



Labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees

Norway

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Summary table on support available to (a) asylum seekers; (b) refugees; and (c) third country nationals (TCN) in Norway

	Refugees	Asylum Seekers	Third Country Nationals
Is the PES involved in the labour market integration of (a) asylum seekers (b) refugees (c) third country nationals (TCN)?	YES	NO	Persons, who wish to come to Norway to work, need a residence permit. And normally have received a concrete job offer before entering. ¹
Do (a) asylum seekers, (b) refugees and (c) TCN have access to:	YES	NO	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring subsidies 	YES	NO	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start-up (self-employment) support 	YES	NO	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-the-job training 	YES	NO	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other labour market integration support? 	YES		YES
Is there a systematic mentorship scheme in place for (a) asylum seekers (b) refugees and (c) TCN?	NO	NO	NO
Are (a) refugees, (b) asylum seekers and (c) TCN eligible to receive unemployment benefits or unemployment assistance?	YES (unemployment benefits are conditional on previous work)	NO	YES (unemployment benefits are conditional on previous work)
Are benefits that are generally received by (a) refugees, (b) by asylum seekers (if applicable) and (c) TCN, conditional on job search requirements/activation?	YES ²	-	YES

¹ Third country nationals who intended to work or operate their own business in Norway must hold a valid residence permit

² Most adult refugees who have been granted a residence permit will participate in the Introduction program. There is a special introductory benefit and there is a reduction of the financial benefits in case of non-participation in the programme.

Does the support provided to (a) asylum seekers, (b) refugees (c) TCN end as soon as they get a job?	YES ³	-	YES ⁴
Please specify which services asylum seekers or refugees have access to that other TCN do not have access to.	Introduction programme (which includes Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies) Job opportunity	Asylum seekers residing in a reception centre may get up to up to 250 hours of Norwegian language training free of charge from the municipalities.	N/A

1 What is the role of PES in integrating (a) (some⁵) asylum seekers⁶ and (b) refugees⁷?

If the PES is not involved, is there another agency dealing with the labour market integration of migrants?

Does the support offered differ according to different factors (e.g. socio-demographic characteristics, family circumstances, host country language skills etc.)?

Does the support differ according to the skill level of the target group?

Are there specific programmes for these target groups?

To what extent do these target groups benefit from measures for broader target groups?

The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organization (NAV) is responsible for the practical implementation of the labour market policies. NAV offers services for migrants as part of services for ordinary jobseekers and vocationally disabled. The special unit 'NAVIntro' provides additional assistance to jobseekers with a migrant background in some of the larger cities and local offices. Migrants are given priority for participation in active labour market programmes, along similar lines as other potential vulnerable groups.

³ A participant in the introduction programme can keep income undertaken independent of the introduction programme and still keep the introductory benefit. However, if the introduction programme includes paid work as one of the measures, the introductory benefit is reduced in the same percentage as the percentage of the job measure. If the pay is very low they may be entitled to social assistance benefits on equal footing with Norwegian nationals.

⁴ If the pay is very low they may be entitled to social assistance benefits on equal footing with Norwegian nationals.

⁵ The reasoning for including (some) is that there is no requirement by the EU that asylum seekers are included in integration policies.

⁶ Persons who have applied for international humanitarian protection but have not been granted it yet.

⁷ Covers all beneficiaries of international humanitarian protection – both refugees and subsidiary protection.

If the PES is not involved, is there another agency dealing with the labour market integration of migrants?

It is the ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion that is responsible for coordination of the integration policies for migrants and their children. And the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) has a central role in coordinating efforts to ensure that people with a migrant background obtain equitable public services. IMDi's key tasks include providing assistance to the municipalities in connection with refugee settlement, contributing to getting migrants from introduction programmes into work or education as soon as possible. Most refugees settle in a municipality with the help of IMDi. For persons with work and a residence permit⁸ and who can provide for themselves and their family, if they have one, it is possible to settle in the municipality of their choice without the authorities being involved. Those who depend on assistance, have to settle in the municipality that accepts them. Many Norwegian municipalities place responsibility for the introduction programme with the local branches of the NAV or have an agreement with the local branch of NAV. Active labour markets policies such as on job training and hiring subsidies for employers can be used in connection with the introduction programme.

- *Does support offered differ according to different factors (e.g. socio-demographic characteristics, family circumstances, host country language skills etc.)?*

Yes, temporary accommodation in reception centres are offered to all asylum seekers arriving in Norway. Accommodation at the reception centre is free. The asylum seeker can live privately while he/she is waiting for a response on the application, but they will not receive any financial support.

The asylum seeker can receive a work permit while she/he is waiting for the asylum application to be processed, if:

- an asylum interview with the applicant has taken place,
- there is no doubt concerning the identity of the applicant,
- she/he is over the age of 18 and can document their identity,
- there is no information about the possibility of taking the applicant back to another country.⁹

The work permit is valid for up to six months, but can be renewed. However, since there is an identity condition and very few applicants are able to identify themselves sufficiently, we lack figures, but the experience is that only a small number actually receive a permit to work in Norway prior to receiving an answer to their application.

Persons with a positive decision can stay in a reception centre until they are settled in a municipality. When asylum seekers have received a final answer to their application, they are no longer called asylum seekers. If they have received a positive answer they are granted residence permit as a refugee.

Refugees and their families who have been granted a residence permit have the right to and are obliged to complete an introductory programme. All municipalities that settle refugees are obliged to offer the programme.

⁸According to the regulations and following an individual assessments, persons may qualify for one of four main residence permit categories: a) labour migrants (persons who have received a concrete job offer, b) persons with close family ties to somebody residing in Norway, c) students, trainees, au pairs and participants in exchange programme, d) refugees and persons who qualify for residence permit on humanitarian grounds. A permanent residence permit, conferring the right of residence and work, is normally granted after three years of continuous residence. The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) handles, as first instance application for asylum, as well as applications for residence permit, permanent residence status as well as the question of expulsion.

⁹ <https://www.udi.no/en/have-applied/protection-asylum/can-you-work/#link-8814>

Migrants to Norway differ in many respects. Some have higher education, substantial relevant work experience and are fluent in many languages; while others have little or no formal education and some are illiterate. People who have been granted a residence permit as a refugee or with humanitarian status enjoy full freedom of movement and may choose to settle wherever they want. However, initially most of them will depend on public assistance to find suitable housing and to ensure their subsistence needs. Those who depend on assistance, have to settle in the municipality that accepts them.

The Introduction Act gives certain groups of newly arrived refugees the 'right and obligation' to receive tuition in the Norwegian language and social studies. The municipalities are responsible for organising the tuition. The right to tuition means that the person is entitled to tuition free of charge in the municipality where he/she lives. The obligation to attend tuition means that the completion of Norwegian language and social studies or documented good Norwegian language skills¹⁰ is a condition for being granted a permanent residence permit and citizenship for the groups this obligation applies to.

The right and obligation to participate in 'Norwegian language training and social studies' free of charge for a total of 600 hours shall apply to:

- Migrants between 16 and 55 years of age who have been granted a residence permit that forms the basis of a permanent residence permit.
- Those who are reunited with the above mentioned group and/or with Norwegian or Nordic partners as part of family reunions.
- Migrants over 55 who belong to one of the above mentioned groups are entitled to training in Norwegian language and social studies, but have no obligation to attend such courses.
- Labour migrants from outside the EEA/ area have an obligation to attend 300 hours of training in Norwegian language and Social studies.

The right and obligation to participate in 'an introduction programme' shall apply to all newly arrived migrants between 18-55 years of age who need to obtain basic qualifications and who have been granted asylum. The programme may run up to two years, with the possibility of a one year extension (three years in total). The introduction programme is meant to help participants find work, gain education, and in a longer term achieve economic independence. Active labour markets policies such as on the job training and wage subsidies for employers can also be used in connection with the introduction programme.

According to Statistics Norway approx. 14 700 persons participated in the Introduction programme in 2014¹¹.

An individually adapted plan shall be drawn up for any person who is to participate in an introduction programme. It shall be formulated on the basis of an identification of the training needs of the person concerned and of measures that may be useful for the person concerned.

Participants in the programme are entitled to an introduction benefit. The benefit amounts to twice the basic amount of the National Insurance Scheme annually (EUR 19 500 in 2015). Participants under 25 receive two thirds of the benefit. The benefit is taxable¹². Participants can keep income undertaken independent of the introduction programme, and still keep their introductory benefit. However, if the introductory programme includes paid work as one of the measures, the introduction benefit is reduced the same percentage as the percentage of the job measures.

¹⁰ The language training offered will depend on the participant's educational background. For those who have little or no education the aim is level A1 or A2.

¹¹ <https://www.ssb.no/en/utdanning/statistikker/introinnv/aar-deltakere/2015-07-14>

¹² <http://www.imdi.no/opplaring-og-utdanning/introduksjonsprogram/introduksjonsstonad/>

'Job Opportunity' (*jobbsjansen*) is a scheme intended to increase employment among migrants who do not have a connection to the labour market and who are not covered by other schemes. The aim of the Job Opportunity Programme is to increase the employment rate among migrants who need basic skills and who are not covered by other schemes. The main target group is women outside the labour market who are not receiving public benefits, or are not attending any form of language or labour market training. It is not intended for newly arrived refugees, the aim is to increase the employment among migrants. IMDi administrates the scheme.

- *Does the support differ according to the skill level of the target group?*

Yes, the support is designed to newly arrived refugees that need to obtain basic qualifications and an individual plan shall be drawn up for any person who is to participate in an introduction programme.

- *Are there specific programmes for these target groups? YES (for details see above)*
- *To what extent do these target groups benefit for measures for broader target groups?*

The refugees and migrants that have a residence permit and work permit have the same access to active labour market policies as other ordinary jobseekers and people with disabilities (see below). But most of the newly arrived refugees participate in an introduction programme (see above).

2 How does the support provided to (a) some asylum seekers and (b) refugees compare to other categories of migrants (third country nationals)?

The Introduction Act does not apply to people with temporary residence permits, people who hold a residence permit pursuant to the EEA/EFTA regulations, Nordic nationals, Norwegian nationals and people whose residence permit was granted before 1 September 2005. These groups have neither a right nor an obligation to receive tuition in the Norwegian language.

3 Do asylum seekers, refugees and other third-country migrants have access to active labour markets policies (ALMPs) such as:

- Hiring subsidies: YES
- Start-up support: YES (by IMDi)
- On-the-job training: YES
- Other labour market integration support: YES

For those with a valid work and residence permit, NAV can help with information, guidance, job mediation and various labour market training measures. When registering as a jobseeker with NAV, clients must present a valid work permit stamped in the passport or another travel document. However, newly arrived refugees will have the obligation and right to participate in an introduction programme and, therefore, participation in ALMPs will not be relevant for them.

NAV offers services for migrants that are part of services for ordinary jobseekers and vocationally disabled. Migrants are a prioritised group. The special unit NAVIntro provides special, additional assistance to jobseekers with a migrant background in some of the larger cities and assists other local offices.

NAV emphasises job seeking and self-activation early in a period of unemployment i.e. following a registration with NAV as a jobseeker. At that point NAV offers information and advice and participation in active labour market policy (ALMP) programmes based on individual needs. Migrants are given priority for participation in labour market measures, along similar lines as other potentially vulnerable groups such as people with

disabilities, youth and long-term unemployed. NAV programmes include recruitment/job-placement measures, job training and labour market training and vocational training in combination with language instruction¹³.

As a group migrants participate in labour markets programmes to a larger extent than others. Migrants participate in labour market programmes. Roughly 15 000 persons participated in active labour market programmes (ALMP) in the second quarter of 2014, 43 % of whom were migrants. In the age group 15-74 years, 1.1 % of the migrants were in active labour market programmes in the second quarter of 2014, compared with 0.3 % of the native population. Unemployed plus ALMP-participants were 18.5 % for migrants (Source: Statistics Norway, employment statistics)¹⁴.

4 What are the concrete obstacles/challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees integration into the labour market?

Norway has high labour market participation of both genders and low unemployment. For several years there have been many labour migrants from new EU Member state countries. Migrants from the Nordic countries, Western Europe and EU countries in Central Europe have high employment rates.

For refugees the years of residence play an important role for their employment level. As most newly arrived refugees take part in the introduction programme, they are not employed for the first years in the country. They often have low levels of education, lack relevant experience, are unfamiliar with the labour market, and have language barriers. Moreover, there is a problem with acceptance of credentials and pre-migration work.

The Norwegian labour market places much emphasis in full mastery of the Norwegian language. Lack of language skills and the limited number of low-skilled jobs probably are the main obstacles for many refugees.

There seem to be shortcomings in the process of recognising foreign qualifications, a lack of 'bridging' between offers for a person whose degree is not considered fully equivalent to Norwegian one. Citizens from countries outside the EU/EEA can apply for recognition/authorisation in order to practice professions regulated by law. In some cases, additional studies may be required before a recognition/authorisation is granted.

5 Is there systematic mentorship scheme in place for (a) asylum seekers and (b) refugees integrating into the labour market (and/or society more generally)?

There is no scheme. IMDi¹⁵ gives advice to employers on sites concerning the inclusion at the work place and job placement arrangements and it cooperates with the municipalities to find jobs for migrants. The directorate encourages network-building among women in order to contribute to increased employment among women from minority backgrounds.

The action plan for making better use of the competence of migrants in the labour market – 'We need the competence of migrants' - is in the process of being implemented. One of the measures that started in 2014 is a grant scheme to initiate and support company-based mentor and trainee programmes for people with a migrant background. The purpose of the scheme is to encourage more companies to initiate and systematise such programmes.

¹³ <https://www.nav.no/en/Home/Benefits+and+services/Relatert+informasjon/qualification-programme>

¹⁴ From:

https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/e26c772313ae479093c20fcd6be7e9c2/norway_imo-report-2014-2015.pdf

¹⁵ <http://www.imdi.no/sysselsetting-og-arbeidsliv/tiltak-innvandrere-i-arbeid/>

Self-employment is small by international comparison. There are few training offers and grants specifically for migrants regarding setting up start-ups. An action plan measure that has been initiated is a grant scheme intended to strengthen and develop regional and local entrepreneurship counselling, making such services more relevant for and adapted to the needs of migrants.

6 Are (a) refugees and (b) (if applicable) asylum seekers eligible to receive unemployment benefits or unemployment assistance?¹⁶

The NAV-office in each municipality provides services and assistance on most of the main welfare and social security benefits, not only unemployment benefits, but also social assistance, disability insurance, various forms of health-related benefits, public old-age pensions, and benefits for families. Social security benefits – such as those granted for unemployed, illness, medical rehabilitation or re-training, and parental leave – require previous attachment to the labour market or are calculated based on previous earnings. Employment is thus key to obtaining access to social safety net in Norway. Social assistance is in principal a temporary benefit and it is an objective that most of the recipients get access to the labour market and not receive this benefit for a long period of time. The general picture is that men in the age group 35-44 years and persons with only a primary and lower secondary education, as well as migrants from Asia, Africa were most dependent on social assistance. Among recipients with an education of more than primary and lower secondary school, few are receiving social assistance (Source: Statistics Norway).

7 In what ways are benefits that are generally received by (a) refugees and (b) asylum seekers (if applicable), conditional on job search requirements/activation?

The Introduction Act entitle newly arrived refugees to an individually tailored training programme as well as a modest fix income, but by making the financial support conditional on participation it means that language training and education/work training is compulsory for most newly arrived refugees.

The percentage of refugees who receive social security benefits is higher than among the rest of the population. After the introduction of the Induction programme in 2004 for refugees and their family members, the use of social security benefits has decreased among refugees. As participants in the programme they receive introduction benefits.

In 2013 , the percentage of participants to go straight into employment or education after finishing the programme was 47 %, 21 % started qualification programmes under the auspices of NAV, 11 % started primary/low education, and 19 % were registered as leaving for other reasons, moving away, maternity leave etc.¹⁷

8 Does support provided to the (a) asylum seekers (b) refugees and (c) other migrants end as soon as they get a job or does it continue for a while during the first phase of their employment? If yes, what support continues?

The support ends when the refugees get a regular job, however, if the pay is very low they may be entitled to social assistance benefits on equal footing with Norwegian nationals.

¹⁶ As regards unemployment benefits Directive 2011/98 Art 12 (1) e – obliges Member States to provide equal treatment to all TCNs except asylum seekers and as regards refugees there is also the legal obligation to provide equal treatment under Qualifications Directive 2011/95

¹⁷ <http://www.ssb.no/en/utdanning/statistikker/introinnv/aar-tidligere-deltakere/2015-12-21>

9 To what extent are social partners systematically involved in labour market integration service provision and/or (b) labour market integration service /policy definition and design?

The social partners play a significant role in Norway, and have a large influence in the functioning of the labour market. In particular, wages are negotiated between the respective organisations of employers and employees. The social partners have also engaged in activities related to the labour market integration of migrants such as mentorship projects and support for entrepreneurship, but these have been rather small-scale and not systematically implemented. There is agreement on a more inclusive working life (the IA agreement) between the social partners. The main goal of the agreement is to improve the working environment, enhance present at work, prevent and reduce sick leave and prevent exclusion and withdrawal from working life. However, refugees and migrants are not target groups.

10 To what degree is the labour market integration of refugees well-coordinated within the country? High degree. Do employment agencies and asylum authorities coordinate?

The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion is responsible for the coordination of integration policies for migrants and their children. IMDi was established on 1 January 2006 to act as a competence centre and a driving force for integration and diversity. The directorate co-operates with migrant organisations/groups, municipalities, government agencies and the private sector. It provides advice and implements government policy.

IMDi's key tasks include providing assistance to the municipalities in connection with refugee settlement, contributing to getting migrants from introduction programmes into work or education as soon as possible. Most refugees settle in a municipality with the help of IMDi. For people with a work and residence permit and who can provide for themselves and their family, if they have one, it is possible to settle in the municipality of their choice without the authorities being involved. Those who depend on assistance have to settle in the municipality that accepts them.

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