

Coming to Norway to work?



Have you moved to, or are considering moving to Norway to look for work? Many EU-citizens wish to travel to a different country to find a job, maybe because there is little or no work where they are from, or because they wish to find a better job in a different place. A lot of people want to come to Norway because we have low unemployment rates and good social welfare systems. However, there are also great challenges in the process of establishing oneself in Norway, both practical, language wise, and bureaucratic. Here you will find information about some of the most common challenges job seekers from the EU are faced with in Norway, and how to prepare for these.

The Basics

As an EU citizen you have the right to travel freely in the EU and EEA, which Norway is a part of. You can stay for up to 3 months in Norway without registering. If you are planning to stay in Norway for a longer period of time you have to register with the immigration authorities before the end of the 3 first months of your stay. You can register either as an employee or job seeker. As a job seeker you may stay for an additional 3 months to find work in Norway. As an employee you may stay for as long as you have work, and for a period after if you lose your job.

N.B. If you have permanent residency in an EU-country, but are not a citizen of that country, these rules are NOT for you!

All grounds for residency are dependent on you being able to provide for yourself for the whole time you are here, that is for up to 3 months without registration and up to 6 months as a job seeker. To be registered as an employee it is normally required that your contract guarantees at least 10 hours of work per week, with a salary that is on par with others in the same business. If this is not the case, the case worker will have to assess your case individually to decide whether the job is sufficient, or if there are other circumstances that indicate that you will be self-sufficient.

To register you need to fill a registration form at selfservice.udi.no, book an appointment and show up in person at your local Service Centre for Foreign Workers (SUA) or police station. You have to bring valid documentation of your identity to this appointment. If you have found work, you need to give information about this in your application and bring your contract of work to the appointment. In case your contract lasts

A personal number is a permanent ID number, while a D-number is meant for those who are in Norway temporarily. A personal number gives access to more services.

for more than 6 months or is permanent you should also bring your lease or other documentation that can show that you have a place to live for the next 6 months. You will then get a *personal number* instead of a *D-number*.

Before you Come

In our work we have met several people who have come to Norway with only a suitcase, without knowing anyone or obtaining knowledge of the labour market, the job application process, language or society. With this starting point you have

no advantages in the coming process. We therefore recommend that you take several steps to prepare yourself before actually travelling to Norway:

Start the job search before you come

In Norway much of the employment process is done online, at least up to the interview rounds, and even this will be possible to do over the internet by using Skype or a similar program. There are therefore no reason not to start the job search before you go. You can find lots of available jobs on nav.no/stillinger, at m.finn.no/job and at ec.europa.eu/eures/public/homepage.

Research the labour market

Even though the unemployment rates in Norway are low in a European context it does not automatically make it easy to find work. The demand for labour will vary by your qualifications and the area you wish to move to. Find out how the market is for your competence by inquiring with others in your field in Norway or contact companies you would like to work with directly.

Research the rent and housing market and the costs of living

In addition to the labour market being difficult, the costs of living in Norway are very high. As an example, the cost of renting a 1 room apartment in 2018 was NOK 7 570 per month¹, and this would be higher in the larger cities. Renting one room in a shared apartment is usually cheaper, but often only offered to students and others in this age group, preferably with a steady income. Very few offer short term leases or wish to rent out to someone

¹ SSB – Leiemarkedsundersøkelsen 2018
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who only wants it for a few months. In the Norwegian housing market it is also customary to pay a 3 month deposit.

Other costs of living are also high in Norway. The standard consumption for one person in Norway is estimated at NOK 9 500 per month² in addition to housing costs. It is important that you take this into account when planning your move. Set up a budget and make clear time frames for how long you can stay in Norway before you start working.

Make contacts

When moving to a new place, knowing one or more people from before can be of great help in the form of help and information, housing, job tips or as a friend and support. Try therefore to make some contacts in the place you want to move and find information about offers and services in this area. Maybe there is a facebook group for people from your country in Bergen?

Learn about the language and culture

Knowing the Norwegian language is a universal benefit in both the job search and in Norwegian society in general. Most Norwegians speak English, but a lot of important information is only available in Norwegian. It is also an advantage when applying for jobs that you speak the language, and you will have an edge with many employers. If you don't know either Norwegian or English, you will have great difficulties integrating in the Norwegian labour market, and be in greater risk of exploitation and labour related crime.

² SIFO sitt referansebudsjett
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How to apply for jobs in Norway

In Norway, as in other countries, the process of finding work varies by the kind of work you are looking for. A good network can help you find and secure a job. In general, though, Norway is very formal in this area, and you will need a written resume or CV for the majority of jobs. In addition, most jobs require a written application, although this can be general and not tailored to one specific job, an “open application”. The application should still be adapted to fit the kind of job you are applying for, and you can have several different open applications to different kinds of jobs.

You should also have diplomas and confirmations of your education in writing, and attestations from your previous jobs. In addition, most employers want to check your references from earlier supervisors before making a hire. It is therefore important that you bring this information and ask your previous bosses if they can be your reference when you are applying for new jobs.

As a rule of thumb, the expectations of documentation and formality go up the higher the qualifications are required for the job. For example, if you wish to work as a waiter, seller or unskilled cleaner (without a certificate of apprenticeship), a written CV or resume, along with a personal appearance might be sufficient, while one would have to send a written application, CV and documentation by the post or by e-mail to apply to a position as a plumber or engineer. In this case one often doesn't meet the employer in person until the interview.

Many jobs are advertised online, on sites like nav.no/stillinger, m.finn.no/job and on ec.europa.eu/eures/public/homepage.

However, not all jobs and positions are published here, and if you know a company you would like to work for you are encouraged to contact them unsolicited.

Norwegian Labour Market

Norway has low unemployment rates compared to many other European countries, but unfortunately this doesn't mean that there are enough jobs for everyone. It is worth noting that the unemployment statistics *do not* include those who come to Norway looking for work but are not able to find any.

For professions that do not require high qualifications or language skills, like unskilled cleaning and service, there are often a high number of applicants. For these jobs, elements like language skills, experience and personal qualities can count a long way towards giving you an edge over other applicants.

For professions that require certification and approvals it is important to check if your qualifications from your home country are valid in Norway. There are usually fewer applicants for these jobs, but higher requirements to get them. It is important to master the main working language, since misunderstandings often have greater consequences for a carpenter than a server.

Rights as an employee

Your rights and obligations as an employee in Norway are mainly regulated by the Norwegian Working Environment Act (Arbeidsmiljøloven, aml) and collective bargaining agreements. The Working Environment Act

TIP: The Working Environment Act is available in Norwegian and English at lovdata.no

regulates areas like working time, resignation and termination and contracts, amongst others. However, the labour law **does not regulate pay**, and in industries not under **collective bargaining agreements** there is **no minimum wage!** Here are some of the important items of the law:

Contract

As an employee in Norway you are entitled to a **written contract** (aml § 14-5). This should as a minimum contain information about the **employer** and the **employee**, **where** you are going to work, what your work will entail either by **job title or job description**, the **date you start working** and **how long** it is expected to last if the job is not a permanent contract, if there is a **trial period**, **notice period** for resignation and termination, **wage** and any **additions**, and when you are paid, the right to **vacation and vacation pay**, daily and weekly **working time** and **breaks**, if there are any **special agreements** for the working time and if the employment is regulated by a **collective bargaining agreement**

Wage

Wage is not regulated by law. In most companies the wage will be regulated by collective agreements. In some industries there are **generalized collective agreements** that binds all companies operating in them. This applies to people working in hotels, restaurants and catering, with construction at construction sites, work with electrical installations, production, mounting and installation work in the ship and shipyard industries, freight transport, agriculture, passenger transport with bus, cleaners in cleaning businesses and employees in the fishing industry. You can find the amounts in www.arbeidstilsynet.no. In companies

that do not fall into these categories, and that are not bound by collective agreements through their employees' unions, there is no minimum wage, and pay is regulated directly in each worker's contract. **The law also does not regulate additions** except for overtime (40% addition for work over 9 hours per day or 40 hours per week). That means that any additions for working nights, weekends or holidays needs to be regulated either in your contract or by collective agreement.

When you are paid you should also get a **pay slip**. This is a document that says how your payment is calculated (for example wage per hour multiplied by the number of hour you've worked, or a set monthly salary), the basis for you vacation pay and what deductions have been made, for example for taxes or pension. This is your receipt for the work that has been done and the tax that has been paid. You have to check that the information in the pay slip is in accordance with the time you have worked and the money you have been paid.

NB: If you do not have a contract or pay slips you are in danger of working illegally. This means that you are not enrolled in the National Insurance Scheme (folketrygden), do not earn rights for unemployment benefits, rights in case of illness or injury, parental benefits and more, and at worst risk being punished and expelled from the country.

Working Time

You should not have more than **9 normal working hours** per day, or **40 hours** per week (aml § 10-4). If you work more than this it is **overtime**, and you are entitled to a **40% addition** in your salary (aml § 10-6, no.11). There is an exception from this rule

called “gjennomsnittsberegning”, averaging, that allows you to work up to 10 hours per day and 48 hours per week, but that you are not working more than 9/40 on average during 52 weeks. In companies that have collective agreements there are other regulations, usually in favor of the employee.

Off-duty Time

As a general rule you should have at least **11 continuous hours off-duty in a 24-hour period, and 35 continuous hours off-duty in a 7-day period (aml § 10-8)**. This 35-hour period should as far as possible include Sunday, and if you have to work one Sunday you should have the next Sunday off. In addition you are entitled to a break if you work more than 5 ½ hours in a shift (aml § 10-9), and if your work day is 8 hours long or more you are entitled to at least 30 minutes of break. In companies bound by collective agreements there are often special regulations, usually in the employee’s favor.

Termination and Resignation

If you are terminated from your position you should get this termination **in writing** (aml § 15-4). You can demand to know why you are being terminated, and to have this as well in writing. When you receive a termination there is a **1-month notice period**, counted from the first day of the month after you received the termination (aml § 15-3). The notice period can be longer if stated in your contract. If you are hired on a trial period the minimum time of notice is **14 days** counted from the day you receive the termination. If you are on sick leave you have an especially strong employment protection for 1 year.

Injury and Illness

If you have worked for an employer for **at least 4 weeks** and fall ill you are entitled to paid sick leave. This should be 100% of your regular income and is usually calculated from your income over the last weeks (folketrygdloven § 8-28). The first 16 days you are sick the sick leave money should be paid by your employer. After this time the money is paid by the state. To receive paid sick leave you must be able to document that you are ill. If you have had a job for more than 2 months you can use an “**egenmelding**”, a **personal declaration**. That means that you give notice to your employer that you have been ill, and fill out a form of personal declaration when you get back to work. You can use a **personal declaration for up to 3 continuous days, and up to 4 times in a 12-month period**. If you are still ill and need to be away from work, you need a **declaration from a doctor** (folketrygdloven § 8-24). You can be on sick leave for up to 1 year. Your right to paid sick leave is dependent on your membership in “folketrygden”, the National Insurance Scheme. Many companies have signed agreements on inclusive employment, these are regulated separately.

If you get sick or injured as a result of your work this is categorized as an **occupational injury**. In this case you are entitled to have treatment, transport, legal fees, lost income and more in addition to your paid sick leave. If the occupational injury gives you lasting afflictions, you may enter into work assessment or disability pension if you were a member of the National Insurance Scheme for at least 1 year before the injury occurred.

For more information about your rights please see www.arbeidstilsynet.no and www.NAV.no.

Unions and Collective Agreements

Workers unions have a long history and strong position in Norwegian labour life. Many of the rights that Norwegian workers take for granted today, such as the 8-hour work day and weekends off, have been championed for through industrial action and collective bargaining agreements during the last 200 years.

Employees in companies bound by collective agreements generally have 5 weeks of vacation and 7,5-hour work days. A collective agreement is an agreement on terms for salary and work, like minimum wage, questions of rights in connection with retirement and pension, working time, overtime pay, welfare leaves and further education. Collective agreements are made between an employer organization and a worker's union.

Norway has a number of workers' unions that organize different groups of workers, where most of these fall under an umbrella organization. The largest organizations for workers in Norway is LO (The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions).

As a member of a workers' union you take part in negotiations on collective agreements and other agreements with the employer or the employers' organization. This will secure better terms than the minimum that is set by Norwegian law, and generally gives better terms for workers as a whole than what would be achieved through individual agreements.

In addition, the union can help you if you run into any problems with your employer, for example if the contract is violated by the employer or you are wrongfully terminated. However, you need to be a member of a union before such a concern arises for the union to assist you in your case.

To be a member of a union you pay a membership fee. Of this fee you can deduct up to NOK 3 850 on your tax return (for the tax year of 2018)

For more information about unions you can visit LO.no, YS.no, UNIO.no or akademikerne.no.

If You Lose Your Job

If you have worked in Norway but lose your job, you still have legal residence in the country for some time. How long depends on how long you have worked before you lost your job, and why you became unemployed.

If you have worked in Norway for less than 1 year, and did not resign yourself, you may stay in Norway for up to 6 months while looking for a new job as long as you are registered as a job seeker with NAV.

If you have worked in Norway for more than 1 year you may stay in Norway and apply for jobs as long as you wish, provided that you did not resign yourself. You also need to register as a job seeker with NAV.

You can find more information on [UDI's information page](#) for unemployed persons from the EU and EEA.

NAV and the Right to Social Services

NAV is the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration. It is divided into two parts: NAV State and NAV Municipal. NAV State processes questions of unemployment benefits and earned rights, child benefits and universal benefits that are not means-tested. NAV Municipal processes questions of financial social security, assisted housing, and other means-tested benefits.

You are entitled to benefits from NAV State to the degree that you have earned them through taxable income in Norway. That means that you are eligible for unemployment benefits if you have earned more than 1,5G (NOK 149 787 per May 1 2019) in Norway in the last year, or more than 3G (NOK 299 574) in the last 3 calendar years, and you have had your work reduced by at least 50%. G is the base amount in the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme. This sum is set by Parliament each year and is used to calculate benefits and pensions. You are also entitled to child benefits if you work in Norway, paid sick leave etc.

As an EEA Citizen you have limited rights to social benefits as long as you do not have a permanent settlement in Norway. That is, if you do not have a strong connection to the country yet. The requirements for being permanently settled can be somewhat unclear, but if you have lived in the country for a long period of time, if you work and have tax commitments in the country and if you have your family here, these will all count towards you being permanently settled. If you are not considered settled here you are only entitled to information, advice and guidance, and in case you are in a situation where you are unable to get food, clothes and a roof over your head you may get limited help until

you are able to get help from your home country. It might be in the form of a temporary place to live and enough money for a day or two of food while you contact your family or get a bank transfer.

When you are considered permanently settled in Norway you generally have the same rights to receive social benefits as Norwegian Citizens. That means that you are entitled to social welfare benefits and follow-up from the social services during difficult periods. This kind of help is meant to be temporary, and the goal is for the recipient to become independent and self-sufficient within a short period of time.



Magnus Barfots gate 22

Telefon: 55 96 00 14

E-post: post@robinhoodhuset.no

Web: robinhoodhuset.no

Facebook: facebook.com/robinhoodhuset