

Information for persons applying for family reunification in Norway

Moving to another country means new opportunities and unforeseen challenges. Knowledge and information about the new country is an important factor in achieving as good a life as possible there. Unfortunately, some people who come to Norway end up in difficult situations, in which case it is useful to know what to do. The following information addresses some of the problems that can arise for people moving to Norway.

Laws

Norwegian law applies to everyone resident in Norway.

If there are conflicts between Norwegian laws and religious laws, it is always the Norwegian laws that apply. Equality between men and women is a fundamental principle in Norwegian society, and it is laid down in Norwegian law. Women and men have the same right to education, employment and cultural and professional development. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, ethnic background or gender is prohibited.

Marriage

Polygamy is prohibited.

It is illegal to be married to more than one person. Polygamists can be sentenced to prison. If more than one marriage has been entered into abroad, only one of the spouses is entitled to family reunification in Norway. Under Norwegian law, spouses have an obligation to support each other and their children financially. Married persons also have an obligation to keep each other informed in order to enable them to assess the family's financial situation.

Forced marriages

Only marriages entered into voluntarily by both partners are recognised in Norway. Forced marriage is punishable by law.

A marriage agreement made by parents or other adults on behalf of a child under the age of 18 is not legally binding in Norway. Coercing or putting pressure on another person to get

married is punishable by imprisonment. Forced marriages are not accepted as grounds for family reunification.

Divorce

Women and men have identical rights with respect to divorce.

Norwegian divorce laws do not discriminate on the basis of gender, ethnic background or religion, neither as regards the right to divorce nor as regards the financial settlement after a divorce. Whether a divorce granted in Norway is recognised in another country will depend on that country's legislation. Rules concerning daily care and parental responsibility for children after a divorce are the same for both spouses.

Children

Children have independent rights in Norway.

Under Norwegian law, all persons under 18 years of age are children. All children have independent, legal rights and are entitled to necessary care from their parents. Children have both a right and an obligation to attend school from the year they reach the age of six until they have completed their tenth year of schooling. Parents are under an obligation to ensure that their children attend school. The authorities are obliged to intervene if a child or young person is living under conditions that can harm their health or development. Corporal punishment of children is illegal. This means, for example, that it is illegal to hit children.

Violence

Everyone who is subjected to violence is entitled to assistance from the Norwegian authorities.

This also applies to those who are subjected to violence by family members.

Domestic violence is a criminal offence in Norway and the police consider it important to investigate and press charges in cases of domestic violence. In addition to physical and mental violence, threats, coercion and negligence are regarded as violence in Norway. People who act violently, also towards their spouse or children, can be punished by up to 8

years of imprisonment. Violence against family members may result in a heavier sentence than other acts of violence.

Women who have been granted a residence permit in Norway on grounds of family reunification with a husband or cohabitant, can apply for an individual residence permit if they have been subjected to physical or mental abuse. This applies even if they no longer live together with their husband/partner. Normally, you can apply for a settlement permit after residing in the country for three years on the basis of family reunification.

Call the police on tel. 112 for help in acute situations involving violence. Women who are victims of violence in one form or another can

also contact a crisis centre. Crisis centres offer protection and assistance to abused women.

Genital Mutilation

All forms of female circumcision are prohibited in Norway, including Sunna circumcision. According to Norwegian law, all forms of female circumcision are considered genital mutilation. Any person who carries out or contributes to genital mutilation can be punished by imprisonment for up to 8 years. The law applies to everyone who lives in Norway, even if the operation is performed abroad. The health authorities can give advice and assistance to those who have already been subjected to circumcision.

Useful Information

Visa

Norway is a signatory to the Schengen Agreement. A visitor visa to the Schengen countries is issued on condition that the applicant leaves the Schengen area before the visa expires. If you remain in Norway for longer than the visa period, you may be expelled from the country. You may also encounter difficulties in connection with any future application for a visa or residence permit. A visitor visa does not entitle you to work in Norway. Foreign service missions can provide more information about visas.

Work and residence permits

You can apply for a work and residence permit at Norwegian foreign service missions. If you have completed three years' vocational or other specialised education after your obligatory schooling, you may apply for a work permit as a specialist. A work or residence permit in Norway normally has to be renewed every year. After three years, you can apply for a settlement permit. A settlement permit is granted for an unlimited period and therefore does not need to be renewed. Foreign service mission can supply more information. See also www.udi.no.

In Norway

Many municipalities have refugee guides. A refugee guide is someone who works on a

voluntary basis to assist immigrants and refugees with practical advice and guidance. The refugee guide can help you to get to know your local community and Norwegian society better, and gives you an opportunity to practice speaking Norwegian. The service is free. Contact the local municipality for information concerning refugee guides.

Most municipalities offer immigrants tuition in Norwegian. Contact your municipality for more information.

Contact information

- Self-help for refugees www.seif.no
- Oslo Red Cross provides assistance and advice regarding forced marriages. Tel. 815 55201 (09:00 – 18:00)
- At www.krisesenter.com you can find the addresses and telephone numbers of all the crisis centres in Norway.
- The employment service "Aetat" – for help in finding a job. Contact Aetat where you live or at www.aetat.no.
- Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI): 23 35 15 00 – www.udi.no
- Police: 02800
- Emergency phone numbers: Fire 110, Police 112, Ambulance 113