

**MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
NORWAY**

**2010
THE EUROPEAN YEAR
FOR COMBATING POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

NATIONAL PROGRAMME



INTRODUCTION

The European Union has designated 2010 as the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (the European Year).

On 18 June 2009 the Storting gave its approval to Norway's participation in the European Year in Proposition No. 69 (2008–2009) to the Stortingⁱ and Recommendation S. No. 340 (2008–2009)ⁱⁱ. At a meeting on 3 July 2009, the EEA Joint Committee supported the participation of the EEA/EFTA States.ⁱⁱⁱ

The objectives and guiding principles of the European Year 2010^{iv} are:

Recognition of rights — recognising the fundamental right of people in a situation of poverty and social exclusion to live in dignity and to play a full part in society. The European Year will increase public awareness of the situation of people experiencing poverty, particularly that of groups or persons in vulnerable situations, and will help to promote their effective access to social, economic and cultural rights as well as to sufficient resources and quality services. The European Year will also help to combat stereotypes and stigmatisation.

Shared responsibility and participation — increasing public ownership in social inclusion policies and actions, emphasising both collective and individual responsibility in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, as well as the importance of promoting and supporting voluntary activities. The European Year will promote the involvement of public and private actors, inter alia through proactive partnerships. It will foster awareness and commitment and create opportunities for contributions by all citizens, in particular people with direct or indirect experience of poverty.

Cohesion — promoting a more cohesive society by raising public awareness of the benefits for all of a society where poverty is eradicated, fair distribution is enabled and no one is marginalised. The European Year will foster a society that sustains and develops quality of life, including quality of skills and employment, social well-being, including the well-being of children, and equal opportunities for all. It will, moreover, ensure sustainable development and solidarity between and within generations and policy coherence with EU action worldwide.

Commitment and concrete action — reiterating the strong political commitment of the EU and the Member States to make a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty and social exclusion and promoting this commitment and actions at all levels of governance. Building upon the achievements and potential of the Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion, the European Year will strengthen the political commitment, by focusing political attention on and mobilising all interested parties, in the prevention of and fight against poverty and social exclusion and give further impetus to the Member States' and the European Union's action in this field.

According to the Strategic Framework Document concerning priorities and guiding principles for the European Year,^{iv} the participating countries are to draw up a national programme setting out the priorities, actions and activities for implementing the European Year.

1. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

1.1. National challenges

The majority of the Norwegian population have a high standard of living and good living conditions, and the income distribution is more equitable than in many other countries. Although income inequalities have become greater since 1990, in an international context they are still small. All sectors of the population have benefited from the rise in incomes and standards of living, but a small minority still lag behind. Unemployment is low (3.1%, second quarter of 2009) and labour force participation high (76.7% for men and 70.4% for women, second quarter of 2009). However, many people of working age are outside or on the margins of the labour market; approximately 25% of the population of working age are recipients of health-related benefits, including disability benefits.

A small minority of the population have a persistently low income. In the three-year period 2005–2007 the figure was 3.0%, which means that this group of persons had an average income that was below 50% of the median income according to the OECD equivalence scale. This amounted to approximately 132 000 persons. In the same period, 8.1% of the population had an average income lower than 60% of the median income according to the EU equivalence scale, amounting to approximately 350 000 persons. Persistently low income is related to sporadic or no attachment to the labour market.

Persons experiencing poverty in Norway today do not form particular, easily identifiable social groups; they are to be found in a wide range of groups. In some groups there is an overrepresentation of persons with a very low income in relation to the proportion of very-low-income individuals in the population as a whole. Examples are young single individuals, single parents, couples with small children, families with three or more children, immigrants, long-term unemployed, persons on long-term sick leave and long-term recipients of social assistance. Some of these individuals have complex, long-term problems related to living conditions, such as the homeless, heavy drug users, prison inmates, prostitutes and long-term recipients of social assistance.

Most children and young people in Norway today grow up in a good environment with good living conditions. However, during the three-year period 2005–2007, 4.7% of all children under 18, or approximately 45 000 children, lived in households with a persistently low income as measured by the OECD equivalence scale (50% of the median income). The corresponding proportion as measured by the EU equivalence scale (60% of the median income) was 7.3%, or approximately 70 000 children. The number of children living in low-income households has increased in recent years. Children whose parents have low educational attainment or weak labour market attachment, children with immigrant backgrounds, children living with single parents and children with many siblings are particularly liable to experience poverty. One out of three young people do not complete upper secondary education. A number of young people do not participate in either education or working life and are at risk of developing substance abuse and behavioural problems.

Although the incidence of poverty in Norway is limited compared with many other countries, the nature and complexity of the problem pose a number of challenges.

1.2. National goals and strategies

The Government's goals are to combat poverty and reduce economic and social disparities, and to create an inclusive society for all. This requires broad-based, long-term efforts. The following are the most important measures for achieving these goals:

- an economic policy that facilitates high employment, stable economic growth and a sustainable welfare system,
- further development of the Nordic welfare model,
- a broad, preventive approach,
- targeted measures against poverty.

The Government is combining a broad, preventive approach with efforts to reduce poverty and improve the lives of persons experiencing poverty. To this end, it has drawn up the Action Plan against Poverty,^v which was presented in an appendix to the government budget for 2007. The Action Plan is part of an overall policy to promote social cohesion, inclusion and poverty reduction.

The Action Plan has the following priority areas:

- opportunities for all to participate in the labour market,
- opportunities for participation and development for all children and young people,
- improved living conditions for the most disadvantaged groups.

Since 2002, a special effort has been mounted to implement targeted measures against poverty. The publication of the Action Plan against Poverty – status 2008 and intensified efforts 2009 (Appendix to Report No. 1 (2008–2009) to the Storting on the government budget)^{vi} provides an overview of the measures taken to reduce poverty.

The goals of the European Year 2010 in Norway are:

1. To increase the general public's knowledge about the extent and causes of poverty and social exclusion.
2. To change the attitude of the general public, and particularly the stakeholders, by making them aware that everyone is responsible for including individuals who have been excluded from the society.
3. To improve the knowledge of persons experiencing poverty about the possibilities open to them and motivate them for change.
4. To make use of new tools and arenas in the efforts against poverty.

The following areas will be given special priority under the European Year in Norway:

1. Inclusion of vulnerable children and youth.
2. Local strategies and partnerships for active social inclusion and poverty reduction, using the qualification programme for vulnerable groups as a tool.
3. Voluntary organisations as an arena for participation and social inclusion.

1.3. Organisation of the work

The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion is coordinating the Government's poverty reduction efforts. The ministry¹ is the National Implementing Body and has the overall responsibility for coordinating the efforts to implement the European Year.

The Directorate of Labour and Welfare will assist the ministry in the implementation of activities under the European Year, including calls for proposals and awarding of grants.

A steering committee will be established with representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, the Directorate of Labour and Welfare, the relevant sectoral ministries and representatives of socially and financially disadvantaged groups.

A national coordinator will be engaged to assist the Directorate of Labour and Welfare in implementing the European Year.

2. THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME, including THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

2.1. Activities under the European Year

Norway's national programme for the European Year will include both participation in EU-wide events under the auspices of the European Commission and national activities.

The following European Year activities have been planned by the Commission: a media event (29 October 2009), a journalists' competition (autumn 2009), the Opening Conference (21 January 2010), an art competition, the Spring Focus Week (May 2010), the Autumn Focus Week (October 2010) and the Closing Conference (December 2010).

Norway has planned activities at the national level in parallel with the following activities under the Commission:

- the Opening Conference
- the Spring Focus Week
- the Autumn Focus Week
- the Closing Conference.

Norway will facilitate Norwegian participation in the following activities under EU auspices :

- the journalists' conference
- the Opening Conference
- the Closing Conference.

Opening Conference to launch the European Year 2010 in Norway (February/March 2010). Theme: knowledge status in Norwegian and Nordic research on poverty. The purpose of the conference will be to share research findings on the causes and dynamics of poverty in countries like Norway, on the situation of the most vulnerable groups and on the effects of different types of actions and tools. In addition, the user perspective and experience-based knowledge should be included and highlighted at the conference.

¹ As of 1 January 2010, the Ministry of Labour.

Spring Focus Week (May 2010)

- Activities and events related to the EU-wide information and media campaign.
- A national forum on the theme: What constitutes poverty in today's wealthy Norway? The purpose of the forum will be to underline the user perspective and experience-based knowledge together with other perspectives on poverty and social exclusion. In addition to input from research institutions, political and administrative bodies and the voluntary sector, the intention is to incorporate other perspectives on poverty in a welfare society, for example human rights, children, consumers and the environment. Input from novel disciplines like philosophy, and novel institutions like political think tanks, will also be included.
- Other activities.²

National Focus Week arranged by the Welfare Alliance (EAPN Norway)

(30 August–5 September 2010)

- A campaign targeted at employees in the Labour and Welfare Administration to raise awareness and improve knowledge of poverty and social exclusion.
- Other activities².

Autumn Focus Week (October 2010)

- Events and activities related to the EU-wide information and media campaign.
- Regional/local seminars (peer reviews) – learning and exchange of experience at regional and local levels.
- Award of prizes – examples of best practice.
- Campaign with regional and local focus on voluntary organisations/voluntary activities as an arena for inclusion and participation.
- Meeting of persons experiencing poverty arranged by voluntary organisations.
- Dialogue meeting between young people with a Norwegian ethnic background and young people with an immigrant background to promote knowledge and mutual understanding.
- Event with the aim of putting women as principal income-earner on the agenda.
- Other activities².

Closing Conference (December 2010)

Theme: The European Year 2010: What have we achieved and where do we go from here?

There will be an emphasis on the joint responsibility of all stakeholders to fight poverty and social exclusion.

2.2. Communication strategy

We intend to pursue an active information and communication strategy in connection with the activities under the European Year. This will include establishing a message platform, information material, press breakfasts, newspaper articles, write-ups in the daily press and so on. Journalists and the media are key actors in the implementation of the European Year.

The European Commission has engaged a number of external companies to implement the EU-wide information and media campaign. The campaign material (information folders, brochures, videos, posters) can also be used in Norwegian efforts to implement the European

² Other activities proposed in response to the calls for proposals and/or as a result of ideas arising during the further planning and implementation of the European Year.

Year. Under the EU campaign, two national correspondents of the communication campaign are appointed to assist each participating country, and in Norway two representatives of Geelmuyden.Kiese have been designated. Two Norwegian journalists have been designated to participate in the network/database of journalists for the European Year.

The participating countries are encouraged to appoint up to 10 ambassadors to promote the European Year. Appropriate ambassadors would be people who have experienced poverty themselves, prominent figures with a commitment to social issues, and/or pioneers in the work against poverty and social exclusion.

A web-based campaign targeted at children and youth aged 14–17 years will be conducted as part of the priority area “Inclusion of vulnerable children and youth”. One of the main aims is to promote reflection and discussions on poverty as a step in preventing young people from dropping out of school. The dilemmas and challenges facing young people, and the contexts and consequences of their actions, will be topics for discussion and reflection. The campaign organisers will cooperate with the education authorities and make teaching materials suitable for schools available on the websites.

Omnibus surveys will be conducted at the start of the European Year, during the year and at the end of the year with a view to determining the impact of the information and media campaign.

A national website will be set up for the European Year on the government website (regjeringen.no) under the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. The website will contain links to the Commission’s European Year website and the websites of organisations and institutions involved in the implementation of the European Year in Norway.

A dialogue will be initiated with the Norwegian Broadcasting Company (NRK) and the national press with the aim to focus on poverty in Norway throughout 2010 through short films (produced by the EU), specially produced documentaries showing individuals sliding into or emerging from poverty, editorials, reports on activities, events, etc. during the year.

2.3. Integration of a gender perspective

Gender equality is a priority policy area for the Government, whose goal is to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all areas of society. Financial independence, equal opportunities for education and labour market participation, shared responsibility for working and family life and an equal division of power and responsibility between women and men are essential means for achieving a gender-equal society and combating poverty and social exclusion. Under the Gender Equality Act the public authorities have a duty to make active, targeted and systematic efforts to promote gender equality in all sectors of society. Gender mainstreaming involves identifying and evaluating the consequences of political decisions for women and men, and the gender perspective will be taken into consideration in the planning, organisation and implementation of European Year activities in Norway. An event with the aim of placing women as principal income-earner on the agenda on the agenda is envisaged.

2.4. Accessibility of the activities

All activities under the European Year will be open and easily accessible to all, including persons exposed to poverty and persons with disabilities. In addition all activities will be planned and implemented in consultation with representatives of socially and financially disadvantaged groups.

3. CONSULTATION WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

3.1. Organisations consulted

- Voluntary organisations and representatives of socially and financially disadvantaged groups, including:
 - The Welfare Alliance / EAPN Norway³.
 - The Collaboration Forum against poverty, a group of organisations that participate in the Liaison Committee between the Government and representatives of socially and financially disadvantaged groups. These include:
 - Landsforeningen Rettferd for taperne
 - Foreningen Fattignorge
 - KREM - Kreativ Mangfold i Arbeidslivet
 - WayBack, Stiftelsen Livet etter Soning
 - Bibi Amka
 - RIO - Rusmisbrukernes interesseorganisasjon
 - Marborg Nord.
 - The Norwegian Red Cross .
 - Batteriet, in its capacity as secretariat of the Collaboration Forum against poverty. Batteriet is a nation-wide self-help service for the voluntary sector under the auspices of the Church City Mission.
 - The Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Disabled People (FFO) will be consulted in the further work.
- The Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers (FO) – a trade union for child care workers, social workers and social educators
- The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)
- NOVA - Norwegian Social Research.

³ The Welfare Alliance / EAPN Norway is a partnership network of organisations, associations and action groups whose aim is to support and help financially, socially and legally disadvantaged groups in Norway. In August 2008 the network had 25 member organisations. The Welfare Alliance is a member of the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN).

- Child and youth organisations will be consulted in the further work.
- The following sectoral ministries cooperate with the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion on coordinated, cross-sectoral efforts against poverty:
 - Ministry of Education and Research
 - Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs
 - Ministry of Children and Equality
 - Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development
 - Ministry of Health and Care Services
 - Ministry of Justice and the Police
- The Directorate of Labour and Welfare.

3.2. Consultation process, results and follow-up

A meeting is held with the organisations in the Collaboration Forum against poverty, the Norwegian Red Cross, the Union of Social Educators and Social Workers, the Association of Local and Regional Authorities and Norwegian Social Research Institute, at which the organisations were presented with the goals and framework for the European Year 2010 and the priority areas and proposals for activities during the European Year in Norway. The organisations were invited to give their views on the priority areas and proposed activities at the meeting and in a written procedure on the basis on a draft of the national programme. Not all of the suggestions and proposals from the organisations could be included, however, due to financial limitations or because they were outside the priority areas of the programme.

The Welfare Alliance (EAPN Norway) and Batteriet, in its capacity as secretariat of the Collaboration Forum against Poverty, will be key cooperation partners in the implementation of the European Year and will be part of the national steering committee.

The sectoral ministries concerned were informed about the European Year at a separate meeting. Afterwards they were invited to submit written proposals for topics and activities for the national programme. They have also presented a draft of the national programme.

4. PREPARATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME

4.1. Calls for proposals, award criteria, selection procedure, etc.

The Community funds will be administered in accordance with an indirect centralised management system. Under this system the Community delegates the right to manage European public money to the National Implementing Body of the country concerned, in this case Norway. In accordance with the EU's Financial Regulation, there will be a publishing of calls for proposals for activities under the European Year in Norway. Calls for proposals will be publicly announced and published on the relevant websites (including regjeringen.no, nav.no, and batteriet.no). Appropriate organisations and institutions will also be informed directly.

Activities and grant recipients will be selected according to the following criteria:

- Activities that promote the goals of the European Year 2010 in Norway:
 - Increasing the public’s knowledge about the extent and causes of poverty and social exclusion.
 - To change the attitude of the general public and particularly the stakeholders by making them aware that everyone is responsible for including individuals who are excluded from the society.
 - Improving the knowledge of persons experiencing poverty about the possibilities open to them, and motivate them for change.
 - Making use of new tools and arenas in the efforts against poverty.
- Activities that are based on the priority areas and activities of the national programme:
- Activities that disseminate knowledge about examples of good practice.
- Activities that will also yield results after 2010.
- Activities that are open and accessible to persons experiencing poverty and social exclusion and persons with disabilities.
- Activities that integrate the gender perspective in relevant contexts.
- Cost–benefit analysis.

The activities must be in line with the EU’s objectives and guiding principles for the European Year.

Cofunding should match public funding by 50%, but exceptions may be made from this requirement.

A joint, coordinated application for Community funds will be sent to the European Commission. The Directorate of Labour and Welfare will draw up a recommendation on the activities and applicants that should be awarded funding, and consultations and discussions on the recommendation will be held with the steering committee for the European Year, which includes representatives of socially and financially disadvantaged groups, and sectoral ministries.

Activities that are approved and financed by Community funds may use the official logo for the European Year. As National Implementing Body, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion may grant permission for the logo to be used for activities that are not financed by Community funds as long as they are in line with the objectives and guiding principles for the European Year. The logo will be translated into Norwegian.

4.2. Indicative timetable

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|----------------|--|
| October 2009: | Consultations with voluntary organisations and other stakeholders on implementation of the European Year in Norway.
Second meeting with the Commission’s Consultative Committee.
Conference on “Social exclusion and the media”. |
| November 2009: | Submission of the national programme to the Commission.
Calls for proposals. |

Selection of activities for the European Year.
Preparation of application for Community funds.

- 10 December 2009: Time limit for submitting application for Community funds to the European Commission.
- Winter 2009/2010: Engagement of a national coordinator.
- 21 January 2010: Opening Conference held by the Commission/the Spanish Presidency.
- January/February 2010: Award of Community funds by the Commission.
- February/March 2010: National Opening Conference
- March/April 2010: Start of activities under the European Year.
Third meeting with the Consultative Committee.
- May 2010: Spring Focus Week, information campaigns and media events.
- August/September 2010: National Focus Week arranged by the Welfare Alliance (EAPN Norway).
- October 2010: Autumn Focus Week, information campaigns and media events.
- December 2010: National Closing Conference.
Closing Conference held by the Commission/ the Belgian Presidency.
Fourth meeting with the Consultative Committee.
- 2011: Evaluation of the European Year and reports from the participating countries.
Fifth meeting with the Consultative Committee.

5. INDICATIVE BUDGET

The total Community budget for the European Year is EUR 17 million, EUR 9 million of which will be put at the disposal of the participating countries for their national programmes. National cofunding is expected to match EU funding by at least 50%. Norway's share of Community funds is EUR 174 722, which amounts to approximately NOK 1.5 million (EUR 1 = approximately NOK 8.5). The indicative budget for activities in Norway under the European Year amounts to NOK 3.0 million including the 50% national cofunding. National cofunding will be appropriated within the approved budget framework.

Provisional budget estimates for the European Year 2010 in Norway (as a proportion of the total budget of NOK 3 million):

- 1/6 National coordinator for the European Year
- 1/3 Conferences, meetings, regional and local seminars, etc.

1/3 Information and media-related activities, including a web-based campaign targeted at young people
1/6 Miscellaneous activities

The European Year in Norway will also include existing measures and activities that are part of the country's poverty reduction efforts and which do not require separate funding.

6. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Commission will arrange for ongoing monitoring of both Community-scale actions and national programme activities.

The national steering committee, which includes representatives of socially and financially disadvantaged groups, will monitor the implementation of the European Year in Norway by participating in the planning and implementation of the activities.

The Directorate of Labour and Welfare will monitor activities and grant recipients in accordance with the Norwegian regulations for financial management in central government and the EU's Financial Regulation.

Omnibus surveys will be conducted at the start of the European Year, during the year and at the end of the year with a view to obtaining information on changes in the level of awareness and knowledge concerning poverty and social exclusion in Norway.

The Commission will subcontract the evaluation of Community-scale actions and national programmes to an independent outside organisation, which will deliver intermediate results in 2010 and final results in mid-2011. As the National Implementing Body, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion will cooperate with the EU evaluation team and provide all the information requested.

Both the Commission and the participating countries will submit final overall reports on the implementation of the European Year.

ⁱ Proposition No. 69 (2008-2009) to the Storting on approving participation in the Decision of the EEA Joint Committee relating to the incorporation into the EEA Agreement of Decision No 1098/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 October 2008 on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010).

ⁱⁱ Recommendation S. No. 340 (2008-2009) from the Standing Committee on Labour and Social Affairs relating to the incorporation into the EEA Agreement of Decision No 1098/2008/EC of 22 October 2008 on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010).

ⁱⁱⁱ Decision of the EEA Joint Committee no. 92/2009 of 3 July 2009.

^{iv} European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) – Strategic Framework Document – Priorities and guidelines for 2010 European Year activities. European Commission, Brussels, 16/11/2008 D (2008).

^v Action Plan against Poverty. Appendix to Report No. 1 (2006-2007) to the Storting on the government budget for 2007. Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion.

^{vi} Action Plan against Poverty. Status 2008 and intensified efforts 2009. Appendix to Report No. 1 (2008-2009) to the Storting on the government budget for 2009. Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion.