political participation

As is made clear above, all government ministers are responsible for formulating Norwegian positions at an early stage and for developing Norwegian initiatives that can be put forward at European level. They should participate constructively in European forums.

As a Schengen member state, Norway is invited to ministerial meetings on the further development of the Schengen cooperation. Through the EEA Agreement, Norway is invited to participate in informal ministerial meetings on areas covered by the EEA Agreement, such as competitiveness, education, culture, the environment, employment, social policy, health, consumer policy, energy and transport. The Government considers it a priority to ensure participation at ministerial level in these meetings.

### Strategic funding

In order to support our political engagement, the Government will ensure that the funds we have at our disposal are used in a way that helps us to achieve our political objectives.

The EEA and Norway Grants are the main financial instrument of Norway's European policy. A total of EUR 2.8 billion (approximately NOK 26.6 billion) is available under the grants scheme for the period 2014-2021. The funds are used to support projects in the least economically developed EU member states through bilateral cooperation agreements. The aim is to address common European challenges, for example by creating growth through research and innovation, taking steps to protect the environment and address climate change, not least through energy policy, defending the rule of law, dealing with migration and fostering the development of a strong civil society. Through the grants scheme, we are helping to realise our vision of a secure, free, economically strong and responsible Europe.

A fund for youth employment has been established under the EEA and Norway Grants to support cooperation projects to reduce youth unemployment in Europe.

## *The EEA and Norway Grants are the main financial instrument of Norway's European policy.*

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A fund for regional cooperation has also been set up to promote inclusive cooperation in Europe. Countries neighbouring the EU, such as Ukraine, Moldova and Serbia may also participate in cooperation projects under the fund. In all the beneficiary countries, we are helping to strengthen civil society through active citizens funds. These funds are our most important financial instruments for promoting a free Europe. Moreover, in many of the countries they are the most important source of funding for civil society.

In order to realise our vision for Europe, it is vital that we also provide funding for efforts in countries that are not EU members. The development assistance we provide to the Western Balkans and to Eastern European countries is an important tool for promoting a secure and free Europe. Norway also provides support to EU efforts in countries beyond Europe's borders through our development assistance. Norway's contribution to the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is one example.

The Government will also maintain Norway's active participation in the European Endowment for Democracy, a funding mechanism that promotes democracy in countries undergoing political transition in the EU's southern and eastern neighbourhood, as well as in certain Western Balkan countries.

## Coordination

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Norway's cooperation with the EU covers all policy areas and affects a wide range of Norwegian interests and actors. In order to formulate Norwegian positions and promote Norwegian interests effectively, the Government will ensure coordination at national level, consult affected parties and promote dialogue with the Storting (the Norwegian parliament) on issues relating to European policy.

*The Government will ensure national coordination, consult affected parties, and promote dialogue with the Storting on issues relating to European policy.*

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### **Coherence**

Many of the EU's initiatives and legislative proposals affect several sectors. Many of them affect Norwegian municipalities and counties. Coordination is therefore essential, not only within the Government, but also at senior official level and between different levels of the public administration. The Prime Minister has overall responsibility for coordination within the Government, while the Minister of Foreign Affairs has a special responsibility for ensuring that Norway has an integrated European policy and a coherent approach to its relations with the EU. The Minister of Foreign Affairs chairs the Government's European policy coordination committee. Matters of particular importance relating to Norway's cooperation with the EU or issues that affect several ministers' areas of responsibility are to be discussed by the Government as early as possible, to provide a basis for effective Norwegian involvement in the European cooperation.

At senior official level, the policy coordination committees for issues relating to the EEA and for justice and home affairs, which are chaired by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, work to ensure a coherent European policy. In addition to the regular meetings of these committees, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for establishing ad hoc cooperation groups in specific areas, as necessary. The Brexit Task Force, which was set up following the UK's decision to leave the EU, is one example.

Coordination is also one of the key tasks of the Norwegian Mission to the EU, which is Norway's largest mission abroad, with employees posted from most of Norway's government ministries. Day-to-day cooperation between the various parts of the central government administration that are represented in Brussels provides a good basis for developing and promoting coordinated Norwegian positions.

### **Consultation**

It is important to ensure that affected parties are consulted, and their views listened to, before decisions are made. This also applies to decisions relating to our cooperation with the EU. This is an obligation set out in Norway's official instructions for planning and management of central government programmes and projects. These instructions state that affected parties should normally be consulted before the Government decides on Norway's position regarding new legislation proposed by the European Commission. All government ministers are responsible for consulting affected parties in matters relating to their respective fields of responsibility. The threshold for inviting relevant parties to give their opinion on specific issues should be low.

In addition to the ordinary consultation arrangements in each of the ministries, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation will work together to further develop the local and regional European policy forum, a forum for dialogue on European issues between local and regional authorities and the Sámediggi (Sami parliament). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to invite relevant parties to the regular meetings of the Early Warning Group, which is made up of representatives of the social partners and the Norwegian regional offices in Brussels. The aim is to share information and help develop Norwegian positions as early on as possible in the EU policy development process.

### **Dialogue with the Storting**

The Government attaches great importance to dialogue with the Storting on matters relating to Norway's cooperation with the EU. We are seeking to promote a thorough and broad political debate in this area.

Twice a year, the Government presents an address to the Storting on important EU and EEA matters, which is followed by a debate. More detailed consultations with the Storting on legal acts that are to be incorporated into the EEA Agreement and other EU-related matters take place in the Storting's European Consultative Committee. The Minister of Foreign Affairs attends the meetings of the Committee, normally accompanied by the minister responsible for the specific area concerned. The Government will continue to make use of the biannual address and the meetings of the European

Consultative Committee to invite the Storting to debate issues that are under discussion in the EU and that affect Norwegian interests.

## Channels for participation

In addition to coherent positions that have been developed in consultation with affected parties and in dialogue with the Storting at an early stage of the EU policy development process, Norway needs good channels for communicating our views to EU institutions and member states. Given that Norway is not a member of the EU, we often have to use alternative channels and resources to seek to influence and participate in the European cooperation. Some of these channels are available to us through our agreements with the EU; we have to develop other channels ourselves.

The Government will ensure that we put across Norway's interests and positions as effectively as possible by participating in European networks, promoting opportunities for Norwegian experts to provide targeted input to EU institutions, and giving priority to cooperation with selected member states.

### European networks

Participation in formal and informal ministerial meetings that we have access to through Norway's agreements with the EU enables us to network and build European contacts at the political level. All government ministers must maintain close contact with the relevant EU commissioner(s) and with their colleagues in EU member states. They must also cooperate closely with their colleagues in the other EEA EFTA states.

The Government will seek to cooperate with informal groups of EU member states in specific fields. We have extensive experience of this type of cooperation, which supplements formal channels for participation. One example is Norway's engagement in the informal group of European countries that have been most affected by the security threat posed by foreign fighters, and that are most strongly engaged in efforts to address this issue. Another example is Norway's participation in the Green Growth Group, which brings together the EU member states that are advocating an ambitious climate policy and a tighter Emissions Trading System cap. The Government will work to ensure that Norway is invited to

participate in this type of cooperation in areas of importance to Norway.

The Government is seeking to strengthen dialogue with the European Parliament. An extra effort to establish contacts with key members of the European Parliament will be needed following the elections to the European Parliament in May 2019. The members of the Norwegian Government will also continue to make use of their political party networks in Europe to promote Norwegian interests. This work supplements the important efforts of the Storting to promote Norwegian interests in the EU through the Storting's Delegation to the Conference on EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the Storting's Delegation for Relations with the European Parliament, the Storting's Delegation to the EFTA and EEA Parliamentary Committees, the Storting's office in Brussels, and through other contact that members of the Storting have through party political forums in Europe.

One of the strengths of cooperation in, and with, the EU is that it encourages cross-border interaction at all levels and not least between interest organisations and other civilian actors. Many Norwegian counties and municipalities, private

*Local and regional authorities, businesses, the social partners, universities and other actors take part in cooperation at European level.*

sector organisations and the social partners, universities and university colleges and other Norwegian actors participate in European umbrella organisations. They also cooperate closely with European partners under the EU's many programmes. Through these European networks, Norwegian actors have broad access to information and channels for participation that complement the channels that are open to the Government and the central government administration. The Government will seek to ensure good exchange of information with these actors, so that we can promote Norwegian interests effectively in European cooperation forums.

### Norwegian experts

Under the EEA Agreement, Norway has the opportunity to put forward proposals and provide input when the European Commission and the EU's agencies are developing initiatives in areas covered by the Agreement. We take part in working groups and expert groups, as well as in committees under the European Commission and in EU agencies. Through the Schengen cooperation, Norway participates in the work of the Council of the EU, but we do not have voting rights. The Government will ensure that Norwegian participants taking part in working groups, expert groups and committees are well informed of Norway's positions so that they can promote Norwegian interests as effectively as possible.

### *We want to deepen our foreign and security policy cooperation with European allies.*

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The Government will continue to promote the secondment of Norwegian officials to the European Commission. Around 50 experts from Norway are currently working in the European Commission and in EU agencies. The Government will work to ensure that Norwegian experts are seconded to those parts of the European Commission that are working on issues that are of particular importance to Norway, and where their input can help to promote Norway's interests.

The Government will propose re-establishing a similar secondment scheme with the European Parliament. Given the European Parliament's role in the EU's legislative process, it is important for Norway to participate at working level in this institution too.

### Cooperation with individual countries

Norway's cooperation with the EU takes place primarily in Brussels, where most of the EU's institutions are based. There, we are in direct contact with the European Commission, which is responsible for drawing up proposals for new legislation, and we are in dialogue with key members of the European Parliament. The Government will ensure that the Norwegian Mission to the EU continues to be well staffed so that we can safeguard

Norwegian interests vis-à-vis EU institutions as effectively as possible.

At the same time, the Government will give priority to targeted cooperation with EU member states. Through the European Council, the EU member states define the EU's overall political direction and priorities, and they legislate through the Council of the EU and the European Parliament. New policies are often initiated – and implemented – at national level. The domestic political situation and debate in the various member states determine which issues are put forward, discussed and decided by the EU. Norwegian missions in EU member states serve as important listening posts for identifying important issues and as channels for promoting Norwegian interests in the EU.

The UK's withdrawal from the Union will mean that in certain areas Norway will be losing a like-minded partner in the EU. The UK's withdrawal will make it even more important for us to establish and strengthen other forms of cooperation, while at the same time maintaining close and wide-ranging cooperation with the UK.

The Government identifies, on a case-by-case basis, which member states we should seek to cooperate with to promote Norway's interests most effectively. In some areas, and with certain member states, we are in the process of building more systematic, long-term relations. This work is intended to complement, rather than undermine, our extensive cooperation with the EU. In the years ahead, the Government will give priority to cooperation with three groups of countries:

Firstly, we will seek to deepen our foreign and security policy cooperation with selected allies in Europe – Germany, the UK, the Netherlands and France. Close political contact and practical cooperation with these countries will help to enhance our common security and to strengthen Norway's own security policy.

Secondly, we will further develop our already close cooperation with our Nordic neighbours. The Nordic countries have common interests and a similar social model, and share a common set of values. We are one another's closest partners, and our cooperation is based on mutual trust. All the Nordic countries participate in the EEA and Schengen cooperation, and the Nordic region

is the most closely integrated region in Europe. In a number of areas the Nordic region is a pioneer region, and by working together we have a real opportunity to influence European policy development.

Thirdly, we will engage in strategic cooperation with the country holding the EU presidency at any given time. Well before the start of a new presidency period, we will identify areas of common interest where we can cooperate on policy development, events or other initiatives. In the period covered by the strategy, the Government will build this type of cooperation with Austria (autumn 2018), Romania (spring 2019), Finland (autumn 2019), Croatia (spring 2020), Germany (autumn 2020), Portugal (spring 2021) and Slovenia (autumn 2021). In several of these countries, the EEA and Norway Grants could be used to fund joint initiatives.

## Knowledge

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Norway's cooperation with the EU requires knowledge about how European integration works, insight into current issues at the European level and knowledge about Norway's form of association with the EU. This knowledge is needed both within and outside the public administration, among politicians and among the general public.

### Information

The Government will play an active part in increasing knowledge and raising awareness about the importance of European integration for Norwegian citizens and the Norwegian business sector. We will also help to ensure that the public sector is well informed about Norway's cooperation with the EU. Addresses to the Storting and parliamentary debates are a source of information about the Government's priorities and positions. We will continue to provide information about concrete issues through our online databases on EEA and Schengen legislation.

### Expertise

The Government will ensure that the public administration has the ability and capacity to implement Norway's European policy. We will introduce training schemes and measures to maintain and refresh existing skills, including language training in key European languages. It is vital that developing expertise on Europe has

a positive effect on the career development of those concerned. This should be the case irrespective of whether expertise is gained in a ministry, directorate or other government agency, by participating as a national expert in Brussels or in other exchange schemes with EU institutions and member states, through work at the EFTA Secretariat, the EFTA Court or the EFTA Surveillance Authority, or through service at the Mission of Norway to the EU.

Norway's cooperation with the EU requires expertise, but it also increases the knowledge of a broad range of Norwegian actors, such as counties and municipalities, interest organisations, and research groups that take part in European networks and the various EU cooperation programmes. The Government will promote the development and sharing of knowledge about European cooperation in collaboration with these actors. During the strategy period, we will seek to ensure that Norway participates in EU programmes that are relevant to societal development in Norway and to our political priorities.

### Research

Both the Government and society as a whole depend on research-based knowledge in order to understand Europe's political, economic, institutional and legislative development. Research-based knowledge is also crucial for making good political decisions. We therefore need strong scientific communities in this field in Norway that can carry out research of a high quality in cooperation with international research organisations. This is more important than ever now that European integration is facing major changes. In recent years, the Government has intensified its efforts to promote research on European integration. It is our ambition to further increase allocations to research in this field during the strategy period.

*We need strong scientific communities that are able to deliver high quality research on European integration.*

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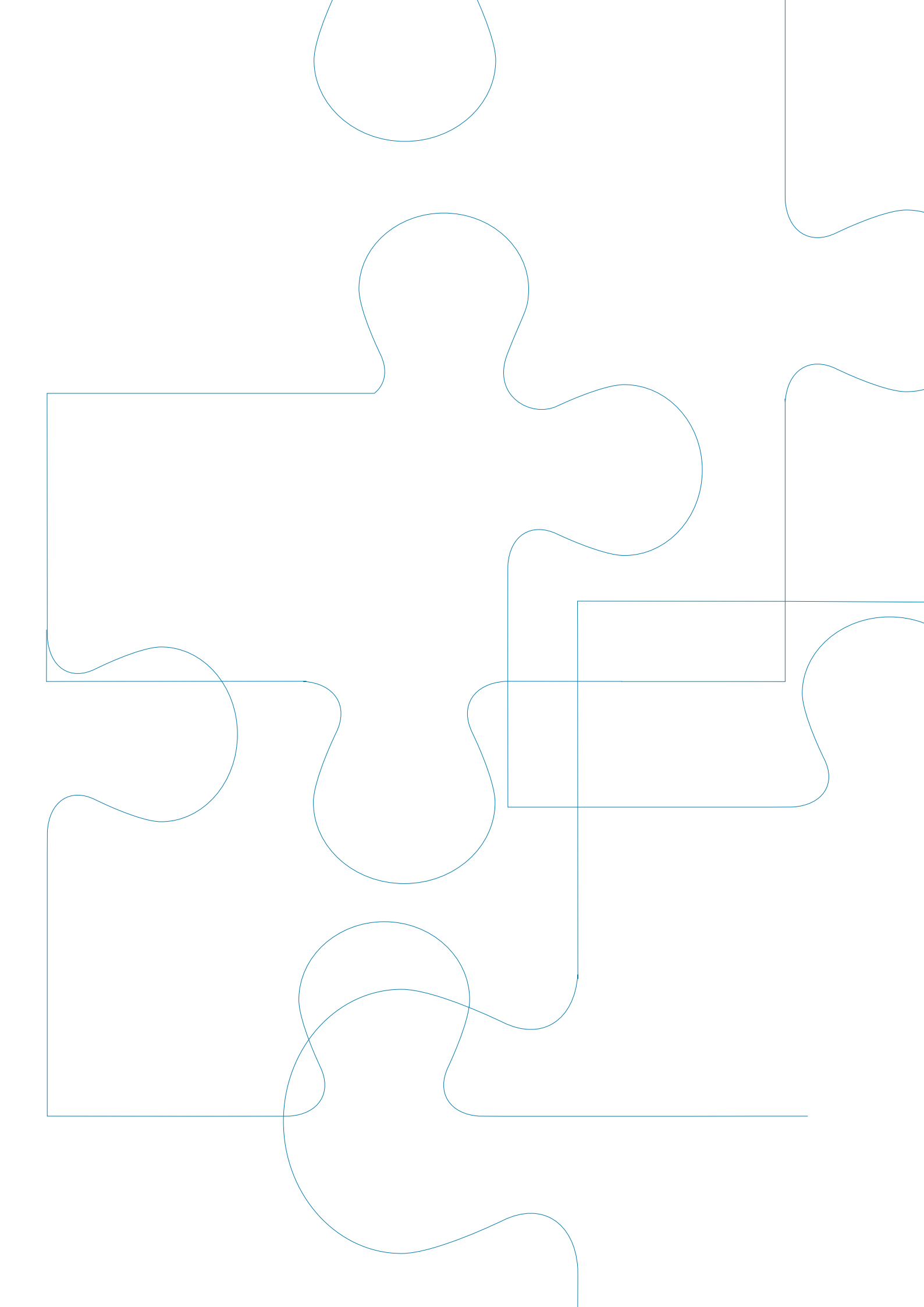
# Follow-up of the strategy

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The Government's strategy for cooperation with the EU in the period 2018-2021 sets out its overarching vision for Norway's cooperation with the EU, and delineates the main elements of an effective European policy. Annual work programmes

will be adopted to follow-up the strategy. These programmes will describe the concrete steps to be taken in the priority areas. Further, the plans and strategies of all the ministries will be guided by the strategy.





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