

# The Know NORWAY Book

Background for Understanding the Country and Its People

Pakistan and Afghanistan Edition



Norway is a country of winter darkness and midnight sun, advanced technology, small towns and a few cities. It has a big government sector, free education and health services, and a modern and dynamic private sector.

Norway is home to large communities of Pakistani, Afghan and other immigrants and refugees.

Norway is one of the world's richest and most egalitarian societies.

The country's beauty has made tourism a major income-earner, and fishing, shipping and shipbuilding industries are still important.

In the last generation, North Sea oil and gas production has made Norway one of the world's largest oil exporters – and the Norwegians are now nicknamed “the blue-eyed sheikhs”.

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the Country and Its People

Pakistan and Afghanistan Edition

**Atle Hetland**

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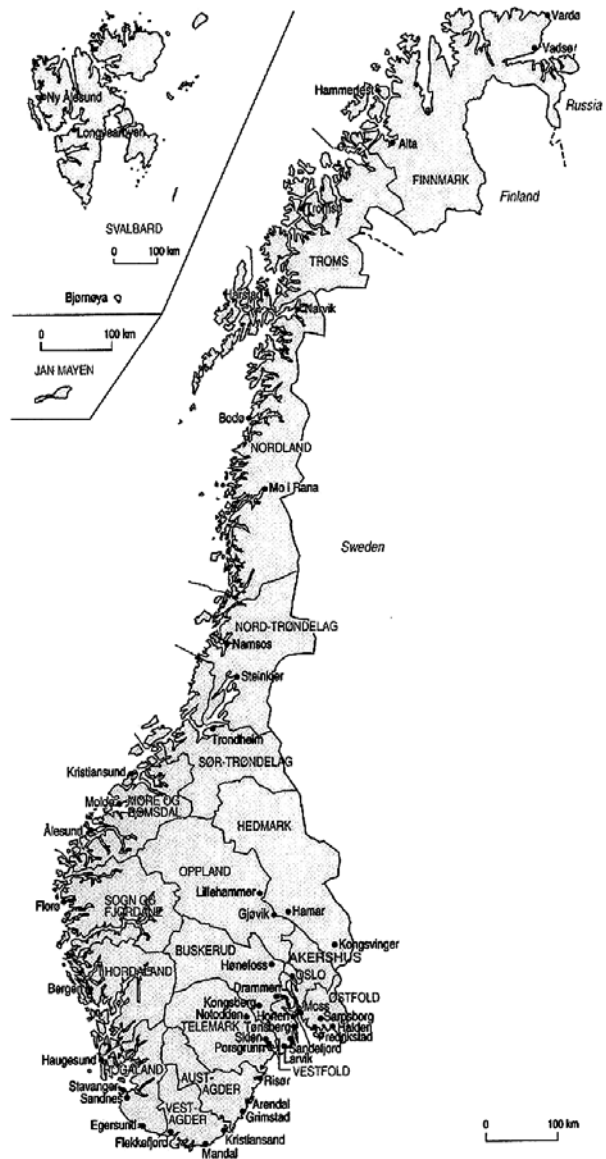
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# NORWAY



# BASIC FACTS ABOUT NORWAY

**Population:** 4.8 million. Approx. 16 persons per sq. km; in Europe; only Iceland is more sparsely populated.

**Area:** 324 000 sq km; incl. Svalbard (61,020), Jan Mayen, Bear Island (377) and island territories in Antarctica, 385 600 sq km.

**Climate:** Due to the Gulf Stream, a warm stream from the Mexican Gulf, the country and especially the long Norwegian coastline is much milder than expected in a country so far north. In winter, the average temperature in northern Norway is only a few degrees lower than in south-eastern Norway. The summer temperature is higher in the south than the north. Only the far north of the country experiences midnight sun (in June-July) and complete darkness in winter (December-January). The coastal Norwegian climate is generally reasonably mild in winter and not very warm in summer, with high rainfall.

**Geography:** Norway is a mountainous country, but the mountains are not very high (the highest mountain is 2469 m). The long coastline has deep fjords and thousands of islands and peninsulas. Norway's common frontiers with Sweden, Finland and Russia are 2,542 km. Norway has several glaciers and Jostedalsglaciar is the largest one.

**Land use:** Only about 3 percent of the land is fully cultivated; 61 percent of it is meadows for mowing and milk cows and cattle; 32 percent is used for growing grain, dry peas and oil seed, and the rest is used for potatoes, vegetables, other root crops, fruit trees and berries. Productive forests (with wild berries and game for hunting) cover about 23 percent of the land.

**Capital city:** Oslo has a population of about 0.6 million. Almost half of the country's population lives within two hours travel time from the city, which is the only metropolitan area in Norway.

**Other major cities:** Bergen (250,000), Trondheim (170,000), Stavanger & Sandnes (185,000), Kristiansand (80,000). Drammen, Fredrikstad, Skien & Porsgrunn, Ålesund, and Tromsø are cities with populations from 50-70,000.

**Settlement pattern and economic activities:** Norway is the most rural Scandinavian country; many people still live in (modern) rural or small urban centres of fishing, farming and trading; today, most employment opportunities are in petroleum and other industrial sectors, education, health, social services, and other public and private services.

**The largest city in northern Norway:** Tromsø, with an urban population of about 70,000, and a large number of people living in the suburban and rural areas in the large municipality. Tromsø is 70 degrees north of the Arctic Circle. Norway's northernmost county, Finnmark, is further to the north and east, bordering the Barents Sea, Russia, Finland and Sweden. The county is larger than Denmark, but its population is only about 73,000; with 2 persons per sq km it is Norway's most sparsely populated county.

**The Sami minority:** Finnmark and Troms counties are part of the Sami region, which spans four countries. The Sami people, who were traditionally semi-nomadic reindeer herdsman and fishermen, form a "fourth world" minority in Norway; today the Sami people are well integrated in the mainstream society, yet also have a separate Sami Parliament.

**Oil and other exports:** Norway is one of the world's largest exporters of oil and natural gas from its North Sea offshore fields. Norway is one of the world's richest countries – and also one of the most peaceful and egalitarian, as per UN indexes. Norway has paid off all its foreign debt and sets aside huge amounts from the petroleum sector for future generations. Oil accounts for most exports. Other exports include, machinery and transport equipment, finished goods, chemical products, food products, fish and live animals.

**Currency:** Norwegian Kroner (NOK). USD 1 = NOK 5.7

NOK 1 = PKR 14.8 (January 2010)

**Foreign policy:** Norway is a member of the defence organization NATO. Norway is *not* a member of the European Union, but it has various trade, cultural, and other agreements with the EU.

**Development aid:** Norway allocates approximately 1.1 percent of its GDP to development aid and is one of the world's largest donors. Currently, Afghanistan is the largest recipient of Norwegian aid, followed by the Sudan, Tanzania and the Palestinian area. More than half of the aid is channelled through the UN (as multilateral and earmarked multi-bilateral aid). Pakistan is a relatively modest recipient of Norwegian aid; the 2005 earthquake relief donations were large and sizeable amounts have been granted to the IDP crisis in 2009-10.

**Immigrants:** The Pakistani diaspora is the largest group of immigrants in Norway, with about 30,000 people in a total immigrant population of about 460,000, counting first generation immigrants and Norwegians born from two immigrant parents, with about half from non-Western countries. They make Oslo and other cities in Norway multicultural.

**Religions:** Christianity is the main religion in Norway. The Evangelical-Lutheran denomination of the Protestant Church forms the Church of Norway, which is the state church, with about 82% of the population as members. About 2.4% are Muslims; in Oslo, over 10 percent of the inhabitants are Muslims, more than the Catholic Church and the non-religious Humanist-Ethical Society. Many Norwegians are "culturally Christian", but few (only some 3%) go to church regularly for the weekly Sunday morning service at 11 o'clock. 40% go to church at least once a year.

# MILESTONES IN NORWEGIAN HISTORY

9000-8000 BC	Earliest signs of settlement in Norway.
8000-4000 BC	Old Stone Age. Hunters and fishermen. Rock carvings. Milder climate.
4000-1500 BC	New Stone Age. Livestock. Early Agriculture.
1500-500 BC	Bronze Age. Agricultural tools, jewelry, weapons, glass. Foreign trade.
500 BC - 1000 AD	Iron Age. Iron ploughs, scythes for cutting grass, etc.
800-1050 AD	Viking period. Large long ships. Trade and plundering. Runic inscriptions.
1030	Unification of Norway into one kingdom. Introduction of Christianity.
1200	The Norse (Norwegian) Empire. Norway at its most powerful.
1350	The Black Death wipes out more than half of the population. The country weakened.
1380-1814	Norway is part of Denmark and the country's name is Denmark-Norway.
1811	First Norwegian university establish in Oslo (that time named Christiania).
1814	The Norwegian Constitution is adopted on 17 May, Norway's Constitution/National Day.
1814-1905	Norway is in a Union with Sweden.
1905	Norway dissolves the Union with Sweden, which is accepted by Sweden a few months later. Norway votes in a referendum to be a monarchy and a Danish prince is offered the Norwegian throne and the new King. He chooses the name Haakon VII.
1913	Norwegian women are the first in Europe to be given the right to vote. Universal suffrage.
1940-45	World War II. Norway is occupied by Nazi Germany.
1945-52	Reconstruction of northern Norway and the rest of the country after the war. Norway is a recipient of American Marshall Aid.
1946	Norway becomes a member of the United Nations. The Norwegian Trygve Lie becomes the Organization's first Secretary General. The second Secretary General was the Swedish Dag Hammarskjöld.
1949	Norway becomes a member of NATO.
1952 -	The modern welfare state is built in Norway (and the other Nordic countries) under the leadership of the legendary Prime Minister Einar Gerhardsen.
1957	Death of King Haakon VII. He became popular during World War II as a symbol of the Norwegian resistance movement, living in exile in London. King Olav V becomes king, and no less popular than his father, nicknamed 'the people's king'.
1970	The Norwegian 'oil era' begins.
1981	Norway's first woman prime minister, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland.
1991	Death of King Olav V. Harald V (born 1937) becomes king. He is still on the throne. His wife is Queen Sonja. The Crown Prince is Haakon (born 1973) and his wife is Crown Princess Mette Marit. They have two children, Princess Ingrid Alexandra (born 2004) and Sverre Magnus (born 2005).

The Norwegian National Anthem

“Ja, vi elsker dette landet”

*Yes, we love with fond devotion*

**Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson**

Music by Rikard Nordraak

Ja, vi elsker dette landet,  
som det stiger frem  
furet, værbitt over vannet  
med de tusen hjem;  
Elsker, elsker det og tenker  
på vår far og mor  
og den saganatt som senker  
drømmer på vår jord.

Yes, we love with fond devotion  
Norway's mountain domes,  
rising storm-lashed o'er the ocean  
with their thousand homes;  
Love our country while we're bending  
thoughts to fathers grand,  
and to saga night that's sending  
Dreams upon our land.





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A.H.

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# Introduction

Although this book is for all who wish to read it, it has been written with some special readership groups in mind, notably *Pakistanis and Afghans*, living in their home countries, especially those who have relatives in Norway. We also think the book is useful for Pakistanis and Afghans who have come to Norway recently and need information about the country.

Secondly, the book is for readers who may want to *visit Norway* one day, maybe as tourists, for studies, business or for other reasons, bearing in mind, though, that it is not easy to get a visa to Norway nowadays.

Thirdly, the book is for readers who are *interested in Norway in a more general way*, and, fourthly, the book is for *various other readership groups* who are interested in Norway; this small, wealthy country in the far north of Europe, with beautiful nature, rich flora and fauna, environmentally concerned and peaceful people, who are also oil producers.

## Overview

Norway, like the other Scandinavian, or Nordic countries, is technologically advanced and very modern. It has a dynamic economy, with a strong private sector and equally strong government sector. Women play an important role in the Norwegian society, not only in the home but also in the working life. It is mandatory, for example, that all public companies have at least 40% women on their boards. 39.5% are women in the new Parliament elected in September 2009 for the next four years. There is

usually gender parity in the Cabinet.

Thanks to high taxation, Norway has first class education, health and other social services for all its 4.8 million people, living in a country about the same size as the UK. Norwegians have enough space, although much of the land is hills and mountains, good for winter sports and in lower areas, forestry, and beautiful to look at for tourists and locals.

In the United Nations Development Report for 2009 Norway made it to the number one spot in the human development index. Such indexes do not tell the whole story about a country, far from it, but they still tell us that the country must be a quite good place to live for all its citizens. An important indicator is the narrow gap between rich and poor, ruler and ruled, as Norway is a very egalitarian society.

We have probably already boasted enough, a character strait opposite to those of the down to earth Norwegians. Still, allow us to mention that many foreigners think that Norwegians are very good looking, 'blond and beautiful', obviously with blue eyes, tall and strong, well like people in the rest of Northern Europe. But then the Sami ethnic minority in the far north in '*Nordkalotten*', don't fit this description; they are often quite short, some with blond hair and Norwegian features and others with dark hair and Mongolian or Inuit features. Since most Norwegians have blue eyes, they think that brown eyes and black hair are very beautiful. Incidentally, the author of this book had an uncle when he grew up who looked like a Pathan, and his sister looked

like Indira Gandhi. We all thought they were blessed with such good looks, and this was long before the Pakistani immigrants had discovered Norway. Were they descendants of Alexander the Great and his men, or perhaps Spanish or Portuguese sailors, shipwrecked somewhere on the long and rugged Norwegian coastline?

The Vikings were at their strongest from about 800-1050. Most likely they were quite short and not as fierce as we make them out to have been since people have grown taller and healthier in recent centuries due to better food, hygiene and medical services. Note, too, that it is only in the last couple of decades that it has become common to take a shower and bath every so often. In the cold countries in the north that was something saved for special occasions; in winter, it could be outright dangerous to take a bath if you did not get warm and dry clothes on quickly afterward. But before Christmas, everybody had to take a bath, and before Easter when spring was around the corner!

But let us not preempt the substantive chapters in the book, in which we discuss various aspects of the Norwegian society, attempting to inform the readers about the most important fields of the country, including history, geography, culture, religion and so on, almost in a *textbook form*. We assume many of the issues will be of great interest to Pakistani and Afghan readers not only as they relate to Norway, but also in order to draw lessons of value to their own countries. We discuss *cultural borrowing* in a general way, but otherwise the book

does not directly compare Norway's development with that of Pakistan and Afghanistan, or other countries.

Norway's emigration history is fascinating and certainly of great interest to many in Pakistan and Afghanistan, *inter alia*, since they too have large numbers of people who have emigrated. From 1825 – 1925, 0.8 million Norwegians emigrated, in a population of about 2-2.5 million that time. Almost all emigrated to the United States of America, and those who could, sent money home to their old parents and poor brothers and sisters. Some invested in development projects of great value to small Norwegian communities. There are many similarities in the Norwegian emigration history with that of other countries, for example, Pakistan. There are also differences, not least in the Afghan emigration history, or refugee history. Many were forced to leave their home country, but others also left for economic or other reasons, which are generally typical causes for emigration.

### **“New Norwegians”**

Since the book is specifically targeted to readers in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and Pakistanis and Afghans in Norway, we have included more information about the “*New Norwegians*” from Pakistan and Afghanistan living in Norway than what would otherwise be natural in a book *about Norway*. Yet, it is *not* a book about Pakistanis and Afghans in Norway.

Lately, several books have appeared in

Norway, written in Norwegian mostly by Pakistani-Norwegians, about the situation of Pakistani immigrants. More books are awaited, including such not only based on journalistic data and life stories, but books based on thorough empirical and theoretical research. We also need books in English and Urdu, and in Pashtu and Dari, for and about Afghans in Norway and the country they left. There are already some books about the broader political issues but fewer telling the stories about the life and history of the people, remembering that every person's and every family's history is unique and at the same time part of larger patterns.

The first wave of Pakistani labour migrants came to Norway in the late 1960s to the mid 1970s, when strict visa regulations were introduced. The number of labour migrants has gone down and most Pakistani newcomers are now close relatives and spouses, categorized as 'family reunification'. Over the forty years since the first migrants began coming, many Pakistani-Norwegian children have been born and grown up in the new land, and they now form the second generation of Norwegian citizens of Pakistani origin. Pakistani-Norwegians maintain close contact with their country of origin and most still marry from Pakistan, often a relative. Quite a few marry from within the Pakistani-Norwegian community, some from Denmark where there is also a large Pakistani community. Pakistani-Norwegians rarely marry ethnic Norwegians, or other Europeans.

Yet, Pakistani-Norwegians are well integrated

(but rarely assimilated) into Norwegian society and form a stable community, where the children, especially the young women, do well at school and university and the young men do well in business and jobs, and they too are beginning to catch up with female education performance. There is scope for broader participation in politics, recruitment to senior posts in the civil service, including the foreign service, and other fields. The government and civil society play an active role in realizing further integration, together with Pakistani-Norwegians and other immigrant groups themselves. Young immigrants are getting impatient, wishing for faster integration and career opportunities. This is also important for resident Norwegians, who need to live in harmony with the "new Norwegians", and benefit from their cultural, entrepreneurial and business inputs.

There are a total of about 30,000 Pakistani-Norwegians in Norway, with about two thirds living in the capital Oslo, where about a quarter of the city's 0.6 million inhabitants are immigrants, making the city multicultural and exciting for foreigners as well as locals. In Denmark, there are about 20,000 Pakistanis, in Sweden about 5,250 and in Finland about 525.

There are over 8,000 of Afghan origin in Norway, most of whom have come as refugees over the last three decades when there has been war in Afghanistan. In general, Afghans are seen as particularly hard working people and are well liked everywhere. There are about 11,500 Afghans in

Denmark, about 7,000 in Sweden and about 2,000 in Finland.

Afghan refugees are spread over no less than 60-70 countries. Over time, many will return, especially from Afghanistan's neighbouring countries, while others will settle in their host countries, including Norway and the other Scandinavian countries. Even if they barely have enough to meet immediate needs, all Afghans spare some Kroner to send home to their families in Afghanistan, without which the hardship would have been even greater for those left behind. After all, Afghanistan is among the world's five poorest countries.

Remittances from Pakistanis abroad are also essential for the economy of Pakistan. A study carried out a few years ago showed that the remittances from Pakistani-Norwegians were sizeable and larger than the Norwegian development aid to the country, although it is difficult to know the exact amount because the value of gifts and other items are not estimated, and money is often taken home in connection with visits, in addition to regular transfers.

## Religion

Almost all newcomers to Norway from Pakistan and Afghanistan are *Muslims*. The majority of Norwegians are *Christians*, but today most are passive members of the Church of Norway, which is a state church, belonging to the Evangelical-Lutheran Protestant denomination. The country is *culturally Christian* and part of the *Western cosmology*, yet

with openness to other religions and acceptance of non-believers. Religion is seen as a private matter.

In Norway, as in the rest of Europe, Islam is the largest *new religion*. Islam came to Norway with immigrants and refugees over the last forty years; with Pakistanis and Afghans together comprising about 40,000 of them, but with other large groups from Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and other countries. In total, there are about 120 – 150,000 new Norwegians from Muslim countries in Norway, and about 80,000 are registered members of the hundred mosques in the country, receiving government support along with other religious and life stance societies. In Oslo, 12-15% of the population is Muslim but on national wide basis the figure is only about 2.4%.

Considering that Islam is an entirely new religion to Norway, where almost every person and household has not only been Christian, but a member of the Church of Norway, the influx of a relatively large number of Muslims has gone smoothly. There has been little tension between the newcomers and the resident population, and few disputes have had religious differences at the core. This proves that the resident Norwegians are open to other faiths, even when newcomers come in relatively large numbers over a short period of time. It promises well for the future.

Norway, like most other countries in Europe, will become multi-cultural and multi-religious in the coming decades, although the majority of people will be 'culturally Christian' and Christianity will

remain the single largest religion, but now also with other groups belonging to world religions, with particularly large Muslim communities.

Norway is a Christian country but people are not very active churchgoers and they interpret the religious dogma in a modern, liberal way. This is often interpreted as the disappearance of religion. The author of this book does not believe that; as a matter of fact, people's interest in and need for religion seem to have grown in recent years – but don't try to get Norwegians to follow one authorized standard to the letter. It seems that Norwegians have little fear for authority in general. This is true in the field of religion, and it is also true in other cultural, social and political fields.

Over time, Muslims are likely to influence the society so that it can become more 'culturally Muslim', or develop pockets that are Muslim. This process will take time and is likely to be complicated for the resident populations and the newcomers. The liberal democratic traditions of Norway and most of the rest of Europe will be tested, and the newcomers' traditions and ability to adapt will also be tested. Most of all, it has to do with finding pragmatic and respectful solutions that are acceptable to all.

The newcomers, *Christians, Muslims, and people of other faiths*, must all continue to seek solutions in their multicultural and interfaith dialogue that are acceptable to other minority religions and the majority of Christians and semi/non-religious citizens. In a liberal, modern society like

Norway, with open-minded resident citizens and newcomers, there is scope for a deeper dialogue than hitherto, which will benefit all parties. Religion is one important field of the dialogue but there are numerous other fields where inputs from outside will enrich the Norwegian society, and vice-versa.

### Welcoming Foreigners

Norway generally receives foreigners well. Asylum seekers and refugees are accommodated in special reception centres. Students are usually provided with accommodation organized by the welfare organization of the college or university from the first day. New foreign workers, today usually family reunifications, are well taken care of by their relatives. The Norwegian welfare state's overall free medical and social services kick in from the time of arrival.

However, in spite of all the formal services being provided, the host country Norway and the resident Norwegians could and should have been *more welcoming* to the newcomers, which also includes helping the newcomers in organizing their own religious, cultural and educational activities, not withstanding the need for integrating them in the rest of Norwegian society. More pro-active welcoming ways and means are needed in future.

The author of this book believes that it is important to discuss these issues so that a broader and more inclusive *superstructure* can be created. That also includes discussion and improvement of aspects of the overall Norwegian immigration policies and



practices; how public relations and visa issues are handled by Norwegian embassies abroad, especially in developing countries, and how the Norwegian Immigration Department (UDI) in Oslo handles issues. The establishment of the Directorate for Integration and Multiculturalism a few years ago was an important step in the right direction, and IMDI's work promises well.

### **Norwegian Democracy**

Let us discuss a few aspects of political debate in Norway in order to shed light on how democracy works in the country.

It should be noted that the majority of Norwegians want all citizens to be part of debates and find solutions to issues that are acceptable to everybody. There is also a tradition of trying to understand people one disagrees with, so that the majority does not force its will on minority groups in an unacceptable and heavy handed way. In several fields there may always be some political tension between groups, such as conservatives versus liberals, city folk versus rural, newcomers of various religious and political persuasions versus other immigrants or resident Norwegians, and so on.

It is said that Norwegians living on islands, or in remote mountain villages, and Norway has its fair share of such communities, are particularly accommodating to people they disagree with, although they may not change their own stand. For example, if your neighbour Johannes and Anna on the island do not want to have that new bridge built from the mainland, because it will take away the

livelihood of another neighbour, Peter and some others, who make a living of ferrying people and goods across the creek, well, then that bridge cannot be built in their lifetime, although the majority on the island actually want the bridge to be built. "It has to be good for everyone" people used to say.

Norwegian democracy has a tradition for taking the view of the minority into consideration and not hammering through decisions, which would make the minority uncomfortable. On the other hand, a minority must also not hold the majority hostage to its opinions. Then, when decisions have been made, it is expected that all groups and people of different persuasions work towards finding pragmatic ways of living with them.

The lengthy abortion debate we had in Norway a generation ago, and the law passed, permitting the woman alone to decide on whether to carry through with a pregnancy, was a heated and polarizing debate. When the matter had been decided, it was expected that all citizens followed the law although health workers who disagreed were exempted. Furthermore, it was seen as important that everyone worked towards finding morally acceptable ways of reducing the causes of unwanted pregnancies and thus reducing the number of abortions.

Non-governmental organizations, including those connected to the Church, carry out important work in this and many other fields. In general, it should be noted that Norwegians are active in all kinds of NGOs and membership organizations, especially in the sports, cultural and social fields.

Many are also registered members of labour unions, professional and interest organizations.

Fewer people are members of political parties but over 75-80% usually take part in general elections. The most recent general election was held on 14th September 2009, electing the 169 members of the Norwegian parliament for the next 4 years.

Two members with immigrant or minority background were elected to the 'Storting' and they are both of Pakistani origin. *Hadia Tajik* (Stavanger) has been elected on an ordinary ticket for the Labour Party, and *Chaudhry Akhtar* (Oslo) on a substitute ticket for the Socialist Party. It is expected that the red-green coalition of the Labour, Socialist and Centre parties will stay in power for another four years, with *Jens Stoltenberg* from Labour as Prime Minister. (Chaudhry Akhtar will attend Parliament regularly as long as the elected representative is a member of the Cabinet; he also attended regularly during the previous 4-year term.)

Norway has 19 counties and 430 municipalities; many of the municipalities are very small, often with just five-ten thousand inhabitants. This makes the concept of *local democracy* different and more real than in larger municipalities. The distance between the people and their elected council members and municipality administrators is very short. There are a number of elected members with immigrant or minority background at regional and local levels. Elections for the local councils are held halfway through the parliamentary term.

## Development and Humanitarian Aid

In this Introduction, we would like to draw your attention to the fact that Norway is one of the world's major donors of *development aid* and contributor to the United Nations and other international organizations. Norway allocates over one percent of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to development aid; in 2010, 1.1%; the United Nations recommends that the rich countries should reach at least 0.7% of GDP, but only a handful countries do that.

Afghanistan is now Norway's main recipient of development aid. The aid to Pakistan was frozen after the country became a nuclear power but the aid programme has now been rebuilt, with major assistance to fields such as culture, education, health and human rights and good governance. After the devastating earthquake on 8th October 2005, Norway swiftly provided huge assistance to the victims in Kashmir and Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province.

Although Norway is not as multicultural as its larger neighbour Sweden, and does not receive as many refugees as Sweden, Norway provides major support to refugees. In Norway there are about ten refugees per 1,000 Norwegians; in Pakistan, which is also a major refugee hosting country, there are about seven refugees per 1,000 Pakistanis, mostly from Afghanistan. Norway is one of the five largest donors to UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, which provides assistance to refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In 2009, Norway granted about NOK 120 million

(about USD 20 million) to Pakistan for IDPs.

### International Relations

Norway is not yet a member of the European Union (EU), but it is a member of NATO, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which is the leading foreign military force in Iraq and Afghanistan. Norway has sent soldiers to Afghanistan to take part in security, training and other tasks, but not to take part in combat. Although the involvement is based on a majority decision by the Norwegian Parliament, it remains a controversial decision, and the author of this book, amongst many other Norwegians, disagrees with it.

Norway is known for its generous development aid policies, refugee and humanitarian aid policies, peace brokering, and awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize. Since Norway is one of the most peaceful countries in the world, it would perhaps have been more fitting if Norway had expanded and deepened its work in development and humanitarian aid in Afghanistan and stayed away from the military field.

### Welfare State

It is important to include a few words about the Norwegian *welfare state* in this Introduction. Norway is proud of providing quality welfare services to all its citizens, such as free education for all at all levels, free medical and health services, unemployment benefits and other social support to the needy. The elderly receive pensions, including free accommodation in

old people's homes, or health clinics for those who need it, especially at an advanced age, recalling that Norwegians live long; men's average life expectancy is 78 years and women's 83 years.

Less than 20% of old people live in old people's homes and health institutions, and they are usually those who are unable to look after themselves or need medical attention beyond what can be provided at home with the help of dependants. We are disputing the common claim that people in the West, and in Norway, just 'store' their old people in homes without much concern for them. Usually, these institutions are better than other options, and there are long waiting lists for old people who want to be admitted to such homes. There are many advantages to *family care* although it can be a burden on those who provide the care - usually women. Homes and clinics provide first class specialist medical care.

### Equality and Inequality

It is impossible for a Norwegian man to write about Norway without drawing special attention to the importance of Norwegian *women* in society. Norwegians are concerned about equality, especially between women and men, rich and poor, and urban and rural. Today, anybody can do and become anything in Norway, we say. There may still be some hurdles but in general there is a will to make *a level playing field for all*. The achievements regarding gender equality over the last two generations, and in particular the last generation are impressive.

We are beginning to realize that similar, successful policies and practices regarding gender issues can also be applied to gain greater *equality for immigrants*. Recently, a number of public and private aid organizations have introduced policies to ensure employment of more staff members with immigrant backgrounds in their organizations. Other organizations and private companies do the same. Special government incentives are applied to encourage employers to hire refugees.

In national politics, there is still some distance to go before immigrants have a faire share, i.e. that the *number of elected representatives and employed staff members* would be commensurate to their number in the population. Immigrants are close to 0.5 million, or about 10%. There are, for example, markedly fewer Members of Parliament and people in Cabinet posts, or other senior positions, with immigrant backgrounds than their relative proportion in the population would warrant. The situation is only slightly better at county and municipality level. At the time that this book went to press, Norway did not have a single Minister or Deputy Minister with immigrant or minority background. This situation is hopefully going to change soon as it is generally seen as unacceptable. Not only immigrants, but also resident Norwegians would like to see improvements.

Although many immigrants, NGO representatives and social scientists are critical of many aspects of the Norwegian *immigration and refugee policies*, it is probably true to say that the policies

have worked quite well for the country. Let us hasten to admit that mistakes may have been made in individual cases. Policies and practices should have been more generous, guidelines and practical applications should have been more flexible and respectful, and much more generous and future-looking understanding applied.

### Learning from Norway

When introducing foreign readers to a book about Norway a Norwegian author is likely not only to boast of good things about the country, and criticize a few things. We have probably also done that. But generally, we have tried to be as neutral and objective as possible. We have tried to draw attention to aspects that would be of particular interest and relevance to the readers in their home countries, in this case specifically in Pakistan and Afghanistan. We also believe that relatives and “New Norwegians” will find the book useful. The information and discussions presented will enable the readers to draw *lessons of value to people in Pakistan and Afghanistan*. But as it is in all comparative studies, and in cultural borrowing, the readers must consider the content and draw their own conclusions.

It is hoped that this book will help develop interest for the many issues discussed, some relevant only to Norway and others also of interest to Pakistan, Afghanistan and other countries - benefiting everyone, young and old, immigrants and refugees, resident citizens and others.

## Organizing the Book

The book has been organized in eight chapters. In *Chapter 1* we present a summary of Norwegian history, the country's geography, climate and some other background information. In *Chapters 2 and 3*, we move on to Norway's constitution, political system and other data, including foreign policy, development aid and emigration and immigration. In *Chapter 4*, basic aspects of the economy are presented, where we emphasize the important rural-urban dimension and the essential role the oil and gas sector plays for the country's economy today. Norway's wealth makes it an independent country with great future potential. In *Chapters 5*, we discuss issues related to education, research and innovation, including some issues related to foreign students and internationalization of Norwegian universities. In *Chapter 6*, we dig into a number of issues related to language, literature and cultural issues, including mass media and sports. We give some special attention to religion, including Islam. In *Chapter 7*, we try to describe the Norwegians, based on their traditions and customs. We look at the food they eat, including the immigrants' influence on Norwegian cuisine. We also include some recipes, so you can prepare and serve a Norwegian meal to your Pakistani and Afghan family and friends. In *Chapter 8*, we take pleasure in presenting some *New Norwegians* from Pakistan and Afghanistan and themes and topics of particular relevance. The Boxes include interesting and sometimes humorous information.

The *Annex* comprises five sections: one about

*30 Famous Norwegians*, one about *all the Nordic countries*, the *Bibliography*, and finally some *Useful Addresses* and *List of Boxes*.

## Readership

We hope that the readers will find the book interesting and pleasant to read, and that the presentation is relatively straightforward and makes easy reading. We also hope that the book can be used at educational courses at schools and colleges in Pakistan and Afghanistan and that the book can inspire others to write related books, carry out research and organize courses, for example in Norwegian language and about immigrants and refugees in Norway, or the country's relationship with Pakistan and Afghanistan, and other countries.

We would like readers to note that the book should be considered an *educational book* rather than a scientific book. The author of the book is a *social scientist*, with a background in teaching foreign students in Norway and undertaking research related to their study conditions, and other studies and administrative work in development aid and diplomacy. Several chapters in the book are based on lecture notes from recent courses and seminars held in Pakistan.

Readers are invited to send their comments to the author on the below email address.

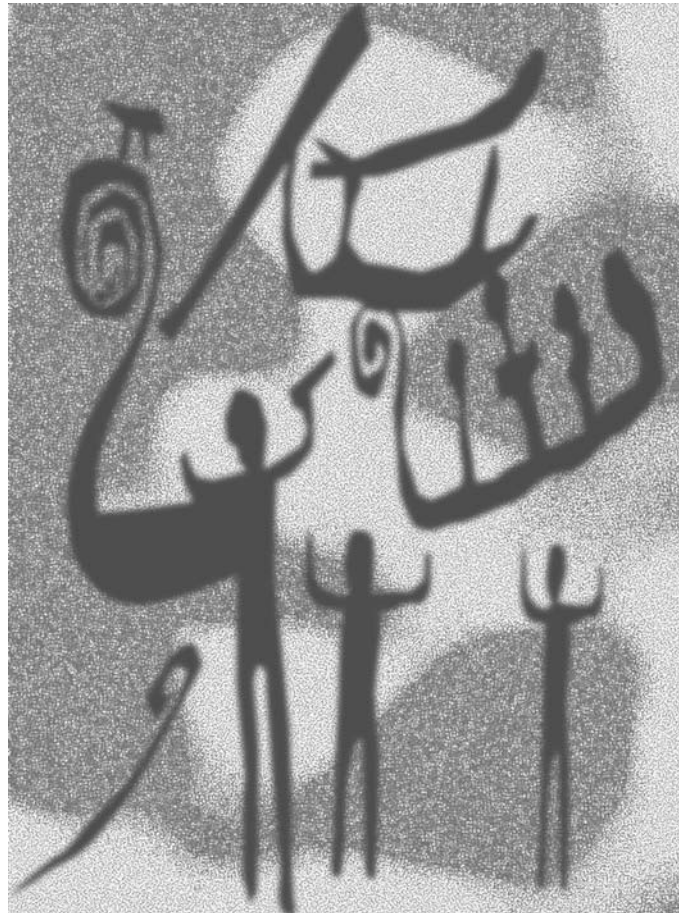
Islamabad/Oslo in January 2010

Atle Hetland  
 atlehetland@yahoo.com

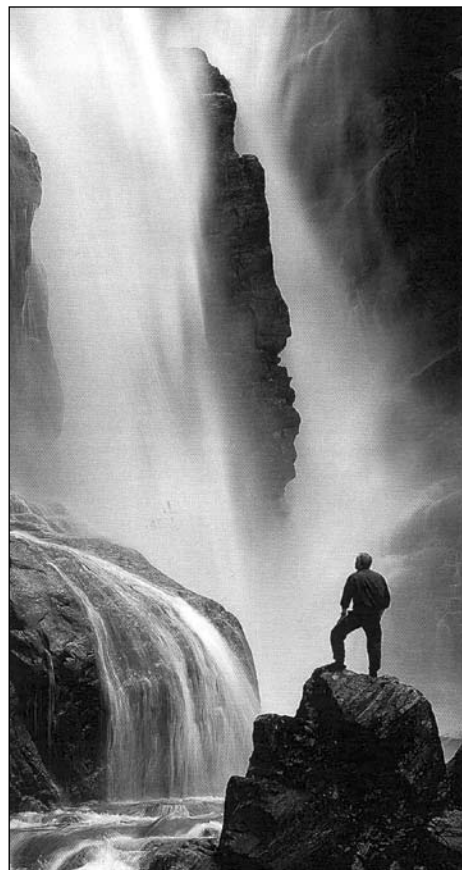
# Chapter 1

## History and Geography

Norway from Poverty to Riches



*Norway is blessed with abundance of fresh water, including waterfalls, rivers and lakes, whose resources are essential for livelihood, sport, tourism and industrial development.  
Norway possesses top expertise in hydroelectric power technology.*





# History and Geography

## Norway from Poverty to Riches

### From the Ice Age to Modern Times

People first settled in Norway about 10,000 years ago. At first they lived by hunting and fishing, but gradually they began to keep livestock and to cultivate the land. The first farms came into existence around 500 BC. This period is known as the Bronze Age, since bronze was the metal used for weapons, jewelry and tools. This was followed by the Iron Age, which lasted until about 1000 AD. Trade increased and better tools were developed.

The earliest, larger *settlements* were in southwestern Norway and along the Oslo fjord. Small urban communities developed, notably in Bergen, Stavanger, Haugesund with the large island of Karmøy, etc., in the southwest; Tunsberg, Fredrikstad, Hamar, Oslo, etc., in the southeast of the country; and Trondheim (earlier named Nidaros) and nearby centers, in central Norway. Nidaros was the first capital of Norway (from 997); later Bergen took over, as it had become the leading trading centre and the largest of all Scandinavian cities.

The period from about 800 to 1050 is known as the *Viking Period*, and was an eventful chapter in Norwegian history. The Vikings had fast ocean-going ships and made lightning raids from the sea. Outside Norway the Vikings are best known for their brutal plundering. Less known is the fact that they were skilled craftsmen, traders, explorers and sailors. The early form of writing known as runes ('runeskrift') dates from the Viking Period. Leiv Eriksson, a Viking who lived in Greenland, was the first European to land in North America, some 500

years before Columbus who is generally thought to have 'discovered America', if we disregard the Red Indians and the Eskimos (Inuit) who already lived there.

Norway became a unified country around the year 1030. Christianity was also introduced, often using force, taking over from the pagan Norse Mythology. In the thirteenth century, Norway extended its rule to include Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands and the Orkney Islands, which was known as the Norse (or Norwegian) Empire. Today, Iceland is independent. Greenland and the Faroe Islands are still just part of Denmark, but have quite autonomous status known as 'home rule'. The Orkney Islands are part of the UK.

In 1349-1350, the Black Death, a plague that swept across much of the world, struck Norway, wiping out more than half of the population, leaving Norway weakened. It was taken over by Denmark, from 1380-1814. The country was known as Denmark-Norway. Norwegians managed to retain much of their national identity, which enabled them to draw up a Norwegian constitution when the union was dissolved in 1814 when Denmark, which was on the losing side in the Napoleonic Wars, had to surrender land. Norway entered into a union with Sweden.

The Union with Sweden was peacefully terminated in 1905. The Norwegians decided in a referendum to be a monarchy and asked the Danish Prince Carl, to become King of Norway. Only men could vote in the referendum since women did not



get the right to vote until 1913, as the first country in Europe. Prince Carl accepted the new 'job' and took the name Haakon VII. He became the first king of an independent Norway for 525 years.

King Haakon VII became a popular king during the German occupation of Norway from 1940-45. He became the symbol of the Norwegian resistance movement, living in exile in London. The Queen and children went to America, as it was not considered safe for the whole royal family to live in London.

Norway is a founding member of the United Nations and the Western defence alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The first UN Secretary General was the Norwegian Trygve Lie. Norway is a peace-loving country and has played an active part in trying to settle conflicts within and between nations, such as in the Sudan and Sri Lanka, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The 'Oslo Agreement' was negotiated secretly with the help of Norwegian government officials and researchers. Norway is one of the world's largest donors of development aid as measured by the country's GDP and also a sizeable donor as measured in absolute terms. The Nobel Peace Prize is awarded in Oslo on 10th December every year, announced on the UN Day on 24th October.

Towards the end of the 1960s the oil and gas exploration in the North Sea off the Norwegian coast proved successful. Large fields have since been exploited and Norway is now one of the ten largest oil producers in the world and one of the five largest oil exporters. The Norwegian Petroleum Fund (today known as the Government Pension Fund) is one of the largest government reserve funds in

the world. Oil income has had a major impact on the development of the Norwegian economy, its industrial and post-industrial sectors, and its ability to maintain and improve its welfare state. Norway has paid off all foreign debt. However, only limited amounts of oil revenue is used. The restrictive economic policy has proved successful, also seen in the economic crisis in 2008 - 2009 with low unemployment and relatively rare bankruptcies.

## Geography and Climate

*"It is thanks to the Gulf Stream that we can live in Norway"*, primary school teachers often tell their children. The warm current and winds from the Mexican Gulf, which crosses the North Atlantic Ocean and touches the long coast of Norway (and Ireland and Britain), makes the temperature several degrees warmer and the climate much milder than you would otherwise expect in a country as far north as Norway, with two counties north of the *Arctic Circle*. Norway is much milder than other areas that far north in North America and Russia, and also milder in winter than northern Sweden and Finland.

The relatively mild coastal winds cause abundant precipitation, which falls mostly as rain, even in winter, when the rain is often mixed with sleet and even some snow. Inland, and in the mountains, there is snow for several months in winter, and Norway has several glaciers with eternal snow and ice, including *Jostedalsgreen*, which is the largest one.

The average temperatures from south to north in the country vary by some 6-8 degrees Centigrade, with the north being colder. However, considering how close the north of Norway is to the North Pole

one could have expected colder weather in northern Norway.

In December and January, the coldest months, the average temperature in *Oslo* is about minus five degrees and about the same in *Vardø*, the northernmost town. In June and July, the warmest months, the average temperature is about 15-16 degrees in Oslo and only 9-10 in Vardø. *Bergen* on the southwestern coast is milder in winter with an average temperature of plus 2-3 degrees in the coldest months and is a few degrees cooler than Oslo in summer and certainly more rainy and overcast.

It should be noted that these are average temperatures measured over some decades, and many days are much warmer than average in summer and many winter days and nights are much colder. In Oslo, winter nights with temperatures of minus 10-15 are not uncommon, and summer days may reach 25-30 degrees, at least for some weeks. In the inland areas, and on the northern plateau in *Finnmark* county, winter night time temperatures may drop to below 30 or 40 degrees, and summer days may be as hot as 30 degrees Centigrade. But none of these situations last; a typical aspect of the Norwegian climate is its changeability. On the coasts, days are rarely sunny throughout, and not entirely rainy throughout either, although the latter is more common than the first if you ask people, who are often tired of rain and overcast weather.

We should not only talk about summer and winter weather. We should remember that there are *four distinct seasons* in Scandinavia, with beautiful, mild springs and crisp and sunny, yes, and rainy, autumn days. Many favour the autumn season, for its beauty when the leaves turn yellow and red. Others favour

the winter, in spite of its low temperatures. In any case, if you are a Norwegian, you'd better get used to moderate outdoor heat, and warm clothes for the weather! Indoors, though, you are comfortable the year round – if anything, maybe a bit hot in summer if you live in a city without air conditioning in your office. Recall that there is daylight, and with some luck, sunshine for 15-20 hours every day for several months in summer, and midnight sun for a couple of months in the far north.

It should be mentioned that Norway also includes the islands of *Svalbard*, *Jan Mayen* and the *Bear Island (Bjørnøya)*, which are not too far from Greenland. The Svalbard winters are considerably harsher than those on the Norwegian mainland, and the short summers are very cool or cold. Norway and Russia have coalmines on Svalbard, and there is also some seal hunting. Furthermore, *Queen Maud's Land* on the South Pole is Norwegian territory, as the Norwegian explorer *Roald Amundsen* and his team of four were the first men to reach the South Pole on 14th December 1911.

The Norwegian mountains are very numerous but not high; the highest peak *Galhøpiggen* in the *Jotunheimen* mountain range in the central part of southern Norway is 2469 meters above sea level. The many fjords on the coast are an underwater continuation of the mountains and some of the fjords cut into the country by as much as 200 kilometers, with *Sognefjorden* and *Hardangerfjorden* being the two longest ones on either side of Bergen. The coast includes thousands of islands and peninsulas. The ocean is the natural boarder to the west and north, and Norway has 1,542 kilometers common borders with Sweden, Finland and Russia to the east.

North of the Arctic Circle, the *midnight sun* can be seen for several weeks in summer, and in winter, the sun doesn't rise above the horizon for a similar period of time. It is completely light in summer, but in winter, it is not completely dark as moonlight and the northern lights brighten the landscape, which is mostly snow-covered.

The *Northern Lights*, which occur most clearly near the two poles originates from electrical particles sent out into space by the sun, and drawn into the earth's magnetic field, where they collide with other small particles in the atmosphere. This results in a greenish light dancing across the sky and illuminating the landscape, which is most spectacular at the darkest time of the midwinter night. Although it is also present in summer it is almost invisible. No wonder the Norwegians in the far north of the country, especially the Sami, the ethnic minority of Finnmark county's plateau, are said to be more superstitious than other Norwegians living further south and in modern cities!

## Transport and Communication

Norwegians often call the ocean or coastline *Highway No.1*, and, although it was more common in earlier times, people still travel by sea and much freight is still carried by boat. There are more than 200 scheduled car-ferry routes along the coastline. There are also car-ferry connections with Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and UK, and, in the summer season, with Iceland and the Faroe Islands. Many of Norway's tourists from abroad arrive by ferry or cruise ship.

The first Norwegian railway line, '*Edisvollsbanen*',

opened in 1854, was about 70 km and connected Oslo and Eidsvoll. '*Bergensbanen*', connecting Oslo and Bergen, was opened in 1909 after a 14-year construction period, including engineering challenges due to topographical conditions and harsh winters with heavy snowfall in the mountains. The other major railway lines include '*Sørlandsbanen*', connecting Oslo, Kristiansand and Stavanger; '*Dovrebanen*', connecting Oslo and Trondheim, with a link to Åndalsnes, and a separate line to the mountain town of Rørås. '*Nordlandsbanen*' connects Trondheim with Bodø, which is the northernmost Norwegian railway station. Narvik, which is further north, is connected with the Swedish railway system. The largest city in northern Norway, Tromsø, and Finnmark county do not have railways.

In southern Norway, there are railway connections between Oslo and Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö in Sweden and Copenhagen in Denmark, with further connections to Germany. Many of the earlier secondary railway connections are no longer in use. However, Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim have kept some of the secondary railways mainly for commuter traffic. In total, the Norwegian railway system extends over some 4,000 km, with more than half of the trains running on electricity. Needless to say, passengers can enjoy spectacular views on their railway journeys, something that is appreciated by frequent travelers, including Norwegians themselves, as well as millions of tourists and other visitors. Every year, some 40 million passengers use the *Norwegian State Railway (Norges Statsbaner, NSB)* and some 15 million tons of freight is transported along the railway lines.

Today the railway has to compete with other

modes of transport, not least *road transport*, which accounts for about 90% of all transport in Norway, and a substantial part of freight transport. All major roads in Norway are of a high standard and most secondary roads are tarmacadamed. Road safety has been given high priority, leading to improvements of roads, better training of drivers, speed limit controls, low tolerance level for drivers' alcohol consumption and stiff punishment for drunken driving, etc. This means there are relatively few traffic accidents, with only 3-500 hundred fatal road accidents per year.

Motorways are mainly found in eastern Norway and on the outskirts of the major cities. Speed limits on such roads are 90 km per hour, otherwise the general speed limit is 80 km per hour and in towns 50 km per hour, or even 40 km per hour, and in neighbourhoods with schools, old people's homes, etc., it can be as low as 30 km per hour. Norway is certainly not a country for speeding on public roads! But you often have a lot of space on Norwegian roads since the road network is extensive and the population and number of cars relatively low, with about 2.5 inhabitants per private car. You recall that the population is about 4.8 million, so that means that there are about two million cars in Norway. Motorcars are expensive to run in Norway as the government charges high duties and taxes on purchase and on petrol (diesel). Norway does not manufacture cars.

Domestic as well as international *air traffic* is frequent and efficient. Norwegians are among the most frequent users of air transport. There are long distances between towns and cities in Norway, especially in the north, and the distance from the northernmost to the southernmost point in Norway

is more than 2,000 km, excluding all the fjords and valleys. Small aircrafts and larger aircrafts are used extensively to connect different parts of the country. There are more than fifty airports in Norway, with about half belonging to the regular network. Some twenty five million passengers make use of air transport every year.

Oslo's new international airport, *Gardermoen*, was opened in 1998 when the old airport, Fornebu, situated just a few kilometers from the city center, gave way to a new airport to meet future capacity requirements. Today, Fornebu provides exclusive office accommodation to international companies like Telenor. The new airport can handle eighty flights per hour using two runways. Although the airport is about 50 km north of Oslo, the high-speed airport train takes only twenty minutes from Oslo's central railway station, and most passengers use this mode of transport. A number of other trains and buses also serve the airport from a large catchment area in southern and eastern Norway.

The main airline is *Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS)*, which is a Scandinavian partnership including Norway, Sweden and Denmark, with 50% government ownership. *Widerø's Flyveselskap*, whose owner is the Fred. Olsen Group, is the main airline serving the smaller airports. The new budget airline Norwegian Air Shuttle (*Norwegian*) is beginning to gain market shares.

## From Poverty to Riches

The earliest, larger *settlements* were in southwestern Norway and along the Oslo fjord. Small urban communities developed in the southwest and the southeast of the country, with further settlements

in the south. In central Norway, Trondheim and nearby centres grew up. With developments in farming, mining, and industry, Oslo, earlier named Christiania, took over. Today, the *only metropolitan area* in Norway is made up of Oslo and neighbouring suburbs, Drammen city, towns and suburban areas. Bergen was “*European Capital of Culture*” in 2000, and in 2008, it was Stavanger’s turn.

In general, *Norway’s farmland was and is very scarce*; only about 3% of the land is arable, but we should add well over a fifth of the land, which is productive forest.

A couple of generations ago, families were large, especially in rural areas, often with six to eight children, and often with other adult members, including grandparents, and (unmarried) relatives, who were helpers in labour intensive farming and fishing activities, or in housekeeping and other work. The laws prohibited smallholder farms from being split into unviably small units since they would then not be able to feed a family, even if the farmer combined farming with fishing and producing most of the food for his own consumption, and harvesting wild berries, game, and fish in the rivers and lakes. The latter was usually considered everybody’s right irrespective of ownership of the vast tracts of uncultivated hillsides, mountains, moors, swampland, etc.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Norway was basically a *quite poor rural country*. Many of the diseases, illnesses and mortality were poverty-related, with indicators such as, frequent prevalence of TB, high child mortality, poor housing and clothing, and frequent occurrence of mortal illness such as pneumonia (before the discovery of Penicillin).

Norwegians were literate and the country had compulsory seven year primary school for all children, from 7-14 years of age, and one-year’s compulsory military service for all young men at the age of twenty. Few young men, and even fewer women took further education, and many rural areas had great shortages of secondary schools, especially at upper secondary level. Trade schools, agricultural schools and other vocational schools were established in some centres. However, academic upper secondary schools and tertiary education were an urban phenomenon, with some exceptions, until after the Second World War. The major education expansion came in the late 1950s and 60s. Access to education did not only feature rural-urban disparities but also major class differences in rural as well as urban areas, and gender differences – in spite of Norway having *universal suffrage including women from 1913*, as the first country in Europe, after all men had been granted the right to vote in 1898.

The major *industrialization* of Norway began at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including development of *hydroelectric power* and *mining industries*, etc. The *concession laws* maintained Norwegian control of the country’s natural resources, but private Norwegian and foreign investment was not only welcomed but was often a necessity. The government maintained control over large-scale developments and could redistribute profits. In many developing countries today, industrialization takes place at the expense of the interests of the common man and woman, whose natural resources (such as minerals, oil, etc.) are sold off to cities or abroad, often through foreign or multinational companies, leaving the country’s ordinary people as poor, or poorer than before.

In the 1930s, Norway and the rest of Europe and America experienced *great unemployment*, especially in urban areas during the *economic depression*. Poverty was widespread, with lack of accessible health services for ordinary people, proper care for the handicapped and the elderly, proper unemployment benefits, etc. Sometimes, urban unemployed became rural under-employed, and city dwellers would stay temporarily with families in the countryside – and rural poor would try their luck in the cities, often only to experience unemployment, or a life on very low wages, living in poor, overcrowded dwellings, also including alcohol abuse and crime. These features are common today in most developing countries and during the current economic crisis, some of the features are even seen in countries like the United States of America, where about one fifth of the population falls outside the welfare state. In Europe, modern welfare systems shelter people from abject poverty.

After the Second World War, Norway moved fast to *reconstruct the country*, mainly over a five-year period, including the northernmost counties, which had suffered particular great destruction because of *scorched earth tactics* of destroying and burning everything before leaving the land.

Norway was a recipient of *Marshall Aid* (*Marshallhjelpen*) provided by the USA to European countries to help them reconstruct after the war, and to tie Europe closer to America commercially, politically and in other ways.

Early in the 1950s, Norway's GDP had surpassed the level achieved before the war, and abject poverty that could be found before the war was eradicated and *medical and other social services*

*became accessible to everyone*. Before the war *poverty and unemployment* sometimes affected people severely, including young men and women with large families, widowed/divorced women with small children, and the elderly and others unable to work, or unable to find gainful employment where they lived. It was especially bad in the cities although it also affected people in rural areas.

The Post-War era ('etterkrigstiden') was one of *continuous growth*. During the first thirty years the growth rate was on average over three percent per year. At the same time family sizes became smaller and is currently only one to two children per family. Although Norway's population is growing more aged, as in the rest of the West, it maintains some slight population growth, unlike several other industrialized countries, such as, *inter alia*, Japan, Germany and Italy, thanks to immigration.

In the 1950s and 60s, for the first time in Norwegian history, large numbers of *women* began to work outside the home, as housekeeping became less demanding and more jobs became available for women as well as men.

Most of Norway's *industrialization and rapid economic growth* took place after the Second World War, although it had begun at the turn of the century. With industrialization, there was *centralization and urbanization*, but to a lesser extent than in other countries, such as neighbouring Sweden. Many Norwegian industries were established in small towns far from the major cities, but often near natural resources and/or the labour force. It is characteristic of Norway, that it has remained possible for many people to stay in their small rural communities, villages, or in centers nearby, at the



same time as having jobs in industry or increasingly, in the public and private service sectors.

Historians have underlined that the *spread industrialization and small centres* with mechanics workshops, smallholder farms, etc., made it possible to for the Labour Party to fulfill its slogan, '*Hele folket i arbeid*', everybody at work, men, women, old, young, disabled, educated, unskilled, foreigners with scant knowledge of Norwegian, etc. The other catchy political slogan at the time was, '*By og land, hand i hand*', town and countryside/land, hand in hand.

In previous generations, each rural production unit may not always have been 'efficient', considered from a limited economic perspective, yet that would be weighed up by the need for paying out limited unemployment and social benefits, which from early in the 1950s had become a universal feature of *the Norwegian welfare state*.

It should be mentioned that the *urban-rural labour force* was flexible; workers were willing to take industrial jobs for some time, and then go back to their farming and fishing activities. Furthermore, the workforce was well educated. Foreign investors considered the country very stable.

Historians have suggested that Norway might have had to choose different policies if Norwegian natural resources could have been transported out of the country more easily, for a higher profit, or if Norway had not had abundance of hydroelectric power, or if the workforce had been less disciplined and less educated.

As late as 1960, about 50% of Norwegians lived *outside cities*, whereas only 25% of Swedes did so,

and only 10% of British people. Today, about three quarters of Norwegians can be said to live in urban settlements, with about half of the population of 4.8 million living within a two-hour travel distance from the capital Oslo. However, many foreigners from densely populated cities will probably consider most of Norway quite rural, yet modern with urban amenities within reach.

As regards *type of dwellings*, over half of all Norwegians live in one-family houses, including houses on farms and in fishing communities, where there is usually a good distance to the next-door neighbour. Twenty percent live in town houses and row houses, and the remaining twenty percent in apartments in multi-story buildings.

In recent decades, the Norwegians have entered the Internet Age faster than most other countries. Obviously, younger people are more likely to embrace new technology than older people, and in Norway, a large proportion of citizens over the age of sixty have no Internet at home, recently leading the Government to express worries about it and take initiatives to encourage and help the elderly to keep up.

Although we shall discuss the *Norwegian Oil Age* in greater detail in other chapters, it should be mentioned here. The huge production and reserves of natural gas and oil, have led to Norway becoming one of the world's richest countries, with a sound economic system and welfare state. Before the oil boom, the ocean gave fish in abundance for consumption at home and for export. Fishing continues to be essential, and today, that includes fish farming. The shipping industry remains essential, but today most Norwegian ship owners

have registered their ships abroad to avoid high taxation and reduce costs. Today, there are only a few thousand Norwegian seamen, mostly officers, as opposed to tens of thousands only a generation ago. The advanced ship building industry has declined, but has in many cases been diverted to building and maintenance of oil platforms and supply ships and equipment.

Oil is important to the Norwegian riches and Norwegians have become the '*blue-eyed sheikhs*', but the importance of oil is not as one-sided as outside observers often make out. Hence, we should also mention the importance of *tourism* to the Norwegian economy. Tourism and recreation services have been a constant growth sector over recent decades. It employs a large number of people in central as well as remote areas – and so does the public sector in our *industrial and post-industrial age*. Norway is part of the post-industrial age, with most employment in retail and service industries, education, social services and health, and other mostly public sector work. Salaries and employment conditions are generally good. However, in some sectors there is need for better pay, in particular in the service industries, some government sectors, and in sectors with a majority of women employees, especially in part-time jobs.

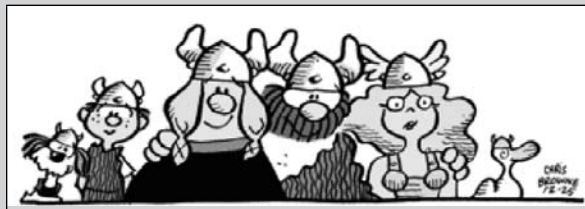
It is true that Norway has moved from poverty to riches in less than a hundred years. The Norwegian life-style has also become more hectic and stressed – even for Norwegians who seemingly have it all, abundance of resources, clean air and a beautiful environment, well regulated work conditions, excellent health services and education, and so on. In most families, both parents earn an income in order to make ends meet.

Some older people question the purpose of all the improvements we have seen when people seemingly have everything, yet still need more, and at the same time, they are short of time, tranquility, and social habits that suit the new time. Perhaps, in years to come, Norwegians and people in other affluent societies, should focus on the *art of living*, not only on acquisition of more things and objects for making life more comfortable. This may not be all that easy, especially not for Norwegians, because Norwegians see themselves as ordinary people, peasants, farmers, fishermen and workers, not as rich, upper class people, whom they generally despise. Thus far, though, Norwegians seem to have got through the new era of affluence and riches reasonably well. Let us trust they will handle it well in the future, and maybe learn a bit from immigrants and other foreigners as well, and not only rely



## Box 1: The Vikings

The Viking Era lasted from about 800-1050 A.D. Stories about the Vikings as warriors and plunderers have overshadowed the fact that they were also merchants, traders and carriers of culture, especially towards the end of the era. The Vikings were warlords or small kings ruling relatively limited areas of Norway, mainly on the southwestern coast, where the cities of Stavanger, Haugesund and Bergen are located, with good farmland, fishing waters and a mild climate. Norway became a unified state about 1000 A.D. and Christianity was introduced about the same time, replacing the Norse Mythology.



“Häger the Horrible” is a humorous comic strip, originally created by Dik Browne, syndicated by King Features Syndicate. It appears in some 2000 newspapers worldwide and was an instant success when it first appeared in USA in 1973. It is not least popular in Norway, where it is called “Hårek den hardbalne”. It is a caricature and loose interpretation of the Vikings and medieval Scandinavia.

## Box 2: The Sami People

Norway’s population is ethnically homogeneous save for the Sami minority, who traditionally mainly lived in the northernmost county of Finnmark. Some of the Samis have physical features resembling the Eskimos (Enuit) or Mongolians, who are mostly short and have dark, straight hair, while others look the same as other Norwegians, i.e., they have blonde hair, and some are short and others are tall. Traditionally, the Sami people were either fishermen on the coast or herdsman looking after their reindeers. They were semi-nomadic moving their herds from the inland plateau, Finnmarksvidda, where the reindeers fed on moss under the snow in winter, to the coast in summer where the reindeers fed on fresh grass. Today, the small Sami minority of about 40,000 has an advisory council in Tromsø, named the Sami Parliament, and they co-operate with Samis in Sweden, Finland and Russia. The Sami language and culture is distinctly different from that of Norway. Today, the Samis live all over Norway and it is difficult to preserve the unique language and culture for such a small minority. The Sami people can be said to be the real, indigenous Norwegians as they inhabited the country before it was populated by migrants, mainly from Germany and the neighbouring countries, from about 2-3000 B.C.-onwards.

### Box 3: Scandinavian Model

The Scandinavian model is often referred to as the third way between capitalism and socialism. The Nordic countries get noticed in the world because they are among the richest and best-organized countries in the world, scoring high in innovation, competitiveness and good living conditions. They allocate huge sums for development aid, peace brokering and international cooperation.



### Box 4: Peaceful Country

In 2009, a respected international Survey has again listed Norway as the world's most peaceful country – and Oslo, the world's most expensive city! Norway is a NATO member and it has troops in Afghanistan although not for combat. Still, maybe that should have disqualified Norway from being seen as the world's most peaceful country?



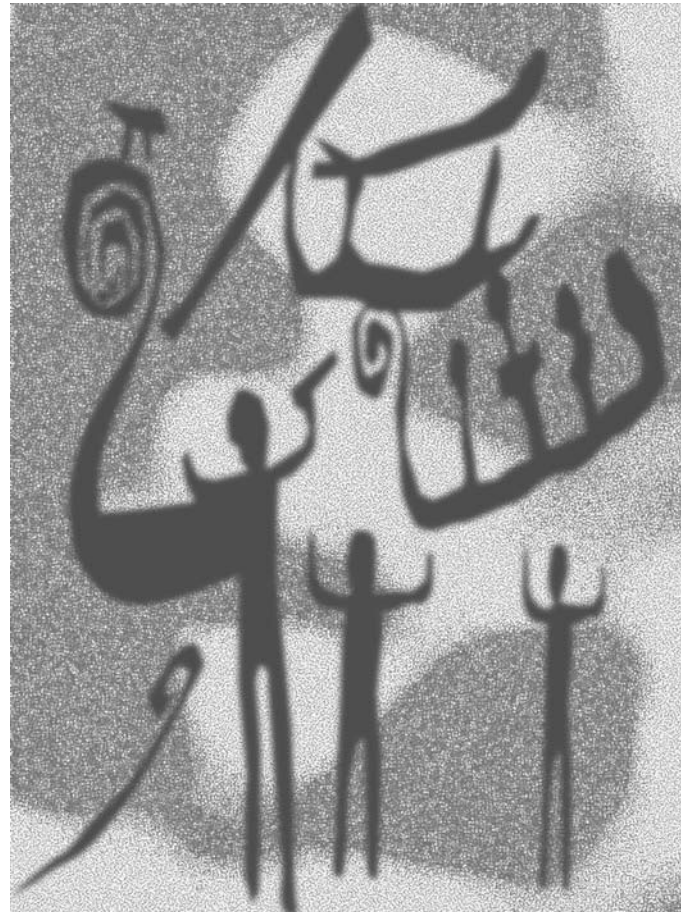
*The Nobel Peace Prize Medal.  
An independent committee, appointed by the Norwegian parliament, awards the prize every year, the first time in 1901. The Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony takes place in Oslo on 10 December.*

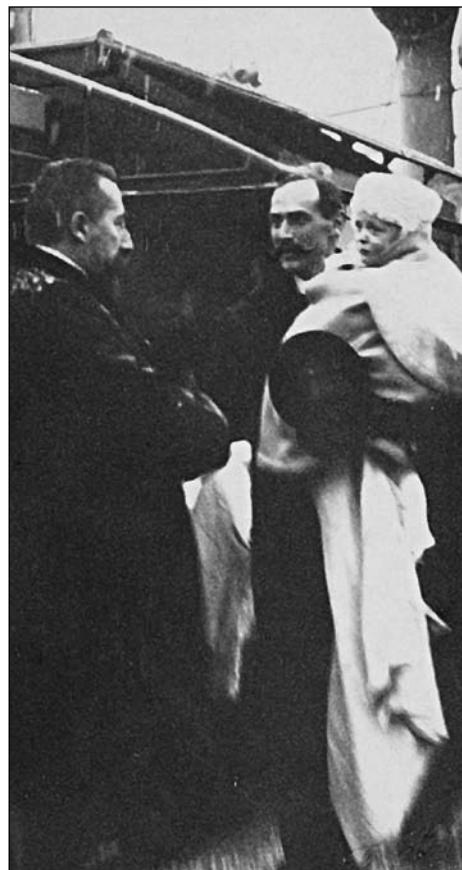
*The Norwegian Crown Prince Haakon Magnus and Crown Princess Mette Marit in traditional Sami outfits during their visit to Finnmark County in North Norway a few years ago.*



## Chapter 2

# Constitution, Politics and Society





*This photo is one of the most famous ones used in Norwegian textbooks. It shows King Haakon VII arriving in Oslo in 1905 with his son, who later became King Olav V. King Haakon was Norway's first king of Norway in modern time (1905 – 1957). They were technically immigrants and the current King Harald V the son of immigrants.*

# Constitution, Politics and Society

## Constitution and Political System

**Norway's Constitution was adopted on 17<sup>th</sup> of May 1814** when Norway gained independence from Denmark, which had been the senior partner of the country known as Denmark-Norway since 1380. Norway's independence came as a consequence of Denmark having been on the losing side in the Napoleonic Wars, which meant it had to cede territory. The Treaty of Kiel was signed on 14th January 1814. Norway became a junior partner in a union with Sweden, which had been on the winning side in the wars. The union became effective from 4th November 1814 after a short war. Norway had preferred total independence. The union with Sweden was quite loose and allowed Norway's Constitution of the 17<sup>th</sup> of May to be respected. The union with Sweden was dissolved peacefully in 1905.

The seventeenth of May, Norway's Constitution Day, in Norwegian, '*grunnlovsdagen*', also called the National Day, '*nasjonaldagen*', is always celebrated with great dedication and joy all over the country, giving special attention to children and schools, yet also being a unifying and all inclusive people's spring festival. The Seventeenth of May is Norway's main ceremonial day. People show their gratitude for their beautiful country, which is awakening after the long, cold Norwegian winter. They rally around the Constitution, national independence, democratic rights and humanistic values, and wish for other countries to enjoy independence and prosperity. People recall the occupation of Norway

by a foreign power during the Second World War, 1940-45, when it was strictly forbidden to celebrate the Seventeenth of May.

Historically, the Seventeenth of May has sometimes been used to put across political messages and encourage strife, and the celebrations have been less unifying, but most of the time since the 1820s and 30s when the Seventeenth of May first began to be celebrated, children have been given special attention.

In the formal parts of the celebrations all these issues are mentioned in speeches. And every 17<sup>th</sup> of May programme in a city, town or local community must include what is known as the '*speech for the day*'. Furthermore, the programme includes a church service, laying of wreaths on the graves of national heroes and soldiers who have lost their lives in war, and lighter sections with games and competitions for children and sometimes also adults, and, special food dishes, if weather permits, taken al fresco, or in a picnic like way – and children can buy as many ice creams and hot dogs as they like on this day!

On 10th April 1814 the elected National Assembly met at Eidsvoll (in the buildings of Eidsvoll Iron Works), about 70 km outside Oslo, to prepare Norway's Constitution. The below quotation (in an artcal by Knut Mykland in 'Nytt fra Norge', MFA, Oslo 1999) shows how one representative depicted the Assembly.

*"Here was to be seen a selection of men from all parts of the realm, of all ranks and dialects, men from court circles as well as landowners come together in no set order for the*

*sacred purpose of laying the foundations for the rebirth of the nation."*

But the representative who wrote this forgot one aspect which Norwegian school children today learn, notably that due to a severe snowstorm in a mountain chain in central Norway, the representatives from northern Norway were so much delayed that they could not reach Eidsvoll in time for the signing on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May. Let us mention that the whole period of time the elected members, with senior civil servants, the Danish Crown Prince and other leaders spent on preparing the Constitution was only about 6 weeks. Such expediency must be of envy to politicians and civil servants in our time – and the Norwegian Constitution was indeed prepared without the use of email, mobile phones, photocopiers or other essentials without which we would otherwise be certain that our world would come to a standstill!

The Norwegian Constitution was to a major extent modeled on the French Constitution, following the French Revolution in 1789, and also the American Constitution in 1786. Today, the Norwegian Constitution is one of the world's oldest constitutions still in force, obviously with a number of amendments, such as, for example, universal suffrage (1913, when all women were given the right to vote) and the right of women to 'inherit the throne' and become head of state of Norway, which was made law only a few years ago.

Before the Constitution was adopted in 1814, there had for several decades been a certain amount of discontent in Norway over the fact that many of the country's interests were disregarded to Denmark's advantage and in particular the dual monarchy's

capital, Copenhagen. Norway wanted to have its own university and National Bank, but Denmark was afraid this would lead to a break-up of the dual monarchy. Norway got its own university in 1811 (opened in 1813), but the National Bank issue was not solved. Furthermore, in the whirlpool of the Napoleonic Wars, the King, in Copenhagen, decided for alliance with France and war with England, overlooking Norway's interests. For Norway, this meant blockade, crisis and hunger. In the years leading up to 1814, the separatist movement in Norway grew, yet the separation came as a result of the Napoleonic Wars rather than the Norwegian dissatisfaction and separatist movement.

For some further historical details, such as the democratization process during the nineteenth century, see other sections in this book, including Norway's fight against poverty and the rural-urban development, especially during the century of Norway's Union with Sweden. Below, we shall dwell on present day issues rather than history.

Norway's form of government is called '*Constitutional Monarchy*' or '*Parliamentary Democracy*'. King Harald V succeeded King Olav V to the Norwegian throne on 18th January 1991. He will rule until his death, or abdication, when his son Crown Prince Haakon Magnus will take over. The King is the Head of State, but his role is mainly ceremonial and that of a goodwill ambassador at home and abroad as power rests with Parliament. King Harald's wife, Queen Sonja, has played a particularly important and professional role along with her husband in performing the duties of the country's first family.

The **Norwegian Parliament**, the '*Storting*', in

Norwegian, literally meaning the Grand Assembly, and “*loya jirga*”, too, has 169 members (MPs), elected on a *proportional* basis rather than single-person constituencies in the 19 counties, ‘*fylker*’. The number of seats depends on the population in the respective county, with adjustments.

The political parties nominate the candidates standing for election; a vote is for a party and only indirectly for the listed candidate. Through a relatively complicated system, the voters can cross out candidates in order to give more weight to other candidates. Today, Norway has seven or eight large political parties, with representatives in the ‘*Storting*’, and a number of additional small parties. The parties can generally be grouped in ‘socialist parties’ and ‘non-socialist parties’, or, ‘bourgeoisie parties’.

From 1 October 2009, the ‘*Storting*’ organizes all its business in a single chamber, making work more efficient. Earlier, lawmakers were split into two chambers, ‘*Lagting*’ and ‘*Odelsting*’, when laws were passed.

In recent decades, no single party has had the majority of the representatives in elections and governments have therefore been *coalition governments*. Sometimes, the government is a minority government, which means that it has to rely on support from one or another party in the ‘*Storting*’ on a case-by-case basis. The previous government (2006–2009) was made up of cabinet members from the Labour Party, the Socialist Left Party and the Centre Party, with the Prime Minister, Hon. Mr. Jens Stoltenberg, from the Labour Party, the largest party in the coalition. The current government, from October 2009, is made up of the same three parties, with twelve members from the Labour Party and

four from each of the two others. The Cabinet has twenty members, ten men and ten women. The next parliamentary election will be held in September 2012.

The first woman Prime Minister in Norway, Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, represented the Labour Party. After retiring from Norwegian politics, she served as Director General of the World Health Organization.

In the last two to three decades, many women have entered politics and the cabinet usually has close to equal representation of men and women. However, there are still fewer female MPs than male MPs.

**Parliamentary elections** take place in early/mid September every four years. Since parliament cannot be dissolved, nor can a new election be held, this means that the elected MPs must sort out differences and establish workable coalitions. When an election has been held, the Speaker of the Storting, known as the ‘*Stortingspresident*’, reports the outcome to the King, who is the Head of State. The ‘*Stortingspresident*’ has the highest rank in the Norwegian state after the King. The King then requests the leader of the largest party to form a government. Since governments are usually coalition governments, the process of establishing a government takes some time, including negotiations on the number of cabinet posts, agreement on important issues etc. When the cabinet has been established, the King opens the ‘*Storting*’ officially, and reads the ‘*stortingserklæringen*’, the government’s overall policy statement and prioritization of issues to be given focus, followed by a general debate known as ‘*trontaledebatten*’. In the following weeks,



the government's budget for the following fiscal year (which in Norway is identical with the calendar year) is discussed and adopted.

Two years after the Parliamentary election, there are **local and regional elections** to the *430 local councils*, '*bystyrer*', which in rural municipalities are named '*kommunestyrrer*', and the *nineteen counties*, '*fylker*'. (See the below section on Local and Regional Government for further details.)

In addition to the key roles of the '*Storting*' and the local and regional assemblies, it is important to note that the large number of **professional and interest organizations**, including employers' organizations, labour unions, etc., also play essential roles in the Norwegian democracy. (See the section on Voluntary Organizations.) Here, we would like to underline that without the many organizations, movements, NGOs, etc., the Norwegian democracy would be very bleak.

Let us mention that the political systems of the other Nordic countries are very similar to those of Norway. Sweden and Denmark are monarchies, while Finland and Iceland have an elected President as Head of State, with power invested in Parliament with the Prime Minister heading the Cabinet.

### Local and Regional Government

We Norwegians keep reminding ourselves and others that Norway is a small country, at least in population terms, about 4.8 million, in a territory about the same as that of Japan and less than half of Pakistan. The other Nordic countries also have small populations; Finland and Denmark have just over 5 million people each, Sweden approaching 10

million, and Iceland, just over 0.3 million, making it the most sparsely populated country in Europe. *Greenland* and the *Faroe Islands* have in domestic matters basically achieved independence from Denmark through their system of 'home rule', but cannot quite be listed as separate countries. Greenland has a population of about 60,000 and the Faroe Islands 50,000.

The majority of Nordic local communities are small, and most of those who live in the big cities have moved in from rural areas and towns for education and employment in the last few generations, and most city folks have relatives in rural areas whom they visit during holidays and for family events. There is close contact between the urban and rural cultures.

The rural, traditional culture is often seen as superior, or more Norwegian, as compared to the modern city culture, which many people feel has less foundation and principles. Many feel that people can go astray in the city culture, especially young people, who may fall outside the mainstream society. They may run into difficulties more easily due to urban people's greed for money, abuse of alcohol and drugs, and lack of moral principles in general, often due to weak social control. Let us hasten to add that this picture of urban culture is painted with a broad brush but is nevertheless based on many people's understanding of reality in the Nordic countries, not least in Norway, and probably in many other countries in the world. However, in today's global village, many urban habits have spread to rural centers and villages.

As mentioned in the previous section, Norway has *nineteen counties*, in Norwegian, '*fylker*', and no less

than 430 *municipalities*, in Norwegian, '*kommuner*'. Through merger of municipalities, the number has gone down from around 750 in the early-1950s. The municipalities vary tremendously in size and number of inhabitants, from less than 1,000 to Oslo with close to 0.6 million. More than half of the municipalities have less than 5,000 inhabitants and only 10 have more than 50,000 people. This means that local councils are small units, bringing closeness between politicians and authorities on the one side, and ordinary people on the other side. It gives a special understanding of the word *democracy* and *people's participation* in their own affairs. The municipalities employ about 20% of the people in the municipalities, and in many municipalities, the percentage is significantly higher. Furthermore, the direct activities of the municipalities count for about 20% of the country's GDP. Most of the budgets of the municipalities and counties are fixed, leaving elected representatives with little real power. Yet, we should not overstate this aspect, as grassroots participation in affairs is the cornerstone of the Norwegian democracy.

The Labour Party, '*Arbeiderpartiet*', is the largest political party in Norway although without an absolute majority in the '*Storting*' since the mid-1960s elections. Yet, it has remained the most dominant party in minority or coalition governments much of the time and it was also the largest party in the recent coalition government, and in the new government following the general election in September 2009.

At the local level, the Labour Party is less dominant. At elections, people don't only vote for a party, they also consider other factors, such as the personal reputation, character and expected ability

of the candidates to represent local people and get work done. At national elections, the center-parties in Norway usually get about 20% of the seats. However, the center-parties often have about twice that number, i.e. about 40% of the local council chairs (mayors) in the country.

The Labour Party sees itself, and is seen by the common people, as the *custodian of the welfare state* in Norway, as are Labour or Social Democratic parties in the other Nordic countries. However, it should be noted that the welfare state has gained the support of all major Norwegian political parties. There are obviously differences, with the parties on the right advocating less government involvement, and the parties on the left believing in maintained, or increased government involvement.

Historically, municipal self-government, '*kommunalt selvstyre*' was introduced in Norway in 1837, with the Local Government Act being passed in 1847. Further modernization took place over the years and a major overhaul occurred in 1993. *Local councils* have the responsibility for implementation of all the welfare state's services, such as basic education, health and social services, transport and communication, with the minor roads, housing schemes, and water, sanitation, etc. *Regional governments* have the responsibility for secondary education, most hospitals and trunk roads, etc.

Local government receives funding from municipality taxation, '*kommuneskatt*', but it is the '*Storting*' that decides on the upper limit of taxation. The '*Storting*' also decides on the amount of transfer from central to local levels, to counties and municipalities. This means that the municipalities must prioritize within fixed budgets,

where most expenditure will take place and the local municipalities have a limited chance of receiving funding for new initiatives. In other words, they cannot expect to be able to find funding for ambitious projects, even if the projects are important and viable. The Rural Development Fund, '*Distriktenes utbyggingsfond*' should be mentioned as a successful central government source for funding of the local municipalities, groups and individuals – today it is especially targeted towards youth and women – to receive support for establishing new income-generating activities, or expanding existing ones.

The regional level has a less prominent role politically than the local level, and certainly the central level. Norway has parliamentary elections every four years, and in-between, i.e., two years after the parliamentary election there are local and regional government elections. About two-thirds to three quarters of the population vote in the local/regional elections, and the number is declining. In the international context this is a good turnout but in the Norwegian context it is low. In parliamentary elections, more than 80% of the voters participate. Of the members of parliament, about three quarters have experience of participating in local councils. This is an important link between local, regional and central government levels.

Declining participation in local elections is a worry to politicians as the role of local councils and local communities in implementing activities is essential for the Norwegian welfare state. Some of the declining participation can be explained by the fact that societies become more technologically complicated and that people move. Professional companies and skilled workers provide services,

sometimes assisted by voluntary organizations, but they also see a lesser role for themselves.

This leaves a diminished role for participation of ordinary people. Yet, you can also find dynamic local communities, with individuals, interest groups, private sector companies, etc., with inclusion of the local councils. They may not involve themselves in politics, but are more interested in working in professional interest groups and specialized sub-groups.

Let us hope that voters' participation doesn't decline further and that the local councils, with interest groups, companies, etc., will form alliances and be cornerstones at local level in years to come. The municipalities may be the weakest link, yet also the most crucial link in the chain, without which, the political chain, and democracy as a whole, becomes weak.

### **Social Welfare State, Social Security and Health Services**

The *Scandinavian Model* is often called the *third way* between capitalism and socialism. It has a major government sector but also a strong private sector. The elected parliamentarians, the lawmakers, work closely with council members at regional and local levels, and consult and negotiate with interest and professional organizations. Parliamentarians draw up policies and decide on taxation so that the government can get the required revenue to provide services to all citizens and redistribute wealth to those who are less fortunate in society. People who have grown up in a Nordic country find the safety net of these countries a more advanced and humane

system than other countries which leave individuals and families to fend for themselves, which is even the case in very rich countries, such as the United States of America. In poorer countries, such as Pakistan and Afghanistan, there is hardly any social security net for ordinary people except for that provided by the family.

The welfare state in Norway and the other Nordic countries rests on the Scandinavian Model, embedded in the thinking of the labour or social democratic parties. Although privatization of some government services has also taken place in Norway and the other Nordic countries in recent years, it is fair to say that the Scandinavian Model is still intact and doing well. These countries are among the most egalitarian countries in the world, yet also have a thriving private sector. There is reason to believe that the Norwegian economy will continue to be solid with low unemployment, normally less than 3% and lower than in most other Western countries, where it is often about 5-6%, and currently in the economic crisis double digit unemployment in some countries.

This backdrop is important in order to understand the Norwegian Social Security System and Health Services, because if there were no general consensus among citizens, it would not have been possible to spend about 35% of the government budget on social services and health. Even most of those who want the government's role to be reduced and modified still accept the general principles of accessible services for all - which requires government regulations and often direct government implementation.

The two main laws regulating the health sector

are the *National Insurance Act* and the *Social Care Act*. Improvements keep being made to the laws and regulations. Since the early 1990s, the municipalities have had the main responsibility for providing care for mentally handicapped and most of the old, large institutions have been closed. (Incidentally, many of these large buildings are now used as reception centers and temporary housing for refugees.) In line with this approach, the general practitioner service was established in 2000, making it possible for all Norwegians to have one permanent doctor, thus improving the quality of service. At the same time Norway has paid major attention to establishing good registries and data systems.

A sparsely populated country like Norway (with only about 16 people per square km on average) relies on many small hospitals, with some larger general and specialized central hospitals, which are often university and research institutions. Today, patients can choose which hospital they want to use. Norway has a unique waiting list system for hospital treatment. Unless a condition is such that immediate treatment is required ("category 1"), all patients are placed on a waiting list, and they will be treated as soon as there is capacity at the hospital they have chosen. The so-called waiting list guarantee states that no seriously ill patient ("category 2") should wait longer than three months. All other patients ("category 3") must wait until there is an opening. In cases, such as for rare ailments where Norway has limited expertise or capacity, patients can be treated abroad. The waiting list system allows for better planning and prioritization by the hospitals, but it is often criticized by patients and their families, especially if the waiting time is long, creating

discomfort or worsening of the patient's condition. Treatment requiring hospitalization is free of charge. For general doctor's consultations and medicines, a modest user fee is charged, with an upper annual limit.

Norway is a large country with a small population. In line with the Nordic people's *equality and fairness philosophy*, health services provided in the five health regions, 19 counties and 430 municipalities shall be as similar as possible. However, since the municipalities are responsible for implementation of services, with most costs covered by transfers from central government, there are some variations from one municipality to another. This also applies, for example, to the availability of places in kindergarten, types of unemployment response, care for the elderly, including old people's homes, etc.

It should be noted that in the years to come there will be an increase in the number and proportion of old people in Norway, as in most other Western countries. Obviously old people need more medical and other services. Statistics show that about 40% of Norwegians above the general retirement age, which is sixty-seven in Norway, have illnesses or conditions, which significantly impair their ability to function in daily life. (In the general population, the percentage is about 20%.) The need for medical assistance and 24-hour monitoring, or care grow markedly for people above 80. In most cases, old people can continue to live in their own homes, but require some assistance.

Less than 20% live in *old people's homes* or health institutions which are mainly government run, although some are private. Earlier, the percentage was lower as families would provide the required

support. Today, when most people work outside the home (about 75% of women and 85% of men), and families often live far apart, there is greater demand for institutions for old people. In many cases, institutions are better than family care, especially for the older segment of the elderly and old. Naturally, additional family contact is always important.

Although living conditions for the elderly and old people are in general good in Norway today, there are many improvements that can still be made. This is usually a major topic in connection with elections.

The *general retirement age* is 67, as mentioned, but many retire earlier, at 65 or even 63, and they will then receive a slightly lower pension. Persons who have not had gainful employment, such as housewives, also get government pension from 67. The minimum pension is about NOK 120,000, with additional allowances if needed, such as a housing allowance, etc. The pension is generally dependent on a person's number of years of employment and his or her salary level, thus also adjusting for how much the person and his or her employer/s have contributed to the pension scheme over the years. A civil servant usually receives about two thirds of his or her full salary at the time of retirement. The pension is taxable.

*Maternity leave* in Norway is between 42 weeks of full-time leave, or 52 weeks of 78 per cent leave. Four weeks of the leave must be taken prior to delivery, and the father must take four of the leave weeks *paternity leave*. Women who have not been employed receive a lump sum grant upon giving birth. A newborn baby automatically gets the *mother's surname* unless she has instructed the hospital where

the baby is born differently.

Until recent decades, *daycare and kindergarten* were only available to some children. Today, almost all children have access to such services, but they are not free. As of 1997, the starting age for school children was reduced from seven to six years of age. Before and after school care is available for six to ten year olds so as to harmonize with parents working hours.

Today, *free and compulsory primary and lower secondary education is 10 years*, from age six to sixteen. All teenagers have the right to 3-year upper secondary education, vocational training with apprenticeship (4 years), or support to find work from the age of 16 to 19 (20). After that there is a year's *compulsory military service for men*; however a large proportion are either *conscientious objectors* and are given civilian service without military training, or are exempt for medical or other reasons. There is voluntary military service for women.

#### • Looked after from cradle to grave?

The Norwegian welfare system provides basic needs for people *from cradle to grave*. However, people who need long-term medical or social services, including people with chronic diseases or handicaps will tell us that there are still shortages and that a life on allowances is not equal to a life on a salary. The services provided are usually acceptable, but the financial allowances are limited, often making the financial situation and daily life of people living on welfare quite difficult. This is also the case for many pensioners. It should also be noted that people living on welfare fall outside mainstream society as they lack the social network and status gained through

belonging to a vocation or profession.

Norway like any other country has people who abuse alcohol or drugs. Of special concern are children of substance abusers, mostly single mothers, as these children have rarely learned what ordinary family life should be like. The more liberal 'protest time' of the 1960s and 70s resulted in many dysfunctional homes with drug abuse. But families and individuals living seemingly successful lives in mainstream society may also fall pray to substance abuse. There has recently been an increase in suicide among young and adult Norwegians although the figure is low, about 500 suicides per year out of an annual natural death rate of about 45,000. The number is significantly higher for men than for women.

As regards the above social ills, we find that in a country like Norway, where most cities, towns and rural areas are made up of small communities with a social network in the neighbourhood, it ought to be possible to find ways of reducing the number of people who become substance abusers or otherwise fall outside mainstream society for various reasons (crime, social-psychological disparity, etc.). Since Norway is a particularly wealthy nation (GDP per capita is now about USD 55,400) with a small population, and can afford all kinds of expertise, we find that Norway is lacking in innovation and socially inclusive approaches – to take care of "the least, the lost and the last". This is a challenge for Norwegian politicians and people in general in the years to come. It will be a test of political and social conscientiousness in our time – with lessons not only for Norway and other 'super-rich' countries, but for all countries.



Another important issue is integration of the *immigrant population* in the country. Norway and the other Nordic countries were culturally very homogenous until the 1960s. The Sami minority was small, and the Sami people were part of the Nordic countries in a different way to immigrants. Most immigrants integrate quite well in Norway, and they do not have any particular conflict with Norwegian society. This also applies to Pakistani and other immigrants from countries far away from Norway. Afghans, Turks, and many others work hard and do well.

However, many live in '*parallel communities*', where only part of their daily lives touch mainstream society. It is also a fact that many immigrants, especially in the first years, are in need of social welfare allowances. Obviously, refugees need help to settle in. On the other hand, few immigrant women receive unemployment benefits as many of them are not used to working outside the home.

Finally, let us stress that the Scandinavian Model and the Norwegian welfare state, including the advanced system of social and health services, are seen to be in good health, and are likely to last. The cost of services is high but forecasts show that revenue to implement services will be sufficient. We mention this since there are critical voices wishing for more privatization and cancellation of some of the services. Rather than reducing public/government social services, we believe that countries, which do not have many services, will want to develop more of them, and that they will look to Norway, the other Nordic countries, and Europe in general, for models and ideas. The United States of America spends much more per person on medical services

than Norway does. Yet, services for the poorer sections of the population are bad, with about 20% falling entirely outside the system.

### **Voluntary Organizations**

It is sometimes said that the welfare state in Norway and the other Nordic countries provide a safety net taking care of people from cradle to grave. Although it is not quite as simple as that, there is some truth to it, as we have discussed above.

In this section, we shall focus on the Voluntary Organizations, i.e. NGOs (non-governmental organizations), CBOs (community-based organizations) and other organizations, as they form 'the other side of the coin', the community's participation as opposed to the government's. In Norway and the other Nordic countries, *membership organizations* are considered particularly important since they involve people in a more direct and responsible way, yet at the same time, not belittling the importance of other organizations. Without these organizations, many aspects of the Scandinavian model and democracy would not function.

About two thirds of Norwegians are members of one or more voluntary organization of one type or other. Many, especially young people, are members of more than one organization. More women than men are members of voluntary organizations. Except for organizations specifically for pensioners, less than one fifth above 67 years (the common Norwegian retirement age) are members of other voluntary organizations.

Voluntary organizations were given a renewed role from the 1980s when scepticism grew about

the extensive role of the state in all countries, not only in communist and socialist states, especially after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, but also in social democratic welfare states such as Norway. From the conservative side it was argued that the state/government should pull back and let the private sector, voluntary organizations and people themselves take care of more issues. It was also thought that this would reduce the costs of many public services. The conservative wind that blew put greater expectations on NGOs and private service providers.

In addition, it should also be noted that Norway is an '*organization society*', meaning that the role of various types of interest organizations, such as the employers and employees organizations and unions, consumer organizations, etc., play a particularly important role in society. In many ways, the organizations form a 'middle level' between the people and the political parties and the elected representatives in local/regional governments and the national assembly.

Whereas political parties play a more prominent role at the time of elections, the many organizations are important throughout. Political scientists and sociologists have said that a prime minister and sector ministers who do not understand this will have difficulties remaining in their posts because they will be at odds with the organizations; hence also the people. The private sector and the public sector may be main poles, but the role of the organizations, including voluntary organizations, must not be underestimated.

In a European perspective, the roots of the Norwegian NGOs do not run deep as voluntary

societies and groups only began to spring up in the middle of the nineteenth century. People united behind causes for a better society, such as poverty reduction, cultural and language issues, and the working class struggle against the upper class and capitalist oppression. When the parliamentary system was adopted in Norway in 1884, the people's movements played a central role in realizing this democratic achievement.

Norwegian NGOs are based on deeply democratic ideals. Membership should be personal and founded on a commitment to do voluntary work. '*The people's movements were marked by volunteer efforts based on personal, moral engagements; faith in a cause and a willingness to make sacrifices for the collective good.*' (Statement by Håkon Lorentzen, Director of the University of Oslo Institute for Social Research, 1998.)

When the labour movement grew roots in Norway in the years between the two world wars, and especially after the Second World War, the welfare state developed. The Labour Party machinery dominated, and gave little room to voluntary organizations in implementation of the services, which became state/government-based public services. The reason for this can be traced back to the labour movement's distance from anything resembling *charity and bourgeois philanthropy*. No one should have to beg for services as it was considered that people had the right to public services when they needed them. The legendary Labour Party and Government leader for two decades after the Second World War said on many occasions that "*ingen skulle behøve å stå med lua i banda*", nobody should have to beg with cap in hand. Thus, the welfare state should



not only provide help and services, it should also do it in such a way that it would not take away people's dignity and pride.

The Labour Party, which is still the largest party in Norway, and the other, established political parties have NGOs affiliated to them, organized as study organizations, correspondence schools, youth organizations, etc. Many other organizations carry out voluntary information work, implement advocacy, charitable and humanitarian work, etc. In recent years, many interest organizations have been established in fields like health, for example, organizing people who are suffering from the same disease, working for better treatment and informing others about how they can avoid getting the disease. New organizations dealing with environmental issues have developed, as well as consumer organizations and organizations interested in international affairs and development aid. Women's organizations have also been successful in their work.

*Norwegian People's Aid* (Norsk Folkehjelp) and the *Norwegian Red Cross* (Røde Kors Hjelpekorps) are among the largest humanitarian organizations, teaching youth and adults how to be prepared for and provide help after natural catastrophes, such as floods and other natural disasters and emergencies. In a country like Norway, with harsh winter weather and people enjoying sports and outdoor life, such as hiking and skiing in the mountains, it is unavoidable that people get lost from time to time, and they rely on voluntary organizations and the government to carry out search and rescue missions. Organizations of this kind have a special appeal to young people.

In recent decades, the government demanded that the myriad of sports clubs should register as

CBOs/NGOs since they often had relatively sizeable income from sports events, and also expenses related to fees for coaches, trainers and administrators, rent or ownership of premises, transport for excursions, organizing of sports events, etc. In order to regulate these activities, and make sure that tax is collected when required, all such organizations have now been officially registered. The professional level of sports and other spare time activities have improved through greater regulation of activities. It should be noted that many of the activities are of great social, health, cultural, religious and moral value. They also play an important role in teaching young people to develop an interest in communal activities, and thus avoid delinquency and crime or bad habits such as substance abuse. Hence, the importance of voluntary organizations is immense.

Increasing the *professional level* of voluntary organizations is a double-edged sword because it reduces the average member's influence over the organization and his and her role in the running of it. An amateur musical group may be more important than a semi-professional group. A football club that selects all its team's players from the members may be more important to the average member and the local community than a club that 'imports' top players from outside and operates like a semi-professional club in other ways.

Although we live in a time when high professional standards are cherished, voluntary organizations must strike a sensible balance between high professional standards and amateurism. It should be realized that both types of voluntary organizations are needed. Furthermore, it is important to ascertain that voluntary organizations also work with the

private sector, i.e., industrial and commercial companies, as well as government institutions and large organizations. The private sector can help fund voluntary organizations and also set up their own humanitarian and other organizations, and through such efforts contribute to the local community and society at large.

Many voluntary organizations focus on providing help to people outside Norway, especially in developing countries. Such organizations focus on studying and learning about foreign countries. They often collect money, clothes, etc., to assist people who live in poverty and after wars and natural disasters. *Solidarity* and (Christian or Muslim) *charity* are key aspects of these organizations' work. They also act as important information and support groups for the large Norwegian development aid programme through governmental and NGO channels.

Norway has for more than a hundred and fifty years had *missionary societies*, which carry out social work and proselytize in a number of countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Funding of missionary societies is based on collections in churches and religious meetings, as well as other donations. All over the country, especially in rural areas and towns, missionary support activities form important social meeting places for the people in the communities. It is often said that the work of missionary societies has been a corner stone and predecessor of Norway's generous development aid programme and assistance to the United Nations.

Norway has several large NGOs providing development aid and a large number of smaller

organizations. The "five big ones", as they are often called, are: Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), the Norwegian Red Cross, Norwegian Save the Children (Redd Barna), and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). They all receive considerable support from the government for their aid activities, NRC some two thirds of its budget. NRC is also responsible for secondment of short-term Norwegian staff to international organizations (about 90-100 annually); the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs pays the total cost, including overheads for NRC's administration. Most religious organizations have joined an umbrella organization known as "Bistnadsnemnda" for its member organizations/societies' development aid work, i.e. work where they do not proselytize.

Some of the larger voluntary organizations, and other focused organizations in key fields, are likely to develop into national and international NGOs or other types of organizations, institutions and companies. We should be open to such dynamic and innovative developments. There is still space and work for the many voluntary organizations, in rural areas and in the cities, and it is important that people get involved in voluntary work, especially at the grassroots level. Local communities become poorer if there are not many active voluntary organizations, and we cannot see any contradiction between such organizations, the government and the private sector. They strengthen and complement each other.

## Gender Equality, Children's Rights and Family Affairs

Norway and the other Nordic countries are known for gender equality and freedom and rights for women as well as men – and today, also children. In 2009, Iceland surpassed Norway on the international gender equality index.

However, in Norway like the rest of the world, women's emancipation came late. The first woman was admitted to university in Norway as late as 1882, and women got the right to vote in 1913. All men, i.e. including men without property and without higher education, got the right to vote a few decades before women. Some years ago, the Norwegian constitution was amended so as to allow a woman to become head of state in future.

Today, all adults above the age of eighteen can vote; immigrants can also vote after three years of residence in Norway, even if they are not citizens, first in local and regional elections and later also in parliamentary elections. It is considered important that immigrants are given a stake in their new land.

In spite of the late recognition of women as full citizens, women in Norway – as in other countries – have historically played important roles in society, mainly at household level. In a country like Norway with a small and sparse population, a harsh climate, and scarcity and poverty in earlier times, living conditions and livelihoods have always demanded great responsibilities from women – as well as for men. In communities of fishermen and sailors, for example, women were often left to run the home on their own. In farming communities, especially at the time of harvesting and storage of foodstuff for

the long winter season, women on the farms had special responsibilities for the whole family's health, welfare and security.

As in other countries, especially when the social welfare is mainly the responsibility of the family, with little government and other communal support, women usually carry the main responsibility for everybody's health, the children, those needing assistance, i.e. the sick and handicapped, old family members, and also the able bodied so that they could endure hard labour and provide for their families. In such conditions, which were also typical for Norway until the 1950s, women's responsibilities were heavier and their roles more important than we often realize today. Women were the social workers of the local communities and the main providers of care for the needy. Women still have such roles, but are now supported by the well-developed social welfare state in Norway and the other Nordic countries, and to a greater extent, by men.

Elsewhere in this book, we present some women in the public sector, in literature, politics, the church, and other fields, as they have become more and more visible on the public scene in the last century or so, and in particular in the last three or four decades. Let us mention here that Norway's first woman Prime Minister was *Gro Harlem Brundtland*, who formed her first government in 1981. It is usual today that the Norwegian cabinet has about equal representation of male and female members.

Many government departments have a majority of women employees, such as the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) and the Directorate of Immigration (UDI). Many

NGOs, too, have more women employees than men. However, men are still found in many higher and top posts, and positive discrimination is sometimes still needed to correct this. Furthermore, positive discrimination is also used to include a higher percentage of *immigrants* in government departments and organizations dealing with international issues. In some professions, such as teaching and nursing, it is necessary to implement measures that can attract more men to undertake training and remain in such jobs throughout their working life.

In the foreign service there are more males at the level of ambassador. Therefore, a few years ago, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided that there should be at least 40% female ambassadors (head of missions) 'within a reasonable period of time'. Currently (winter 2010), the Norwegian Ambassador to Pakistan is *H.E. Mr. Robert Kvile*. The former Ambassador, *Mrs. Aud Marit Wiig*, was the first woman to hold the post in Pakistan. In Afghanistan, the current Ambassador is *H.E. Kaare R. Aas*.

Although the government sector, at central as well as regional and local levels, attracts women, there are still sectors where more women should be employed. In the private sector, there are clearly great gender disparities, with most top posts being occupied by men – and many low and part-time jobs, for example, in retail sales and service industries occupied by lowly paid women. The employees' organizations work to rectify such abnormalities, and they are usually supported by the employers' organizations.

In the 1960s and 1970s feminist organizations were particularly outspoken and radical in their

demands, not only in Norway but all over the world. They played an essential role in getting women's issues high up on the political and social agendas, such as in family planning and sex education, equal pay for equal work, etc. Their achievements were impressive and in many cases, women's issues, or gender issues, as the term is now, are considered mainstream and it is almost unnecessary that separate organizations remind us of them.

Historically, a hundred years ago or so, it was the upper class women who could take the risk to take up women's issues, for example, family planning and other health and social issues concerning women. Middle class women could not risk their reputation and status and would therefore be more careful in discussing such issues in public. Many of the issues concerned ordinary working class women, but if they took up the issues themselves they would have little impact. As regards gender issues, there are probably many similarities between Norway, say 50-100 years ago, and Pakistan and Afghanistan today. However, it should be noted that there are also modern sub-groups within Pakistan and Afghanistan, often constituted of upper class, or upper middle class families and segments of the societies, where there is greater understanding for gender equality.

In the 1950s and 60s, women in Norway and the Western world at large took up work outside the home. This was possible because household chores took up less time, children were fewer in each home and they spent more time at school than before, the government welfare system provided better healthcare for the sick and the elderly, relieving women of many duties. Simultaneously economic growth meant that the labour force needed more

members, and women were readily available. Often 'jobs for women' were less well paid than 'jobs for men'. That is still the case to some extent, but the gap has been narrowed markedly in recent decades. Women's organizations, along with the *Ministry of Children and Equality*, still carry out important control, advocacy and policy tasks.

Today, women as well as men are better educated than ever. In Norway and the other Nordic countries more women than men take up university studies, and now they are less likely to end their studies at lower or medium degree levels, as was common earlier. In general, girls and women do better at exams than men do. This picture also applies to Pakistani-Norwegians.

In Norway and the Western world in general, the twentieth century was often termed *the Child's Century* ('*barnets århundre*'). By the end of the nineteenth century much abject poverty had been removed from Norway, although poor living conditions existed for many for several decades, not least during the recession between the two world wars when unemployed, widows with children and the elderly had particularly difficult times – and the social welfare system for all was only made comprehensive soon after the Second World War.

In 1892, *child labour* became prohibited by law, although it has always been common that children 'help at home'. In rural areas, on farms and in fishing villages, during harvesting seasons and special fishing seasons, children were always counted upon to work after school. Sometimes, bigger children would even work for pay to help a neighbour or somebody else in the village or town. Similarly, in towns and cities, children helped as errand boys, baby sitters, etc.,

and it was not considered child labour, but part of a good upbringing. Naturally, all this happened within limits and it probably only ended when school days, homework and organized after-school activities filled the child's day entirely – and they became busy on the computer and with their own activities. Did we lose something in the process? Yes, we lost a lot of the spirit of joint efforts, of belonging and also for children to feel they were important in the family and community. When Asian countries struggle to rid themselves of exploitative forms of child labour, let us hope that some of the positive aspects of children learning to 'help at home' are kept.

*Corporal punishment* is not permitted at all in Norway. If the police use excessive force during arrest or interrogation, it is termed police violence and considered a crime. Corporal punishment is also not permitted in prisons, schools or any other institutions (such as mental hospitals). Parents or other adults are not allowed to use corporal punishment in the home or elsewhere against their children. This is a relatively new law. A crisis telephone number has been established so that a child (or someone else on the child's behalf) can call to complain. The Children's Ombudsman, '*Barneombudet*', has the responsibility to follow up and investigate any such complaints. It should be mentioned that there are few complaints of this kind; corporal punishment may occur in homes and remain unreported. There is also an Ombudsman for Equality and Gender Issues, '*Likestillingsombudet*'.

Norway plays an active role in connection with a number of children's issues, such as the *International Convention on the Rights of the Child*, adopted in 1989,

to which Norway is a signatory. One of its articles, Article 30, on Children of minorities or indigenous populations, may be of particular interest to many readers of this book. It states that, “*Children of minority communities and indigenous populations have the right to enjoy their own culture and to practice their own religion and language*”.

Norway plays an active advocacy role in connection with abolition of landmines, and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) has mine clearance as one of its specialized tasks. It should be noted that children are the first victims of landmines where such cruel weapons of war are still used in our world in the twenty first century. Landmines have been used extensively in Afghanistan, and also in the Swat valley in Pakistan in the recent conflict there.

The conditions for children in Norway are very good, and they have improved much in the last half century. However, additional problems have arisen, making the quality of life for children and families poorer than before – in spite of the material wealth, the increased number of contact hours at school, etc. Since it is common that both parents work outside the home, family life has become *quite hectic and stressful*.

Earlier, one parent, usually the mother, stayed at home and there was often more tranquility in the home. Furthermore, in earlier days, families were often extended to include grandparents and other close relatives. Today, this is quite rare, although it may still happen, especially in rural areas, at least for a period of time, for example, when grandparents get very old and need to stay with relatives and require some daily care and supervision, as an alternative to

an old people's home.

It should be mentioned that *the divorce rate* in Norway is as high as in the West in general, but slightly lower than in neighbouring countries. Statistics show that in Norway up to 45% of all marriages are likely to end in divorce, with the highest divorce rate in Oslo. In addition, many people live together without having obtained a marriage certificates and are therefore not included in the statistics. There is an option for same-sex couples to register in formal partnership or marriage, but few do so. (For some further discussion of same-sex issues, see the section on Religion.)

Divorce is always a burden on the affected persons in a family, not least the children. In Norway, the mother automatically gets the right of custody of her child/children after divorce, unless she surrenders the right to her ex-husband or the court decides that she is an unfit mother (which would usually be due to alcohol or drug abuse). The father has frequent visiting rights to his child/children and he has to pay a monthly allowance to the mother as support for his child/children's upbringing. If he is unable to pay, the government will pay the allowance so that the child/children can be provided for reasonably well. There is little social stigma related to divorce, as it is so common. Obviously, many people remarry after divorce, and children may have to adjust to new brothers and sisters, and a new parent. On average, a Norwegian woman gives birth to less than two babies (statistically 1.9), which is below the number required to keep the population from declining. Many women do not have any children, however Norway has a slight population growth thanks to immigration.



### Box 5: Norwegian Monarchy

Crown Prince Haakon Magnus will be the next Constitutional Monarch and Head of State of Norway. Succession takes place when his father King Harald V passes away, or abdicates. King Harald V ascended to the throne in 1991 when his father King Olav V, often referred to as the 'People's King', 'folkekongen', died. Monarchy is an anachronism in a modern democracy like Norway, but according to opinion polls it is still preferred by most Norwegians - and also by the Danes and Swedes, who also live in monarchies.

It should be noted that the Monarch and his or her family are seen as unifying figures and ambassadors of the country, with ceremonial, representative and diplomatic duties, without any real power. The King or Queen is a figurehead and the Constitutional Power rests with the Prime Minister and the elected members of Parliament. King Harald V, the current king, is the first Head of State of Norway in more than 500 years to have actually been born in the country!

### Box 6: Women's Right to Vote

Norway was the first country in Europe to give the women the right to vote in 1913. The first woman to be elected Head of State in the world was President Vigdis Finbogadottir in Iceland in 1980-1996. Norway's Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland was one of the world's first women Head of Government in 1981.

### Box 7: UN Secretary-General

Trygve Lie, a Norwegian Labour Party politician, was the United Nations' first Secretary General from 1946-53.

Tryve Lie was succeeded by the Swedish career diplomat Dag Hammarskjöld, who was a particularly respected leader of the world body. He died in an airplane crash while on duty in what is today the Democratic Republic of Congo.



*Trygve Lie*

*Dag Hammarskjöld*

### Box 8: Gender Neutrality

The new, Norwegian Marriage Law is ‘gender neutral’, not discriminating between same-sex and opposite-sex marriages. Many people find it difficult to get used to the new law, but it is likely that it has come to stay. Many bishops, pastors and other leaders and members of the Church of Norway and other religious societies are strongly against the new law. Religious associations can refuse to hold same-sex ceremonies in the church, mosque, temple or other house of worship. At the same time, there are also pastors and other religious leaders who accept the new law, and some live in same-sex relationships themselves. Muslims in Norway have been particularly strongly opposed to the new law, saying that homosexuality in general, leave alone marriage, is to be punishable by death. This has created a serious schism between the Muslims in Norway and the state. The state, being all-inclusive, considers the new law a human rights issue and an improvement on earlier laws.

### Box 9: Immigrant Politicians

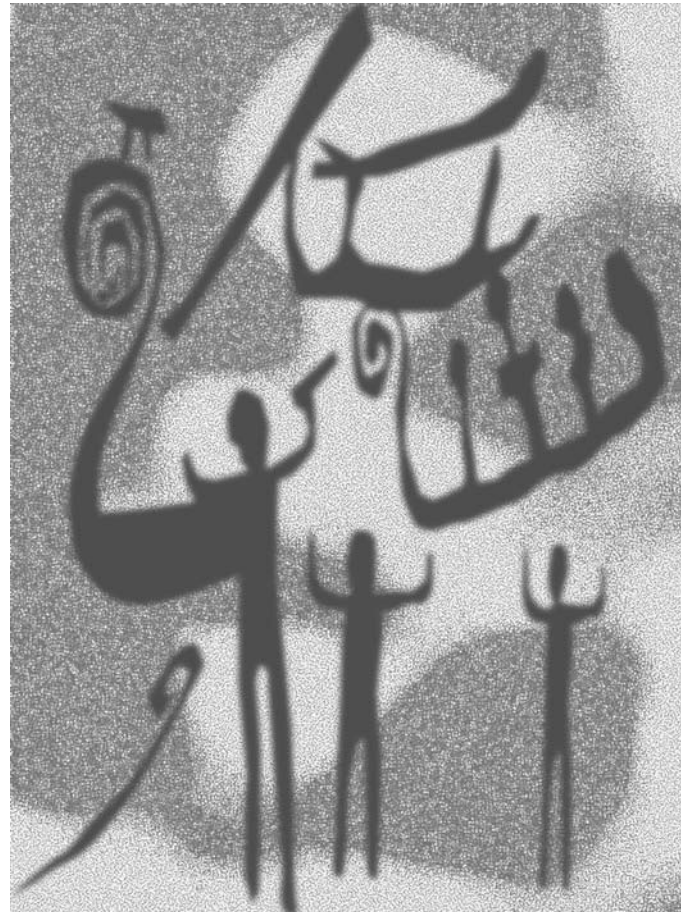
Athar Ali from the left-wing party, Rød Valgallianse (RV), was the first Pakistani-Norwegian to enter the Norwegian parliament, standing in for Erling Folkvord for a single day! Shahbaz Tariq from the Conservative Party, Høyre (H), was ‘vararepresentant’ and attended several times during 2000-2001. Afghan Rafiq was elected on a regular ticket as a Member of Parliament in 2001-2005, as a woman in her mid twenties, and she became the first Pakistani-Norwegian to be “stortingsrepresentant”. In 2007-2009, Chaudhry Akhtar was elected to Parliament on a ticket for the Socialist Party, Sosialistisk Venstreparti (SV). In 2009, Hadia Tajik from Stavanger was elected on a ticket for the Labour Party, Arbeiderpartiet (A), in Oslo. Norway has not yet had a Pakistani-Norwegian government minister. Lubna Jaffery Fjell has recently become deputy minister for culture. In local and provincial councils, there are a number of Pakistani-Norwegians and others from the more settled immigrant communities.





# Chapter 3

## Norway and the Outside World



*Norway is one of the world's major donors of development aid. It also plays a major part in the United Nations and in peace brokering, including, for example, in Sri Lanka, the Palestinian Areas and the Sudan. In Sudan, the referendum and election will decide on the future status of South Sudan, whether it will remain a part of Sudan, or secede and form a separate state.*



# Norway and the Outside World

## Emigration and Immigration

The *earliest settlements* in Norway are up to nine thousand years old. People were hunters, gatherers and fishermen, and later settled permanently and established farms, usually supplemented by fishing and hunting, and founded small semi-urban and urban communities.

*Migration to Norway mainly took place from Germany and neighbouring countries*, and from about 500 B.C. there were permanent settlements all along the Norwegian coast all the way up to Tromø, on a latitude about 70 degrees north of the Arctic Circle, and even in the northernmost county of Finnmark. The earliest, larger *settlements* were in southwestern Norway and along the Oslo fjord.

The ethnic minority, the *Sami people* (today about 40,000) originally lived as nomadic/semi-nomadic reindeer herdsman in the two northernmost counties. Today they are integrated in mainstream Norway, but have a separate Sami Parliament, cooperating with the Sami people in the neighbouring countries in the north ('Nordkalotten').

The major era of *Emigration to America*, '*utvandringstiden*', was from the 1850s to about 1910. The first emigrants left by boat from Stavanger in 1825. About 0.8 million of Norway's population of about 2-2.5 million at that time emigrated from 1825-1925, mainly to America. About 25% returned later, either because they had been successful and wanted to help their relatives back home in building their country of origin, or because they did not make it in the New World, or for other reasons. After Ireland,

Norway was the largest exporter of emigrants to America relative to its population. Sweden, the other Nordic countries and most European countries sent large numbers of emigrants to America. They emigrated because of poverty and lack of prospects at home in societies with clear class structures and injustices; some also left for the sake of greater religious and political freedom in America.

Today, emigration is small because living conditions for *ordinary people* in Norway, Scandinavia and the rest of Europe, are at par with or higher than in America, especially if the existence of the social welfare systems in the European countries is taken into account. Many Norwegians frequently travel to other countries, as tourists or for business, and they learn from the outside world. Some stay for several years as students or in jobs, but most return home upon completion of their studies or employment contracts. Foreigners come to Norway for the same purposes. The '*Scandinavian model*', sometimes considered a 'third way' between socialism and capitalism, is still doing well in all the Nordic countries, which have economic growth, low unemployment, leading health and education/research systems, etc., and economies and companies, which are amongst the most competitive in the world. Thus, there are few 'push factors' encouraging emigration today. Rather, there are 'pull factors' leading to immigration.

It is difficult to say whether Norway, through its large emigration to America, '*exported its poverty*', or whether emigration led to *drainage* of educated

and uneducated talent and labour. It probably contributed to a smoother development than if the many urban and rural poor, unemployed or under-employed, had remained in the country, jobless and penniless, and likely to become radical and extremist political activists.

It should be noted, too, that some people without land and property migrated within the country, such as *from the south of the country to the thinly populated north*, with good natural resources, albeit remote and with a harsher climate, especially in the long, dark winter season.

Norway has received a large number of immigrants from Pakistan since the late-1960s when the Pakistani-Norwegian (and Pakistani-Danish) immigration boom started. Until the mid-1970s it took place without any major restrictions or regulations. From 1975, Norway has had *immigration stop*, '*innvandringsstopp*', largely limiting immigration to family reunification. Norway has also received a large number of refugees, and the total number of foreigners in the country is about 460,000, with more than half of them coming from outside Europe and North America. In spite of the high number of immigrants from Pakistan, about 30,000, there is still limited trade between the two countries, even though the Pakistani diaspora is the largest and also among the best established immigrant communities in Norway. There are over 8,000 Afghans in Norway, who have mostly come as refugees.

Norway has a large number of foreign workers from Sweden, Denmark, other EU countries and the United States. In addition, refugees and immigrants come from Somalia, Vietnam, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey and other countries.

*Muslims* constitute the largest religious community outside Norway's state church, the Church of Norway, which is Evangelical-Lutheran and part of the Protestant Church. Church attendance has gone down in Norway in recent decades and, today, only about 3% of Norwegians attend church regularly for the main service at 11 a.m. on Sundays. Recent opinion polls have it that only some 50% of Norwegians are believers. But then only 10-20% say that they do not believe in God or similar power. About 82% remain members of the state church, and some are members of other Christian denominations and other religious associations. The number of registered Muslims in Norway is about 80,000, but researchers estimate that the number of immigrants with an Islamic background is in the range of 120 – 150,000. About two thirds of the Muslim community lives in the Oslo area and the rest in other larger cities.

## Foreign Policy and Defence

The foreign policy and defence arrangement of Norway reflect the fact that the country is a solid Western nation and part of the European-American grouping. Norway is a founding member of the *North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)*, the defence alliance established after the Second World War in 1949. Norway was also a founding member of the United Nations, which was established in 1946 with the Norwegian Labour Party politician *Trygve Lie* as its first Secretary General, succeeded in 1953 by the Swedish diplomat *Dag Hammarskjöld*.

Norway was ushered into NATO membership by the government without much public debate. Norway had just experienced a five-year occupation

by Nazi Germany. During World War I, Norway was neutral but experienced major losses to its merchant fleet due to sea mines. It should also be noted that Norway, being a neighbour of the Soviet Union (now Russia), with which it shares a border of about 200 km in the far north and common fishing waters in the Barents Sea and the High North, was at the time a particularly strategic country. Finland had to play a cautious role as the immediate neighbour of the Soviet Union. Sweden was neutral, albeit clearly Western-oriented; its neutrality had even been respected by Germany during the Second World War. Denmark across the ocean to the south, a little land with a vulnerable territory, also joined NATO after the war. The current Secretary General of NATO, *Anders Fogh Rasmussen*, is a former Danish Prime Minister.

The Cold War era passed without any serious violations to the sovereignty of any of the Nordic countries. When it was over, Norway's neighbours, but not Norway itself, joined the European Union, making their Western ties unequivocally clear, as did other nearby countries, notably the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which had been Soviet republics until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990. Poland also became an EU member. Sweden has maintained its neutrality and remains outside NATO, but is a member of the EU.

It is likely that Iceland and Norway will eventually join the EU, but up until now, Norwegians have declined membership in two referenda (in 1972 and 1994) and Norway makes do with extensive trade and other cooperation agreements with Europe. Iceland, on the other hand, due to its current severe banking and financial crisis, wishes to become a member of

EU. However, Iceland will need exemption from the general EU rules and regulations, which would allow fishing in Icelandic waters, as it is so dependent on fishing for its economic survival and employment.

The Nordic countries remain a particularly peaceful corner of the world. During the Cold War, Norway played an important role as seen from a NATO/United States point of view. Iceland, too, with its *Keflavik Base*, remains an important American ally. The vast Greenland territory, which still has ties with Denmark, may play a more important strategic role in the future, considering the effects of global warming. The Barents Sea and even the High North circle around the North Pole, to the north of Norway and Russia and to the northeast of Greenland, are also likely to become more important strategic areas in the future. Fishing will continue to be important in these areas. Possible deposits of oil and valuable minerals are yet to be explored further.

Norway does not allow storage of nuclear weapons on its soil. However, equipment is in place so that weapons could be installed quickly in case of war. This policy remains controversial, but the likelihood of war is so remote, and the likelihood of use of nuclear weapons in a conflict more remote still, that it is not given too much attention in public debate. It should also be noted that Norway does not have atomic energy plants due to the abundance of waterfalls and hydroelectric power.

The majority of Norwegians support the country's membership of NATO, albeit somewhat reluctantly as Norwegians do not appreciate having to follow 'military policy orders' given by the United States and NATO. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was serious political debate about defence

issues, focusing on nuclear weapons and Norway's membership of NATO and closeness to the United States.

A breakaway group from the Labour Party, the country's ruling party at that time, formed a new party with independent socialists as a response, many of whom were pacifists and more or less all anti-NATO. In 2006, for the first time, the Socialist Left Part (SV) became a member of the cabinet in a coalition government with the Labour Party and the Centre Party (formerly, the Farmers Party). In spite of SV being in power, the party still accepted Norway's decision to join NATO countries in sending troops to Afghanistan. Norwegian troops have policing, training and other functions in Afghanistan. They cannot take part in combat, but they may assist a friendly country's soldiers if they need assistance in a critical situation.

In this connection, it may also be noted that '*Nei til atomvåpen*', *No to Nuclear Weapons*, is an active association, playing a constant watchdog role in the Norwegian society, focusing not only on anti-proliferation aspects, but also on reduction of nuclear weapons for existing nuclear powers and eventually abolition of such weapons everywhere. Associations such as '*Nei til atomvåpen*' and '*Norges fredslag*', *Norwegian Peace Association*, work for reduced spending on the military, in particular weapons of mass destruction in a world where there is great poverty and disparity between and within countries and continents. In their opinion, resources should be directed towards development aid. In '*Nei til atomvåpen*', *Ingrid Eide*, founding member of the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) in 1959, and a former top Labour Party politician,

plays a leading role, while in '*Norges fredslag*', *Ingeborg Breines*, a former UNESCO Director in Pakistan and Afghanistan, works tirelessly.

The current Norwegian Afghanistan policy is controversial. Norway is generally known for its peace initiatives, such as in the Sudan, Sri Lanka, and Israel-Palestine. It is the country which awards the annual Nobel Peace Prize. It plays a particularly active role in development aid, including as one of the United Nations major contributors. Hence, many Norwegians argue that the current Afghanistan policy contradicts this focus and damages Norway's standing and trustworthiness internationally. It might have been better if Norway had only been involved in peace building and development aid work in Afghanistan.

### Development Aid

Norway is one of the world's largest donors of development aid, and about 0.9-1% of the country's GDP is usually allocated to development aid, surpassing the international community's advice to rich countries to give at least 0.7% in development aid. In 2010, the government plans to spend 1.1% of GDP in development aid, including allocations for refugees in Norway. Sweden and Denmark are also amongst the world's major donor countries. In 2009, Norway's total development aid was NOK 23 billion, over USD 3 billion. The largest recipients are Afghanistan, the Sudan, the Palestinian Areas, Tanzania and other African countries. Afghanistan received over USD 100 million. Pakistan received a relatively modest amount, approx. USD 30 million.

Emergency aid, such as that provided for internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Swat and Waziristan in Pakistan in 2009, come in addition to the ordinary, planned development aid. Norwegian aid to Pakistan was frozen following Pakistan becoming a nuclear power, but the aid programme has been steadily rebuilt in recent years, after 9/11. A large component has recently been added, notably assistance through the United Nations to the health sector and specifically, vaccination of children in Sindh to help Pakistan meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

In Afghanistan, the main channels for Norwegian development aid are the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), UNDP and other United Nations organizations, Norwegian NGOs such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee, Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), and local and other NGOs such as Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) and the Aga Khan Foundation. Norwegian aid is allocated to a number of fields, including good governance and anti-corruption activities, education, district development, oil and energy, and peace and reconciliation. Human rights and other women and gender issues always rank high on Norway's priority list.

In Pakistan, Norwegian aid activities focus on education, good governance, human rights, women and gender issues, and culture. In addition to channeling assistance through the government, a large number of local NGOs and UN organizations, such as UNICEF, UNDP and WHO, receive Norwegian development aid. UNESCO and the Aga Khan Foundation are major recipients of

Norwegian aid to several museums, various cultural heritage studies and related competence building.

Historically, the first Norwegian development aid activities began in 1952 and 53, with 'Indiahjelpen' and the Indo-Norwegian Fisheries Development Project in Kerala, India, and over the years, aid activities have grown, with African countries being given particular attention, followed by Asian countries and some Latin American countries. A large portion of Norwegian bilateral aid is government-to-government aid, overseen by Norwegian embassies. Some aid is channeled through Norwegian and local NGOs, including humanitarian and religious organizations. Multilateral aid, and earmarked multi-bilateral aid, goes through the UN system and a number of other international organizations.

Norway is amongst the five largest donors to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which benefits Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and recently also UNHCR's work related to internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Swat and Waziristan. In that connection, the Norwegian Refugee Council's global IDP project, Geneva, should also be mentioned.

It is often said that for Norway and the other Nordic countries, the work of the United Nations, and development aid work in particular, was a *natural niche* for Norway and other Nordic countries in their foreign policy after the Second World War. It was seen as a natural arena for the small, peaceful, and relatively wealthy and advanced democracies in Scandinavia. Without such a clear focus on aid and development the small Scandinavian countries would hardly have been noticed among the larger countries



and major players in international politics.

Through extensive UN and development aid work, Norway has become a '*major power*' in those fields, along with Sweden and Denmark, and to a growing extent, Finland. Iceland shares the same values as the other Nordic countries but plays a much less prominent international role, as it is extremely small, leaving limited scope for large aid programmes, but it nevertheless has a relatively ambitious aid policy. A fisheries research project under the United Nations University should be mentioned.

In the years ahead, it is likely that the '*Scandinavian model*' – i.e. capitalism with a large public sector, strong government regulatory systems, prosperous economies and welfare services providing for

the needy – will become a model for many other countries and will gain more focus.

The Nordic countries need to cooperate in order to advocate the Scandinavian model in general and in specific areas such as urban and regional planning, peace research, and many other fields, not excluding the social sectors and the symbiotic partnership between the public and private sectors, and the myriad of interest organizations and CBOs and NGOs.

The Scandinavian model is probably the most advanced model for social organization that the world has seen so far. Why not propagate it and let others learn from it, and at the same time, advance it further, in developing countries!

## Box 10: Emigration to America

The first Norwegian emigrants to the United States traveled from Stavanger, in Rogaland county on the southwest coast of the country in 1825, and hundreds of thousands followed later from all over Norway.

In the section below from a recent article, Gunnar Roaldkvam draws an interesting picture of emigrants from Rogaland, similar to emigrants from anywhere in the country. What is interesting is that the Norwegian emigrants probably resemble many of the Gujratis from Pakistan and other 'new Norwegians' in our time. Note, for example, the notion that everything is so rosy in the 'new world'.

*"Right up until the period between the World Wars, emigrants from our country traveled to America. It was not only straitened*

*circumstances, however, that motivated people to emigrate. The move required both a go-getter attitude and a spirit of adventure. Many young people dreamed of having a broader scope for their abilities in a society with apparently limitless opportunities for those with willpower and creativity. In some townships, more than half of the population left for the "new world". Several parts of the county thus lost the majority of their most ambitious and imaginative residents. Many of those who emigrated sent back a highly romantic picture of their new homeland. America was the land of opportunity where all could freely work their way up and achieve immense prosperity. There were endless prairies that were ready to be tilled and modern cities with large factories that needed labour. The United States of America, popularly called "Junaiten", became the dreamland where everybody was the architect of his own fortune and could play a part in building up the new society in accordance with the dreams and visions they'd brought with them from the "old country".*

*"The emigrants might also tell stories of drudgery and*

*disappointments, but we didn't hear much from our relatives "over there" about the maltreatment of the Indians and the ruthless capitalism that was taking shape in the States. The somewhat naive idea of the magnificent USA, "God's own country", is still relatively alive and well in many parts of Rogaland even today. The main explanation for this is probably the flood of money that poured in from emigrants in America, whether in the form of financial help to their families back home or large donations to various institutions in their native villages. It is likely that this support was welcome in capital-poor Rogaland. Then there was all the inspiration and knowledge about business, science, politics, and culture that emigrants provided to the people back home. For many of them returned home after several years abroad, and the lucky ones came home with full wallets. Of these, several became the driving forces behind new enterprises in the county. There's no doubt that this transfer of capital, knowledge, ideas, and influence meant a great deal to the development of many rural communities in Rogaland."*

Gunnar Roaldkvam: "From Open Sea to Open Port.", in *Capital of Culture*. Stavanger 2008, p. 10.

### Box 11: Norwegian Development Aid

Norway is one of the world's major donors of development aid. In 2010, 1.1% of the Norwegian GDP is allocated to development aid and channelled through bilateral, country-to-country projects and programmes, the United Nations and other international organizations, and Norwegian, international and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Norway is the third largest donor of humanitarian aid and one of the five largest donors to each of the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Norway is a founding member of the United Nations,

with the first Secretary-General Trygve Lie being a Norwegian, and Norway is still a staunch supporter of the UN.

Norway has made efforts in peace facilitation in several cases, such as in the Sudan, Sri Lanka, the Palestinian Areas (the Oslo Agreement) and elsewhere; although not always with success and never with over-night results.

- In 2009, Norway's total development aid budget worldwide was USD 3 billion.
- In 2010, Norway intends to allocate about 1.1% of GDP to development, including refugees in Norway.
- Afghanistan is the largest recipient of Norwegian aid, with well over USD 100 million, followed by Tanzania and the Sudan, each with slightly lower amounts.
- Pakistan received USD 30 million.
  - After the devastating earthquake in 2005, Pakistan received USD 70 million in a special emergency grant from Norway.
  - In 2009, special allocations were made to benefit IDPs, and about USD 20 million was set aside.
- Other major partners include the Palestinian Areas, Mozambique and other African countries. In Asia, Nepal is the largest recipient of Norwegian aid and in Europe it is Serbia.

Norway plays a major role in the international development aid community. However, Norway's trade with the countries that receive aid and other developing countries is minimal, and there is room for improvement. Remittances from Pakistani-Norwegians in ordinary years, i.e. years without natural disasters and displacement of people, are higher than the government aid from Norway. (This was documented in a study by

Jens Claussen et al of the NCG consultancy firm in Oslo in 2005, where Pakistan was one of the case countries studied.)

There is room for developing special public-private programmes for transfer of assistance to the major sending areas of emigrants to Norway, as well as other projects, programmes and support to organizations. The large Pakistani diaspora in the UK has established Islamic Relief, which has become a trusted aid organization, receiving funds from the UK government. Islamic Relief has major aid activities in Pakistan.

Daswandi, a foundation established by Pakistani-Norwegians in Stavanger, Norway, is an attempt to develop a Norwegian aid organization run jointly by Pakistani-Norwegians and Pakistanis. Its initial, modest activities in Pakistan are coordinated by Atilla Amir Iftikhar, a Norwegian of Pakistani descent, who currently lives in Pakistan. He has also recently established a firm called Pak-Nordic Consulting with focus on trade.

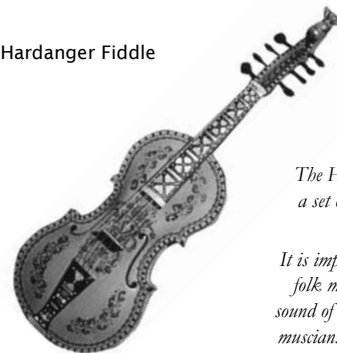
## Box 12: Norwegian Tourism

Tourism is a major income earner for Norwegians. Although most guest-nights in Norwegian hotels are by Norwegians almost a third are by foreigners, including business people, tourists and others. The largest number of visitors always comes from Germany. In 2008, the number of overnight visits by Germans were about 750,000 followed by Swedes with almost 600,000 and Britons and Danes with about 550,000 each, and Dutch and Americans (USA) with about a quarter million each, and Spaniards and French who are a bit less numerous. Norway is a particularly beautiful country, with mountains, fjords, coastal towns and settlements, with ultra modern facilities and historical sites, attracting visitors all year around, but especially in the unique Nordic summer with long days and short, hardly dark, nights. Hiking in

the unspoilt mountains is popular with natives as well as foreigners in summer and sports enthusiasts and others come during winter for skiing, tranquility and peace. Two Norwegian cities have been European Capitals of Culture; Bergen in 2000 and Stavanger in 2008.

Norwegian school children used to learn that it is thanks to the warm Gulf Stream that Norway is reasonably mild so that people can live in the country – and it was thanks to the income from shipping and tourism that Norway's trade balance was positive. Norway is still the world's second largest shipping nation after Japan. But today, most ships are registered outside Norway for reasons of lower taxation, although the ships are owned by Norwegian shipowners. Norwegian cruise ships, with Norwegian officers, are world famous for their quality. Tourism is a growing industry and Norway will continue marketing its environmentally friendly tourism industry, with clean air, unspoilt nature, peace and tranquility – and a modern and traditional urban and rural culture, people with international orientation and social conscience towards the less fortunate at home and abroad – and now also with immigrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan and elsewhere, making cities multicultural. What more could one ask for?

Hardanger Fiddle

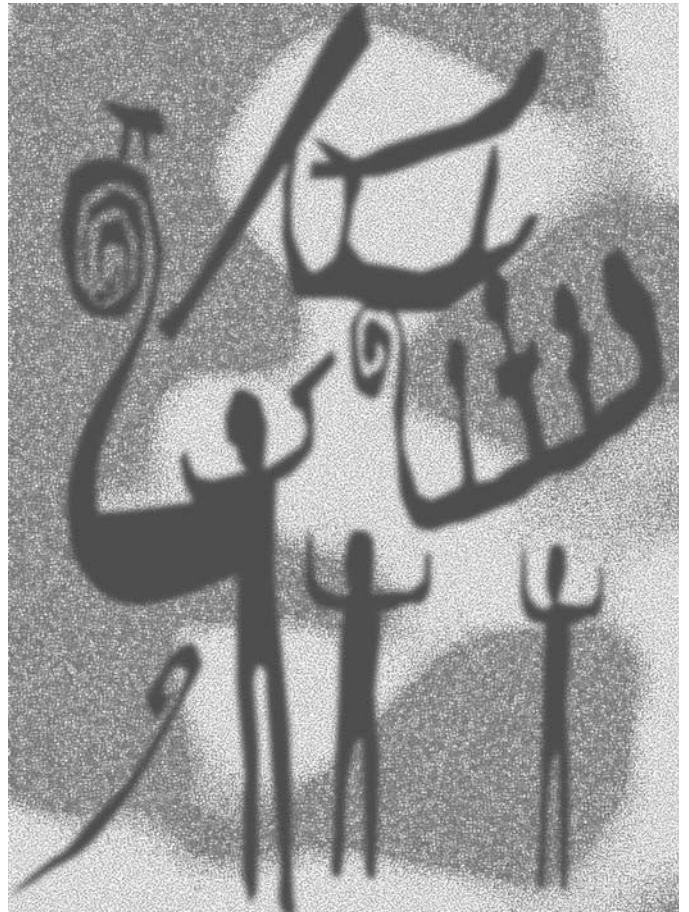


*The Hardange Fiddle is a violin with a set of extra strings (4 or 5) located beneath the others.*

*It is impossible to imagine a Norwegian folk music festival without the distinct sound of the Hardanger Fiddle, and the musicians marking the rhythm by tapping the beat with their feet.*

# Chapter 4

## Economy





*Without the huge resources in the ocean, Norway would have been a relatively poor country. The ocean has abundance of fish. In the last generation, North Sea oil and gas production has made Norway one of the world's largest energy exporters.*

# Economy

## **Traditional Backbone: Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Environment**

After Iceland, Norway is the most sparsely populated country in Europe, with about 16 persons per square kilometer. There are about 70,000 farms in Norway and this number is decreasing. Just over 3.5% of the workforce is engaged in farming. The term farming is used not only for farming in a traditional sense, but also for forestry, reindeer herding, fish farming, animal husbandry and the development of new businesses based on agriculture.

In recent years, the authorities have initiated measures to make it more attractive for women and young people to remain in rural areas. The rural development fund is mainly used to create jobs for them. Until the 1970s, it was a general rule that the eldest son of a farmer took over the farm, and he was also entitled to buy the farm at a lower price than if it was sold outside the family. Today, the eldest child, irrespective of sex has this right. Still, only about a quarter of farms have been taken over by women, and women account for about a quarter of the labour in farming.

In Norway, an owner of a farm must live on the farm and run it. Absentee farming, or, 'telephone farming', is not permitted. However, many farmers do have a part-time or full-time job outside the farm.

In a country like Norway, which has only 3% of arable land, plus about 22% of productive forests, it is important that cultivated land does not stay

unused unless it is impossible to secure a user of the land. However, every year, land does lie fallow. Forestry is Norway's largest export industry after oil, gas and fisheries.

Norway is almost 100% self-sufficient in feed grain and 50-60% as regards grain for human consumption. In addition, meat, fish and dairy products are enough to feed the entire nation, and a surplus is exported. In spite of Norway's relatively cold climate, it has a good supply of its own fruit (apples, pears, plums, etc.) and berries, including wild berries. However, for climatic reasons, a number of products must be imported, including horticultural products, spices, etc.

Norway puts emphasis on *self-sufficiency in food*. In the future, due to Norway's clean water and unpolluted air, it is thought that its food products may become more popular. Biodynamical food production should be considered promising. Until now the other Nordic countries have given more attention to biodynamical food production. Norway is advanced in fish farming and further expansion is likely to take place.

In recent decades, the importance of *environmentally sound food production* has been realized. A better understanding of the importance of agriculture for the *settlement structure* in Norway has also been realized. Without employment in agriculture, many villages and scattered settlements in Norway would not be viable, leading other employment to disappear as well, such as the local shop, garage and petrol station, school, church and

prayer house, doctor's office and health services, local government services, etc.

'Ghost villages' and villages with few inhabitants and limited services and activities would also reduce the attraction of the villages as seen from a tourist point of view. Thus, agriculture plays a major role in preservation of the cultural landscape and biological diversity.

Judged from a *security and defence perspective*, it has been seen as important to keep the settlement structure in remote areas in Norway, including in remote areas, such as coastal villages in the far north of the country.

As a result of its many indirect benefits, the agricultural sector in Norway receives major government transfers in the form of *subsidies* so that Norwegian agricultural products can compete on price, not only on quality. Many urban dwellers with less understanding for the rural areas of the country, find the high prices of Norwegian food products and subsidies to farmers irritating. However, other citizens, including urban dwellers, have a more balanced view of the importance of agriculture in Norway.

When Norwegians twice declined membership in the European Union in referenda in 1972 and 1994, a major cause was that it was feared that the agricultural sector and the rural settlement structure would be severely affected. As an EU member, Norway would have had to reduce or remove many of its agricultural subsidies and allow for imports from other EU countries with milder climates more conducive to agriculture. It was feared that cheaper products from elsewhere in Europe would have

attracted Norwegian consumers, leading to the local farmers going out of business. It was also feared that foreign fishermen and their trawlers would outstrip Norwegian fishermen and leave many fishing communities unviable.

The old Farmers Party, today called the Centre Party, plays an active role in Norwegian politics, and has since 2006 been a member of the coalition government led by the Labour Party. With great emphasis being placed on environmental issues in our time, the Centre Party is likely to keep a relatively stable constituency in spite of the farmers decreasing number. Farmers' associations and some newspapers, play important roles, far beyond what one would expect in a sector which has only about 3.5% of the workforce.

It should be noted that many Norwegians appreciate the rural culture related to the primary sectors and the rural and small town settlements in general. Of the Nordic countries, Norway is still the least urban country, with over a third of the population living in scattered settlements or in villages and small towns. Depending on the definition used, the fraction of Norwegians living in rural or semi-urban settlements would be much higher. As compared to more densely populated European countries, with large metropolitan areas, Norway appears quite rural overall, with the exception of the Oslo area and a few other major cities. It should be noted that Norway's social and other modern services reach even the most remote rural areas.

## Overview of the Economy

Norway came from a situation of relative poverty



in the nineteenth century. It also exported much of its population surplus through emigration, mainly to America, when some 0.8 million Norwegians (out of a total population that time of about 2-2.5 million) emigrated during 1825-1925. About 25% came back. By the end of the nineteenth century abject poverty was mainly overcome and Norway had literacy and education for all. Yet, many Norwegians were poor. There was no welfare state yet and no universal health insurance, no proper unemployment benefits, and no comprehensive support for the elderly. All this became universal only in the 1950s.

Norway's economy relied heavily on the primary sectors, with farming, forestry (wood, pulp and paper) and shipbuilding and shipping. Norway is still amongst the largest shipping nations in the world. Norway's economic success also benefited from its economic policies, notably the concession laws, which attracted foreign capital for government controlled, private sector developments especially related to hydroelectric power and mining more than a hundred years ago.

Due to good government policies and control, foreign companies could not easily loot the country's natural resources, as is often the case in developing countries today, leaving the country and the local people even poorer than before 'development projects' started, and without the deposits, natural resources and environment they had before. However, historians have noted that it would probably have been more difficult to succeed with its policies if the resources could have been transported out of the country more easily, such as the hydroelectric power and the readily availability of a stable and well-educated labour force.

Between World War I and II, Norway experienced a serious economic depression along with the rest of Europe and America. In the Post-War era, Norway has had unprecedented, steady economic growth of some three percent annually. Growth slowed down in the 1960s, to increase after oil production began in the North Sea in the late 1960s. From 1990 to 1999, Norway's mainland economy (excluding the petroleum sector and shipping) grew by about 25%. The boom in the 1990s has been followed by a period of reduced growth.

Since about 40% of Norway's total domestic demand is met by imports, and about the same amount of 40% of added value is exported, Norway is strongly influenced by international economic fluctuations. However, Norway has paid off all its foreign debt and has set aside huge reserves.

Norway has low *unemployment*, especially long-term unemployed, usually in the range of 2-4%, which is lower than in the rest of Europe. Currently, the unemployment rate is 2.6%, while it is high in Europe and America, in countries hit hard by the economic crisis it reaches double digits.

The workforce in Norway is about 2.5 million (in a population of 4.8 million) and the working percentage has never been higher, indicating substantial growth. The workforce reserve is limited and Norway has a need for imported manpower in specific sectors. When needed, labour is largely imported from the other Nordic countries. Economists and employers term the labour market as tight, with shortages of specialists and certain types of workers, for example, in the building and construction industry, health and social sector, IT, and some other fields. Manpower requirements



fluctuate over time, and the availability of candidates fluctuates, too, including young graduates. Furthermore, there are economic fluctuations in specific sectors and salaries offered to attract employees also fluctuate. In Norway, as in the rest of the Western world, there is an aging population with an increasing percentage of the population being retirees, and an increasing percentage of the population remaining in education and training longer than before.

Norway's GDP per capita is about NOK 480,000 in constant 2007 prices as well as current prices. This compares to about USD 84,000, which is much higher than the GDP per capita in USA.

Norwegian Domestic Product by Sector (in %) in 2007

Agriculture	0.5
Forestry	0.2
Fishing and fish farming	0.5
Oil and natural gas	22.0
Mining and quarrying	0.2
Manufacturing	9.3
Electricity supply	1.9
Construction	4.5
Wholesale and retail trade	7.4
Hotels and restaurants	1.4
Pipeline operations	0.7
Transport	2.7
Post and telecom	1.4
Shippin	1.7
Banking and insurance	3.2
Housing services	3.6
Business services	9.0
Other private sector services	14.1
Public services	11.4
Correction items*	10.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\* VAT and other product taxes, net and statistical deviations.

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *Mini Facts about Norway* 2009. MFA, Oslo. 2009. Based on data from Statistics Norway. For further information, see the Website: [http://www.ssb.no/nr\\_en/](http://www.ssb.no/nr_en/)

Another way of getting some insight into the Norwegian economy is to divide GDP as follows: *Public administration* accounts for close to a fifth of employment; *Industry and Mining* accounts for about a fifth of employment and 40% of export value; *Oil activities* account for about 1% of employment and about 40% of exports; *Private services* account for about half of employment and a fifth of exports; *Primary sectors* (farming, forestry, fishing) account for about 5% of employment and about 2% of export value. (Source: *Facts about Norway* published periodically by Chr. Shibsted Forlag, Oslo.)

A significant aspect of the Norwegian economy is the oil sector's large share of GDP. Almost 70% of Norway's exports in goods is *fuel*, including oil, natural gas, electric power, etc. Until about a generation ago, shipping was a particularly important part of the economy and foreign exchange earnings. The known reserves of oil will last for a couple of decades at the current production level, while natural gas reserves will last for about a century.

Norway is a young oil and gas producing country. It all began with the discovery of gas in Groeningen in the Netherlands in 1959, which led to geological interest in oil and gas exploration in the North Sea. The first boring and extraction of oil and gas started on the Continental Shelf in 1965 and discovery of viable oil and gas fields were first made in 1967 when 'Balder' was discovered, and then in 1969, the American petroleum company, Philips discovered the large 'Ekofisk' field. After that, a number of discoveries have been made in the North Sea and the Barents Sea. Commercial oil production in the Norwegian shelf in the North Sea started in 1971.

True to the Norwegian psychic and character, Norwegians didn't quite believe that they had become rich, for a long time. The Swedes were much more impressed with Norway's riches and quicker to realize the immense impact that would follow, for them as well.

When the author of this book studied in Sweden in the early and mid-1970s, it was dawning on us that the Norwegian oil finds were for real! And again, in line with the Norwegian character, many Norwegians thought it would have been better if we hadn't discovered so much oil and gas because it was feared that it would tilt the economy and lead to neglect of other sectors and make Norway an intolerably expensive country for ordinary Norwegians and visitors. To some extent the sceptics have been right, but on the whole, Norwegian politicians and the government oil company *Statoil* have managed the new found wealth well.

### Trade and Industry

When the Norwegian oil and gas production took off in the mid-1970s it was feared that the economy would become too one-sided, impacting other sectors negatively. It should be noted that most of the profit from the *petroleum sector* is not 'pumped into the economy' but set aside in the Government Pension Fund (earlier named the Norwegian Petroleum Fund). However, prices and salaries have gone up in many sectors due to the success in the petroleum sector, but the government has also had success with its control and regulation measures. And from the late 1990s, Norway experienced particularly strong growth in exports of goods and services in sectors not directly connected to the oil sector.

Norway is not a member of the Organization for Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC). When oil prices are high, Norway benefits from that for its oil exports. It should be noted that the cost of Norway's oil production is high since it is offshore in rough waters, demanding special technology and high security standards. Serious accidents have happened, including an oilrig capsizing, but generally, accidents are few and work conditions and pay are good. In spite of Norway being an oil producing country, petrol prices are high as they are fixed, based on broad political and economic considerations.

Norway enjoys a comfortable trade surplus and a current account surplus. Before the oil era, income from shipping was crucial in order to balance the foreign trade account. There are about 13,000 Norwegians employed on foreign-going ships and rigs (2007).

Norway's largest group of imported goods is *machinery and transport equipment* (motorcars, etc.), accounting for about 40% of imports, but at the same time about 8.5% of Norway's exports are in the same category. Norway is self sufficient in food, but has to import certain items, which it does not produce itself. On the other hand, about 5% of Norway's exports are in the group of *food products and live animals*. *Fish products* are a particularly important export group, and so are chemical products, pulp and paper and wood.

*83.5% of Norway's foreign trade is with Europe.* 11.5% of trade is with the Nordic countries, with Sweden as Norway's most important trading partner. Trade with North America accounts for 9-10% and with Asia about 5%, with Japan as the most important

trading partner. Trade with developing countries is close to 6%; with Africa accounting for 0.7% in spite of African countries being the focal point for major Norwegian development aid over the last fifty years.

The *Norwegian Export Council* assists in export activities. It has recently chosen *five focus areas*, notably, maritime operations, including fishing, and fish farming equipment; oil and gas operations, with emphasis on offshore activities; foodstuff, with emphasis on fish and agricultural products; electricity, including hydro-power plants and power distribution systems and military re-purchase.

The oil sector is overshadowing other Norwegian industry. However, there are also benefits from the oil sector to many companies, for example, those that are supplying goods and services to the oil sector, including many small and medium-sized shipyards along the coast. Due to Norway's abundance of water resources and hydroelectric power stations, Norwegian industry has an advantage over many other countries and can operate energy-intensive industries. Key industries include the aluminum industry, paper and pulp, chemical and fertilizers, machinery, fishing, fish farming and fish products, and the petroleum industry.

Norwegian industry is more and more *knowledge and research-based*, which is typical, for example, in fish farming and shipping, ship-inspection and control, and other maritime fields, including marine biology. Norwegian research institutions have also had success in fields of computer technology and electronics. Telecommunications is another important field, noticed in Pakistan where *Telenor* is among the largest telecommunications companies

in the country. (*Telenor* is a public limited company, wholly owned by the Norwegian state, and it is Norway's market leader in telecommunications, data services and media. It was until a few decades ago simply the Norwegian state's telecommunications company called *Televerket*.)

*Tourism* plays an important role in Norway and it expanded markedly in the 1980s and 90s. The fjords, coastal landscapes and mountains are traditionally the greatest tourist attractions. In early summer the scenery is spectacular with deep, narrow fjords, towering mountains on either side, often with snowcapped mountaintops or even a glacier, flowering orchards, and waterfalls and rivers and lakes with crystal clear water.

Bergen on the west coast of Norway is the tourist capital and a tourist attraction in itself with a medieval quarter, old churches and cultural attractions, including 'Trolldhaugen', the home of the world-renowned composer *Edvard Grieg*. The annual *Bergen International Music Festival* is held every year at the end of May. Bergen is also the boarding port for the '*Hurtigruten*' coastal cruise ships, which take tourists and locals to the northernmost tip of Norway in four days. No less than about ½ million people travel by '*Hurtigruten*' every year. The capital Oslo, on the coast in eastern Norway, and the inland town of Lillehammer nearby are always worth visits, in summer as well as winter, for sports and recreation as well as museum visits and other cultural activities.

Norway's attractions include its *environment* in general, with unspoiled nature, fresh air and water. In the future, these aspects are likely to become more important *selling points* in tourism as well as in

food production and other fields.

There is very limited trade and industrial cooperation between Pakistan and Norway. Except for Telenor, which has been in Pakistan for less than a decade, there is no other major Norwegian company in the country. Pakistan exports some textiles, leather products, horticultural produce and some other goods to Norway. The two countries' governments are interested in increasing trade but with limited success so far.

#### Some of Norway's Top Export Companies

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• Statoil-Norsk Hydro ASA	- Oil, natural gas, aluminum, fertilizers, chemicals, plastic
• Kværner ASA	- Technology-based engineering, construction services
• Asea Brown Roveri AS	- Energy resources, R&D
• Aker GI ASA	- Industrial and financing company, oil technology
• Norway Seafoods ASA	- Seafood and other food processing (owned by Aker RGI)
• Orkla ASA	- Consumer goods, chemical and financial investments
• Norsk Skogindustrier AS	- Forest products, one of the world leaders in printing paper
• Hydro Aluminium ASA	- Extruded aluminum products
• Dyno ASA	- Commercial explosives and chemicals
• Elkem ASA	- Ferroalloys, silicon metal, aluminum and microsilica
• Saga Petroleum AS	- Oil and gas
• Willh. Wilhelmsen ASA	- Shipping (tankers, bulk carriers and bunkers)
• Telenor AS	- Telecommunications
• Rieber & Søn ASA	- Engineering, roads, foods, packing
• Kverneland ASA	- Farm implements; world's leader in ploughs

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#### Oil and Information Age\*

The Norwegian oil era started with offshore explorations in the North Sea in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Many ordinary Norwegians found these activities far fetched and thought we should focus on traditional industries and livelihoods. However, in the late 1960s, it was announced that rich petroleum resources had been discovered in large enough quantities for production activities to start. In the early years, Norway depended heavily on top expertise from foreign oil companies, such as Philips, Elf, Amaco, and others, as Norway developed its own expertise at an exemplary speed and level. Petroleum engineering, geology and other courses were expanded at Norwegian universities, often in cooperation with foreign institutions and the private sector. Staff salaries were 'topped up' in oil sector areas so as to avoid a drain of Norwegian university teachers and researchers to the private sector.

It should be added that the general scientific and professional base for development of the oil sector already existed in Norway. This point may be important to appreciate when other, less developed countries venture into new technological fields and want to copy Norway's model.

Throughout the oil era, the Norwegian government has maintained control, through the *Directorate of Oil*, the *Statoil* state oil company, the *Ministry of Oil and Energy* and ultimately Parliament, '*Stortinget*', and the Cabinet. The Norwegian private sector and foreign oil companies have played essential roles, and they have also been allowed to operate within their business culture and make profits – but are heavily taxed as is common in Norway.

*Norway is among the ten largest oil producers in the world and among the five largest oil exporters.*

The Norwegian oil era is now over a generation old, and it has contributed to development of a number of cross-functional industries, supplying goods and services to the oil sector. The top quality Norwegian shipyards adapted their activities to the oil industry, and many of the large shipyards were split into smaller units and located near the coastal towns where offshore activities were so as to be as efficient as possible in maintenance and supply services.

The Norwegian Petroleum Fund, recently renamed the Government Pension Fund, the second largest government fund in the world, exceeds NOK 2.2 trillion (USD 1 is today approx. NOK 5.7). This is a fund set aside to benefit future generations since neither the known oil reserves nor the natural gas reserves will last forever, albeit for several decades to come. (Recent figures show that in 2008, mainly due to the current economic recession, Norway lost some USD 92 billion, at least on paper, and when the recession is over, there will probably be a gain.)

As explained above, it has also been Norwegian government policy to avoid injecting very much of the oil money into the economy in order to avoid overheating the economy and also to avoid the economy becoming too dependent on oil at the expense of other sectors of the economy. This policy seems to have been very successful. Yet, Norway is a high-cost country, and the oil sector has contributed to making and keeping Norway expensive, hampering development in other sectors, including foreign investments. Oslo is often ranked along with Tokyo, London, New York and others as

one of the world's most expensive capitals.

One of the main beneficiaries of the Norwegian oil boom, and the economic boom in general, is *the Norwegian information and communication sector (ICT)*. Norway is one of the world's most developed countries as regards ICT. The government encourages and facilitates the use of ICT in schools, homes and workplaces. For example, stimuli programmes were recently introduced in order to increase the percentage of people over the age of 60 to use ICT in their homes.

A glimpse at Norway's ICT consumer statistics shows the following (2007):

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- 82% of households has access to a PC
  - 78% has access to the internet
  - 1,5 million broadband subscribers (in a population of 4.8 inhabitants)
  - 103,830 people are employed in the information sector, i.e. 4.5% of the total economy and 6.9% of the mainland economy excluding the public sector
  - In 2007, Norway exported ICT goods of a total value of NOK 15 billion
  - Internet IP Telephony: 508,000 subscribers. (35% of households with fixed broadband use broadband telephony.)
  - Mobile Telephony: 5.1 million mobile phone subscribers
  - Mobile Broadband: 220,000 subscribers, of which 117,400 are private customers
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—Note that most figures are a few years old and developments in the ICT sector is fast.

\* This section is based on a longer paper prepared by **Nasir D. Iftikhar** with data from Statistics Norway and other sources. (January, 2009)

## International Trade and Population Movements - A Personal View\*

Trade provides mankind with the most significant meeting place, the market. The major trade routes of ancient civilizations were up and down the great rivers, waterways and coastlines. The Silk Route from China to Persia and Rome provided key aspects of what we would term as *global trade*. The Vikings (800-1050 AD) were not only warriors and plunderers who raided North Sea countries. They were tradesmen and carriers of culture on the high seas and the narrow rivers, including, for example, the large river systems of Eastern Europe and Russia, all the way to Asia Minor.

Over the centuries, international trade resulted in considerable people-to-people contact, movement and cultural exchange. Today, it is important that our governments encourage freer people movement as part of improved trade, commerce and other co-operation at country-to-country, regional and international levels. Sometimes businessmen, especially from non-Western countries, feel almost as unwelcome as refugees and immigrants, whose rights have been continuously reduced in recent years in many European Union states.

Europe needs expanded international trade, and in the future it also needs to import foreign labour to make up for gloomy demographic forecasts in the face of an aging population and low birth rate, and the risk of collapsing, or in any case, less generous social security systems. In spite of these facts, Europe, including Norway, has put in place restrictions to keep immigrants out. It appears to be caught up in its own dilemma, needing people to come in from outside, yet at the same time fearing

migrants. Unless the anxiety is countered, it will have a negative impact on international trade and commerce.

Let us hope that the world will see freer movements of people and more open trade and other international exchange and cooperation. In a modest way, let us hope that associations like the Pakistan-Norway Association (PANA) in Islamabad can contribute to improving relations between Pakistan and Norway.

The author of this section belongs to the large group of *Pakistani-Norwegians*, who started coming to Norway in the late 1960s. My parents moved from Gujrat near Lahore to Norway's oil capital Stavanger, and that is where I was born and bred, before I got the opportunity to study in Germany and Scotland. A few years ago, I had the opportunity to go back to my parents' home country although they are still in Stavanger. I got married to an indigenous Pakistani a few years ago, and our daughter was born in Pakistan. I have many relatives in Pakistan, and it has in many ways been an eye opener for me to live in my ancestors' country. Yet, I am also a Norwegian, and I believe we will spend more time in Norway and Europe than in Pakistan in the years to come.

Those of us who have the privilege of *belonging to two countries* are richer for it. We can contribute to both our motherlands so that Norway and Pakistan can prosper from multiculturalism and improved trade. There is a lot to do in those fields, not least in developing stronger trade links between Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and Norway and the rest of Scandinavia. We need a *Pak-Scandia Trade Route* – built on the traditions of our ancestors and the



creativity of our contemporaries, perhaps even with some ideas from the Vikings and the Mongols – and modern entrepreneurial and business-minded Norwegians and Pakistanis!

\* The author of this section is **Atilla Amir Iftikhar**. He is a Norwegian of Pakistani descent currently living in Pakistan

### Box 13: Women Board Members

Public companies in Norway must have at least 40% women on their Boards. In 2009, the average figure was well over 44%. It took a positive discrimination law to get this done. In 2001, only about 6% of Board Members were women, and Ansgar Gabrielsen who was Minister of Trade and Industry that time initiated the new law, and today there are over 44% women Board Members, and companies who do not comply are penalized. Gabrielsen has said that he did not do spearhead this change based on feminist thinking but simply based on economic and business thinking, notably how to get top class, diverse and creative Boards with competent and experienced members. It didn't make much sense to leave out almost half the population at a time when women do have the knowledge and experience. In the 1950s and earlier, most women stayed at home, and that time it was often true that women did not have the qualifications, but today that is not true any more.

### Box 14: Norwegian NGOs

Norway has a large NGO sector and a number of the organizations are active in developing countries, receiving about 10-15 percent of the Norwegian government's development aid budget. In Pakistan, two Norwegian NGOs implement activities; Norwegian Church Aid

(NCA) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC). Both focus on emergencies, such as the huge earthquake in Pakistan in 2005 and other crises, including assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). In 2009, the IDPs in Pakistan reached unprecedentedly high numbers, with IDPs from Swat and neighbouring districts and from Waziristan being forced to leave their homes due to military operations to curb extremism and terrorism in these areas.

Norwegian Church Aid is also active in other substantive sectors, such as provision of water and sanitation to the poor, and in facilitating religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims. Currently, the head of NCA in Pakistan is a Pakistani-Norwegian Muslim woman. In Afghanistan, a large number of international NGOs from Norway have implemented activities, undertaken project activities, carried out studies and evaluations, and otherwise participated in activities related to Afghanistan's reconstruction work. Such organizations include Norwegian Save the Children (Redd Barna), in cooperation with Swedish Save the Children and the international Save the Children Alliance and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), which has expertise in mine clearing, and other organizations.



### Box 15: Norwegian Companies

The only large Norwegian company in Pakistan is Telenor working in the mobile phone sector. Telenor has grown out of Televerket, the Norwegian government telecommunication company, which was privatized a couple of decades ago. It is owned by the government but run as a private, limited company. It has been in Pakistan since 2003 and has made huge investments in infrastructure. It is one of the country's largest providers of mobile phone services with over 20 million customers and has become known for cutting edge technology, innovation, modern management, and is a company which appeals to young people.

Some other, smaller Norwegian private sector companies operate in Pakistan, but none as significant as Telenor. In Pakistan as well as Afghanistan, trading companies operate but mostly on an ad hoc basis, such as providing equipment after the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005 and making supplies for reconstruction in Afghanistan. Some of the Norwegian goods and services that are provided go through NGOs and UN organizations, including emergency depots/warehouses.

In the future, it is hoped that more regular trade links can be established between Norway and Pakistan. It is also hoped that more Norwegian companies will come to the region. It is hoped that larger Pakistani as well as Afghan export companies can manage to penetrate the Norwegian market, for example, in fields such as textiles, leather, fresh and dried fruits, and in other fields. It would be expected that the large Pakistani and Afghan diasporas in Norway (and Denmark) can play key roles in the development of expanded, durable commercial co-operation between the countries.

Further information to help transfer business ideas into reality can be obtained from the Norwegian Embassy and Innovation Norway

### Box 16: Norwegian Export

Energy, i.e. oil, natural gas and electric power are dominating Norwegian exports with about 70% of the value of all Norwegian exports in 2008. Machinery and transport equipment accounted for about 10% and various other finished and manufactured products accounted for another 10-12% of export value. Chemical products, including pulp and paper, accounted for about 5% and food products, including fish, and live animals made up about 4.5% of Norway's exports.

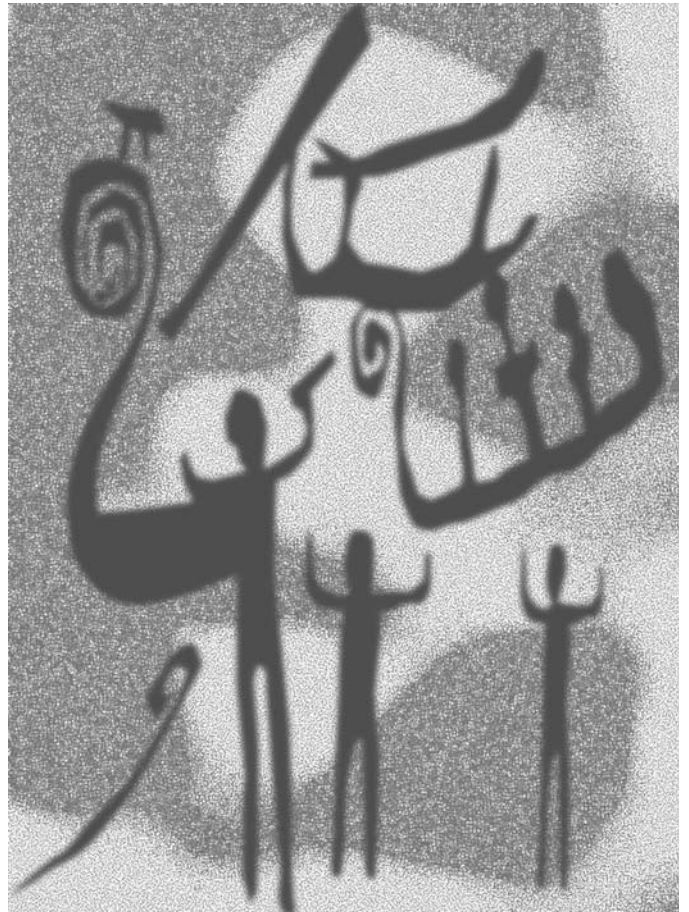
UK, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, other European countries, the United States and China are Norway's major trading partners.

In spite of Norway being a 'super power' in development and humanitarian aid and international cooperation, trade between Norway and developing countries remains minimal and this is a major concern to the developing countries as well as Norway at a time when there is growing focus on trade rather than aid.



# Chapter 5

## Education, Research and Innovation



*Norway has a first class education system. The 10-year primary and lower secondary school is compulsory and free. Pre-school care is universally available; and upper secondary school, sometimes in combination with work, is also available for all. Over 50% go to university. Special education is available to all who need such services.*



# Education, Research and Innovation

## Some Education Acts

The brief excerpts from the Norwegian education acts on the next pages indicate that religion, i.e. Christianity, is an important basis of the Norwegian school system. It is also underlined in the acts that humanist values shall be emphasized and that schools shall promote intellectual freedom and tolerance. Most Norwegians accept Christian moral values in a broad sense, but would also like their children to learn to think for themselves and realize that believers, in one or the other religion, and non-believers, can be equally moral human beings.

In recent decades Norway has received a growing number of immigrants from outside Europe and many of them are not Christian but belong to other religions, including a large proportion from Muslim countries. The Pakistani diaspora is large and well established, as are Moroccan, Iranian, Iraqi and Turkey communities. The Somalis came later, mostly as refugees. There is a large Afghan community in Norway and several other nationalities.

It is important for non-Christian children in Norwegian schools, most of whom are from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, to feel that they are treated equally with the Christian children, who will remain in the majority. Currently, the government reviews to what extent Christianity can explicitly be mentioned in the education acts without discriminating against other religions and non-believers. At the same time, it should be observed that the Norwegian Constitution states that Norway shall be a Christian state and the Protestant denomination shall be Evangelical-Lutheran.

In Norwegian schools the subject 'religious

studies' (now called 'religion, livssyn og etikk') gives much more space to Christianity than other religions and moral foundations. However, in today's more multicultural Norway, with many ethnic Norwegians being 'culturally Christian' rather than believers, it is necessary to consider to what extent Christianity should play such a dominant role. Since Norway is a tolerant and open-minded country, we should also appreciate that religious studies is not a compulsory subject in Norwegian schools. It is up to the parents to decide whether a child shall attend these classes or be exempted, and an alternative curriculum will be devised. Many parents are hesitant to remove a child from certain classes because it makes the child different from the others.

Although we have focused on the religious aspects of the Norwegian education acts, as this would be of special interest to Pakistani and Afghan readers, also considering that Pakistan and Afghanistan are Muslim states, we would like to emphasize that many other aspects and pedagogical principles are given focus in the Norwegian education acts.

The brief excerpts below show clearly the great emphasis that is placed on schools in helping the children to become *harmonic, independent and democratic persons*. Great pedagogical importance is also placed on the children being *active members in the education process*. They should be encouraged to ask questions, explore issues, make up their own minds, and develop their own opinions. *Tolerance, openness and a scientific way of thinking* are cornerstones of the Norwegian education system. These are among the many lessons that other countries can learn from Norway's good education system.

### **Excerpts from Norwegian Education Acts**

*Source: Core Curriculum. Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. Oslo 1997*

#### **PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT**

##### *§ 1 PRINCIPAL AIMS*

Primary and lower secondary education shall, with the understanding of and cooperation with the home, assist in providing pupils with a Christian and ethical upbringing, develop their mental and physical abilities, and give them a broad general education so that they can become useful and independent persons in their private lives and in society.

Schools shall promote intellectual freedom and tolerance, and emphasize the establishment of a cooperative climate between teachers and pupils and between school and home.

#### **UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION ACT**

##### *§ 2 PRINCIPAL AIMS*

The purpose of upper secondary education is to develop the skills, understanding and responsibility that prepare pupils for life at work and in society, to provide a foundation for further education, and to assist them in their personal development.

Upper secondary education shall contribute to increased awareness and understanding of basic Christian and humanist values, our national cultural heritage, democratic ideals and scientific thought and method. Upper secondary education shall promote human equality and equal rights, intellectual freedom and tolerance, ecological understanding and international co-responsibility.

## **VOCATIONAL TRAINING ACT**

### *§ 1 PRINCIPAL AIMS*

The Act aims to develop competence, understanding and responsibility in relation to craft, profession and society; to provide a basis for further education and to assist apprentices in their personal development.

Vocational training shall contribute to increased awareness and understanding of basic Christian and humanist values, our national cultural heritage, democratic ideals and scientific thought and method. Upper secondary education shall promote human equality and equal rights, intellectual freedom and tolerance, ecological understanding and international co-responsibility.

### *§ 12.2*

The apprentice is under an obligation to participate actively to achieve the objects of the training and contribute to establishing a favourable working climate and a spirit of cooperation.

## **ADULT EDUCATION ACT**

### *§ 1 PRINCIPAL AIMS*

The aim of adult education is to help the individual to lead a more meaningful life. This Act shall contribute to providing adult persons with equal access to the knowledge, insight and skills which enhance the individual's sense of values and personal development and widen the individual's scope for independent action and for cooperation at work and in society.

## **FOLK HIGH SCHOOLS ACT**

### *§ 2 PRINCIPAL AIMS*

Folk high schools shall, in keeping with their traditions, promote general education for different age groups and educational levels. Within this framework, the governing body of the school determines its basic values and aims.



## Literacy, Education and Socialization

In Norway, education for all came in the wake of the liberal developments in the Church in Europe at the end of the Middle Age, the invention of book printing and the general political and other developments. Primary school for all was introduced in 1737. The parish priest had a supervisory role in all schools in his parish, and the priest was one of the most highly educated civil servants.

To a major extent, education became literacy training for children, including reading and to a lesser extent writing, with some arithmetic (the 3Rs) and other general studies/civic education. The main justification for education for all was to enable all Norwegians to read the Bible and other uplifting books and pamphlets, and through that become better citizens. Over time, the content of the secular subjects was made more comprehensive and split into different subjects, and the importance of religion as a school subject was reduced. *Moral education*, not only as part of religious studies, has remained important explicitly and implicitly.

*Confirmation* is a religious ritual and feast in the Church for teenagers at the age of 14-15 when they are expected to confirm that they accept the baptism and wish to remain members of the Church. Until a few generations ago, the parish priest questioned each young boy and girl at a hearing in the Church and decided if he found that the candidates had gained acceptable knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith. For a long time, this was a public examination. Candidates who failed would be asked to come back the following year. Sometimes, candidates failed several times. If a young man or woman was not confirmed, he or she could not

marry. This power of the Church has been removed a long time ago.

From an educational point of view, the public religious examination was a control of the quality of the education provided in the main subject, Christianity and Bible history, which required a minimum level of literacy and general knowledge. The basic texts in the primer were usually religious in content and were designed to play an uplifting role and help the children to become moral and good citizens.

For a long time primary education was of varying quality. It was often very poor in rural and remote areas and in working class areas in cities and towns. Often teachers had rudimentary education beyond having completed primary education themselves, although usually with good results; sometimes teachers attended seminaries to become fully qualified. Children went to school for a limited time, with vacations so that they could help their parents with farm work (planting and harvesting), fishing and cleaning of fish, handicrafts, and other tasks. This was not considered child labour. Rather, it was seen as important that children learnt to help at home rather than roam idle on the streets. It was generally felt to be an important principle that children learnt to appreciate their own culture, not least in rural areas. In many areas, this also allowed for a more lax attitude to families who frequently kept their children away from school for a good number of days every year so that they could work at home. However, children did not only have a right to go to school, but education was also made compulsory. Parents who deliberately kept their children away from school for too long periods

of time would be warned, and in grave cases, they could be fined or even imprisoned. Child labour has been prohibited by law in Norway since 1892.

In rural areas, it was common that children went to school every other day up until as recently as the 1960s and in some places, the early 1970s. The compulsory schooling was 7 years, with an additional voluntary or compulsory eighth year of theoretical and practical training, added in the 1950s and 1960s, before compulsory 9-year primary and lower secondary school was introduced and made compulsory all over the country in the 1970s. From 1998, Norway has had a compulsory 10-year primary and lower secondary school, and all youth has the right to further education or training for another three years. This means that all children go to school from 6 to 16 years of age, and continue in education or training till they are 19 years of age.

Norway has compulsory one-year military service for all boys, usually at the age of 19-20. Boys who for religious and other reasons are pacifists, or object to military service for other reasons, are assigned civilian service. Earlier, military service played a major role in education/socialization and nation building, not least for rural youth. It was considered not only a duty to do military service, but also an honour. When a young man had completed his military service, he was seen to be ready to get married and settle down in life. It was considered shameful for a young man to be rejected by the draft board. Today, military service is voluntary for women.

Until 1959, Norway had two different laws for schools; one law for schools in the cities and towns, '*byfolkeskolen*', and one law for schools in the

rural areas, '*landsfolkeskolen*'. This dual system made it difficult, although indeed not impossible, for children from rural areas to continue to secondary level. In general, it was not considered necessary that children from rural areas, who were to live their lives in the same rural areas, had much education and training beyond the basic primary school. Until a couple of generations ago, there were very few secondary schools in rural areas, especially at upper-secondary level.

Universal literacy and an acceptable quality of primary education could only be achieved in the second half of the nineteenth century, i.e. well over 100 years ago, and even later, some children could barely read and write when they completed primary school. As recently as about a generation ago, Norway achieved a *high quality of education* for all, reaching all girls and boys, including those living in the most remote areas of the country, the semi-nomadic Sami minority in north Norway, children with special education needs, etc. Special education has only been given proper attention in the recent thirty-fortt years.

Gender segregated education is long gone in Norway. It has not been common, especially not in rural areas with few pupils in small school districts, where it would be practically impossible to apply gender segregated education. In the larger cities, separate girls' and boys' schools/classes could be found, especially at secondary level and vocational schools. All schools are co-educational, i.e. girls and boys sit in the same classrooms. The main argument for this is that it is socially better for the pupils. However, in some cases, girls would have benefited academically from being taught alone in

mathematics and science subjects, for example. Yet, today they outsmart boys at exams, so maybe now we need special classes for boys so they can perform better, and perhaps be less distracted by the girls? On the other hand, boys usually behave better if girls are around.

In Norway, it has been common to have a female teacher for the lower grades and a male teacher for the higher grades. Originally teaching was one of the few respectable professions women could take up. Today, there are more female teachers than male teachers. Teaching is now quite well paid although many other professions are better paid and have higher status.

Historians usually consider that Norway had eradicated illiteracy by the second half of the nineteenth century and certainly by 1900, i.e., all children, or almost all, would have attended primary school and gained acceptable competencies in the main subjects. It should be noted that even in the early decades after education for all had been introduced most children became “more or less” literate. However, some handicapped children were never enrolled, some dropped out, or only attended school sporadically.

Furthermore, in remote areas, including north Norway, where the semi-nomadic Sami people lived, reindeer herding and coastal fishing were the main livelihoods. Sami children often had to attend *boarding schools* due to the long distances between families and their nomadic lifestyle. Boarding schools are otherwise extremely rare, or non-existent in Norway.

The Norwegian state has been criticized for having forced the Norwegian language and majority

culture onto the Sami people. However, if the Sami had not been given education, that would have been wrong. It is only recently that the Sami people have become respected and discrimination has ceased. The Sami people in the north of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia have now established their own “Sami Parliament” and have independence in many fields as a ‘fourth world’ minority. We cannot do justice to Sami education and life in this short section, but instead refer to other sources. One of the most prominent Norwegian scholar and specialist on Sami education is *Professor Emeritus Anton Hoëm*, who has published extensively, mostly in Norwegian, on Sami education. His works have relevance for other parts of the world, especially in developing countries with ethnic minorities.

Corporal punishment is not allowed in Norwegian schools, or for that matter, in homes, or any other institutions, such as prisons. A few generations ago corporal punishment was quite common. It was also seen as a duty of parents and teachers to discipline children and bend stubborn, proud or disobedient behaviour, and justification was often found in the Bible.

It should be noted that the best Norwegian schools are *government schools*, not private schools as in many other countries. Private schools are extremely few in Norway, as in the other Nordic countries, with more private schools in Denmark. It has been a general rule that a child has to attend the school, which is closest to his or her home. Parents are generally not allowed to choose another school elsewhere in town, if they wish to do so. The justification for this policy measure is that the school belongs to the local community and it

is generally felt that all children should be brought up with the same standards and conditions and integrated in the local community. If a child goes to another school outside the community, that child becomes different, and this is generally considered to be negative for the child. In larger Norwegian cities, a few children do attend private schools, such as the Rudolf Steiner Schools, Catholic Schools, International Schools, etc.

For a long time, *kindergartens* were not available for the majority of children, partly due to sparse population in many areas and long distances to kindergartens, and partly due to Norwegian traditions, where it was seen as best for children to grow up in a home with one of the parents staying at home; almost always the mother. In recent decades, most children have access to kindergarten, and in most families both parents work outside the home.

Due to the high divorce rate in Norway, many children grow up in single-parent homes, usually with the mother. Unless the mother surrenders her custody right, or is declared unfit to look after her child/children, the mother is automatically granted custody. However, the father has visiting rights (usually every other weekend) and he must contribute to the cost of bringing up the child/children. If he doesn't, the government will enforce it through deduction from his salary, provided he is employed; otherwise the government will pay the allowance.

As we emphasized in the first section of this chapter, with reference to the main Education Acts, the foundation of primary and lower secondary education in Norway is to help children become good citizens. Although it has varied over the years,

the compulsory basic education is not competitive; it is rather the opposite as it encourages teamwork and teaching children to help each other and develop good values and behaviour. It is also seen as positive that a child becomes independent and develops his or her own opinions.

These pedagogical principles are important to many teachers and parents. They want children to feel comfortable at school and learn to respect themselves and each other. Today, grading of children's performance is not practiced at the lower levels. Instead, broad statements are given so that the parents can feel assured that their child is in good hands and not having any special problems. In recent years, though, a more competitive and result-oriented wind has been blowing through the school system and society at large, but most people hope that politicians and school leaders do not deviate too far from past ideals and practices.

Naturally, the Norwegian education system can do better in some fields, but few people believe that fancy, private sector ideas are suitable in the all-inclusive education system. Education has a value in itself and is not only for our future jobs and efficiency in the private or public sectors.

As we have mentioned above, all young people between 16 and 19-20 years are guaranteed access to secondary education, or work/apprenticeship combined with school. A generation ago there were far too few places in secondary education, especially in rural areas, blocking many talented youngsters from getting further education.

The unique Scandinavian *folk high school*, which became popular in the second half of the nineteenth century, was originally meant for young people from

rural areas, who did not go to secondary school but wanted one year (or rather, a winter) at a folk high school, which focused on literature, social studies, character building, music and choir singing, and various other subjects (although it was not common to divide the studies into strict subjects). The folk high schools are usually boarding schools.

The *special education* sector has seen major developments in the last generation. It is a general rule that children and youth with special educational needs, as far as possible, attend ordinary school and that the special education teachers come to the school where the pupils are. Earlier, it was common to provide special education (to a limited number of those who needed it) in specialized institutions. It has recently been realized that this had too high social costs for the child, overshadowing some of the positive education aspects.

Similarly, *immigrant children* who need special introduction or follow-up courses in Norwegian are integrated in ordinary schools. Earlier, it was common to cluster immigrant children together, but that led to immigrants feeling segregated from other children and they lacked the opportunity to speak Norwegian and socialize with Norwegians.

## Higher Education and Research

In 1950, Norway had 7,000 university students in a population of just over 3 million people. In addition, 2,000 Norwegians studied abroad, mainly due to too few university places at home. As in the rest of Europe, major higher education expansion took place in Norway in the 1960s. Today Norway has about 220,000 students pursuing higher education in 61 higher educational institutions,

including the six fully-fledged universities and seven specialized universities in architecture, biological and life sciences, veterinary sciences, theology, music, sports, and economics and business administration, situated in Oslo (with about 40,000 students), Bergen (with about 20,000 students), Trondheim (with about 15,000 students), Tromsø (with about 10,000 students), Aas (with about 3,000 students), and Stavanger and Kristiansand (with about 10,000 students each). In addition to the universities, the some 50 other tertiary institutions are situated in major towns and cities all over the country; most with modest student populations and staff numbers, yet providing high quality education in fields like teacher training, nursing, engineering, IT, and so on. 21 are private institutions, yet receiving the bulk of their funding from the government.

The Norwegian university degree structure has been streamlined to harmonize with the international British-American degree structure. In many cases this has led to a shortening of the courses at Bachelor and Master's levels, but the Ph.D. degree is usually slightly longer than the earlier advanced Norwegian degree. The Norwegian Dr. Philos. degree, a higher doctorate, which was common for staff members at universities and research institutes, often taken halfway through academic careers, is now being phased out.

In the recent decades, many small higher education institutions have been merged to make them larger and reduce running costs. But many research and education communities are quite small. That can be good in many cases as it gives a possibility to focus on the work at hand. Yet, there is also need for contact, collaboration and competition

with other individuals and institutions, and with the non-academic outside world.

Norwegian universities and other higher educational institutions are counted among the very best institutions in the world. The same applies to the universities in the other Nordic countries. Norwegian universities are quite young as compared to those in the other Nordic countries, especially in Sweden, where the universities of Lund and Uppsala are among the oldest in Europe. It is interesting that the first university in Norway, in Oslo was only established in 1811, and the second university, in Bergen, initially expanding the work of Bergen Museum, only after the Second World War.

The first woman was admitted to university in 1882. Today, more women than men are admitted to university – that is also reflected in the Pakistani diaspora in Norway.

Earlier, Norway had several research councils, in social sciences and the humanities, natural sciences, etc., providing assistance to individual researchers, research teams and institutions. Today, the research councils have been merged into one institution, *Norwegian Research Council*, '*Norges Forskningsråd*'. Defined research programmes are common, prioritized by the Research Council with policy directives from Parliament, or the ministry in charge of research. Ph.D. students usually have to find a slot within such programmes and projects in conjunction with the university they belong to. In general, this new more regularized structure represents improvements over the past, looser system. However, it is quite a technocratic and rigorous system, and may lack in creativity and ability to pick up alternative, radical ideas.

Norway's university and research sector is large, with government-funded universities, the research institute sector, and some private sector institutes and other research establishments outside or affiliated to the universities or institutes. In recent decades, a number of specialized *national competence centres*, or units within other institutions, such as hospitals, have been established or existing institutes named to bear the responsibility for high-level expertise and competence development in their often specialized and narrow fields. In a small country like Norway, it is important to define the responsibility for top expertise and leadership in various fields.

An example of one such new institute is the National Institute for Minority Health (NAKMI) at Ullevål University Hospital in Oslo, dealing with physical, mental and social illnesses that are more prevalent in the immigrant population than the indigenous Norwegian population. Inherited disorders and congenital diseases are for example more common among Pakistani and other immigrants due to frequent marriages between close relatives, i.e., first and second cousins. (Norway has always allowed for such marriages, but they are today very rare in the indigenous Norwegian population and not of medical concern.)

Norway has good universities, and in some academic fields they are top institutions on a par with the best in Europe and the rest of the world. Norwegian institutions provide good tertiary education to a large proportion of its youth; today, over 50% of secondary school graduates continue with further studies. Hence, universities should not only provide top education for the few, they should provide good education for the many.



Obviously, all university students, especially at postgraduate level should have access to 'research-based knowledge' otherwise a university becomes a school and not a university. This is a topic in the political debate within universities. However, with the large number of students and time-consuming teaching and administrative duties, university staff do often not have enough time for carrying out their own research, and they will at best base their teaching on research carried out by others.

In Norway, it is a political issue that in spite of the high economic growth in the country in recent decades, government allocation for research has not grown at the same rate. Norway uses less for research than countries it usually compares with, such as Sweden, Denmark, Finland and the larger countries in Europe.

It is expected that in the coming years, the higher education and research sectors will become a topic for increased public and political debate, in addition to vigorous debate within the institutions.

It is expected that new forms of study financing will be called for since the current form of a combination of stipends and government loans leaves most graduates heavily indebted at the time they enter the labour market, which is also the time when most of them will establish families, enter the housing market, and have other expenses. It should be mentioned that the *State Education Loan Fund*, '*Statens lånekasse for utdanning*', makes it possible for all Norwegians to study what they want to study as long as they are admitted by the educational institution. Even mature students, say in their 40s or even 50s, may need financing to complete their university degrees.

## **Creativity in Higher Learning and Research\***

It has been estimated and argued that 80 % of a country's wealth is in our heads. The ability of any nation to secure future happiness for its citizens depends on what it does to nurture and utilize the intellectual potential available in the minds of today's children. So how do we do that? By encouraging, stimulating, praising, prioritizing, rewarding and proclaiming the efforts of new generations to develop their intellect and skills. Is that what schools and universities do today?

The world we need to equip our youth for is different from anything we ourselves confronted. Our children will need to know more than we do, more than their teachers know, and above all, they must be able to use that knowledge in totally different circumstances and for different purposes than we can imagine today.

What has this got to do with creativity, then? Well, to define 'creativity' is no easy task, and as long as we know more or less what it means, we need not look for a very sophisticated explanation. Let us just say that one of the things creativity means is the ability to see familiar objects, actions and relations in a different light and from a different angle.

Achievements of the past have had everything to do with creativity: Penicillin, which helped us overcome terrible diseases, was brought to us by uniquely creative people. The world's food production has multiplied over the last half century through creative talent. Wars have been averted and peace built by creative minds. And in the future it is human creative talent that must help us save our global environment and stave off catastrophic global warming. The AIDS pandemic must be met



by the creativity of thousands of researchers and health workers and billions of people must be given access to basic education through creative use of new methodologies and sources of learning.

And a more just world with equal access to global resources and equal chances for all, wherever they live, must be brought about by creative people, whose minds have been stimulated in the best centres of learning.

This is where creativity must take us, and this is why the universities and research institutions of today must be above all *centres of creative thought*, where our children and children's children can be equipped to solve tomorrow's problems. Not only the answers are unknown today – the problems and challenges are themselves hidden from us.

If that is the test, then it is not enough to have all the knowledge of today at our fingertips, we need minds that can use that knowledge to produce the knowledge of tomorrow when we see what is needed. This kind of readiness for the unknown challenges of the future is the foremost mission of institutions of higher learning, in Norway and in all countries.

Perhaps we need to examine our cultural values and traditions. Is it a good thing that young people are expected to accept the wisdom of their elders if we really need them to be critical of established truth? Should we perhaps tell them instead that the professor could be wrong, and ask them to look for solutions and possibilities elsewhere, keeping their eyes open for the unexpected. Should universities be places where students learn to question rather than to accept, and to break the rules in order to discover the unexpected?

And perhaps, also, we need to do something to make sure that those lucky ones who get to enter universities are selected because of their intellectual ability and unexpected ideas, instead of their ability to memorize and reproduce the truths of the past. As a very rich country, Norway has a unique opportunity to make its university institutions excellent, and to experiment in order to make them first class.

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\* The author of this section is **Olve Sørensen**. He is a specialist in higher education and international university cooperation. He lived in Pakistan from 2007-8 when his wife, Aud Marit Wüig, was the Norwegian Ambassador in Pakistan.

## Foreign Students and Internationalization of Universities

Traditionally, many Norwegians have studied abroad. Today, Norway has in total 61 university level institutions, including regional university colleges, specialized universities, and university colleges in fields like teacher training, nursing, engineering, IT, and the large fully-fledged universities, with over 220,000 students in all, and a clear majority of women.

Norway has recently adopted the international degree structure, which will in general take 3+2+3 years for the three degree-levels. Some Master's degree programmes are of 1-year duration. The professions are exempted from the new degree structure, i.e., medicine, dentistry, psychology, engineering, theology, and until recently, also law.

Today, about *18,500 Norwegians study abroad* for a number of reasons, including about 7,000 students in exchange and study-abroad programmes. It is a

deliberate policy that Norwegian university students get the opportunity to spend part of their degree studies abroad, and students are also encouraged to take a full degree abroad, for example, a higher degree or diploma. It is part of the internationalization policy of Norwegian higher education that foreign students and researchers come to Norway. Currently, figures show that about *15,000 foreigners study in Norway*.

The *Nordic Council* has for decades recommended increased student exchange within the Nordic countries, and has advised that the home university be liberal in approving courses from neighbouring countries in spite of some differences in curriculum content, examination forms, and specific degree requirements. The *Council of Europe* has for decades granted scholarships to enable students to study abroad.

Today, the EU has several exchange programmes, such as *ERASMUS*, in which Norway takes part along with the other Nordic and European countries. There are also other programmes, such as *Nordplus* and various *cultural agreements*. The Norad Fellowships Programme for students from developing countries is administered by the Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU). SIU has a programme called NUFU for research and other cooperation between Norwegian and Third World universities and scientific institutes. SIU is the overall body for international cooperation in higher education, located in Bergen.

International student mobility is often quite tilted, notably from countries that are seen as less advanced to more advanced countries. When students

choose to study at prestigious and top universities they do it for various reasons, including academic reasons and to become more marketable upon graduation. In addition, family background, class, parents' opinions, etc., are also very important.

Within Norway and Scandinavia, the general high standard of the universities is quite even, although with some differences. Other aspects than academic level would attract students to certain universities, in addition to the simple fact that students would often prefer the university that is nearest. The University of Oslo is ranked as one of the top three universities in Scandinavia. Yet, many students may choose smaller institutions and smaller university towns, and also newer and possibly more experimental institutions.

A university education does not only have to do with course work and academic aspects. All the other aspects of university life, on campus, at the student hostel and in the city are also important. The possibility to practice various kinds of sports and other spare time activities is certainly very important to many young students. International curricula, and an inclusive and outward looking atmosphere are important for all students and staff to broaden their horizon and open their eyes. Recently, Norwegian universities have given more deliberate attention to internationalization aspects than before, and study and living conditions for foreign students have probably never been as good as they are today.

Foreign students help create a *multi-cultural atmosphere* at a university but they are not the only actors to make universities international. Courses must include international topics. Research must

take up international and comparative issues, and international research programmes should be established. Norwegian institutions have cooperation agreements with foreign universities, mainly in the United States, Europe and some other countries. Such agreements have been expanded, *inter alia*, to include developing and other young states and their universities.

An example of old-time internationalization is the *International Summer School at the University of Oslo*, which is organized for six weeks every summer for more than 500 students from some 100 countries. It may be old-time, but it is as popular as ever. Many other courses from one semester to one-year programmes have been added.

Overall regulations regarding foreign students at Norwegian universities are now about fifteen years old, dating back to 1994, based on recommendations made in “*Grenseløs utdanning*” (education without borders), a Report to the ‘*Storting*’, the Norwegian parliament, by ‘*Faltn-utvalget*’, after its chairman Dr. Kjetil Flatin. Before that, Norwegian universities were quite unorganized and liberal in accepting students from other countries, including Third World countries. Once the students had arrived in Norway and were accepted by the university or college, they were entitled to study loans, which for Third World students were turned into a scholarship if they left Norway and returned home upon completion of their studies.

Earlier, except for some introductory courses in Norwegian language, society and philosophy, foreign students attended the *regular courses* that Norwegian students attended, without any special help, and these courses were all in Norwegian. In

practice this led to many foreign students spending an unreasonably long time to complete their courses and obtain full degrees, and many did not make it, especially not in the social sciences where there was a ‘hidden Norwegian cultural curriculum’ that was taken for granted in exams, but details of which was difficult to grasp for most foreign students. The old system turned out to be very inefficient although those who had time, motivation and stamina to take the long studies, which could easily take more than ten years to obtain a higher/advanced degree, would gain a solid academic and professional education and understanding of the Norwegian way of thinking and working.

The author of this book knows several Pakistanis who studied at the University of Oslo about thirty years ago, and who succeeded in their studies and completed their degrees. They returned home to pursue good careers. But such students were the exception. Generally students did not succeed and there was need for change and improvement when the current system was introduced.

Foreign students studying in Norway can be divided into three main categories, notably (a) *Self-financing students*, (b) *Exchange students*, and (c) *Scholarship students*. The Norwegian Quota Programme is a funding scheme offered by the Norwegian Government to students from developing countries, Central and Eastern Europe, and former Soviet republics for studies at higher education institutions in Norway. This funding scheme aims to offer specifically designed, research-based Master’s degrees or one-year non-degree programmes, taught in English, open for quotas of foreign students from various countries, including Norway,

on a competitive basis. The Quota Programme also offers funding for doctoral programme students, either for the full doctoral degree taken in Norway, or for shorter periods in Norway and the rest in the home country. The number of courses for foreign students, taught in English, varies from university to university. At the University of Oslo, the largest university in Norway with over 30,000 students, more than thirty Master's degree courses and a number of other short courses and doctoral programmes are offered in English. At Oslo, priority under the Quota Programme is given to students from institutions with which the University of Oslo has cooperation agreements with.

Students who are self-financing need at least NOK 100,000 per year (approx. USD 17,500) to meet their expenses, i.e. living costs, travel, entertainment, books, etc. There is no tuition fee at Norwegian universities but all Norwegian and foreign students must pay a compulsory fee every semester to the Student Welfare Organization at the respective university. Foreign students are entitled to a place in a student hostel run by the welfare organization.

The basic entrance requirements for Norwegian universities are high. Since education systems vary in different countries, it is sometimes difficult to find out whether foreign students meet the entrance requirements and if certificates are genuine. In general, education modeled on the British system requires A-level examinations. The French

Baccalaureate and the European International Baccalaureate also satisfy entrance requirements.

For a number of countries, including Pakistan and Afghanistan, the national upper level secondary school certificate does not meet requirements, and one year of additional studies in academic subjects at university level is required. In addition, it is necessary for applicants who are not native speakers of English to provide documentary evidence of a satisfactory level of English as per the TOEFL or IELTS tests. Students who have obtained diplomas and degrees in some countries where English is the national language and the medium of instruction, mainly African countries, are exempt from English language tests.

Further details about entrance requirements, etc., can be obtained from the Websites of the respective Norwegian universities. Some Website addresses are listed below. However, many institutions have not been included.

**Note:** The above section is merely a brief introduction to the field. It is about internationalization of Norwegian universities, including foreign students, but is not meant as an orientation for potential students. Those who are interested in studying in Norway should seek more detailed information, and they should generally realize that Norway, being a small country, can only accommodate a small number of foreign students at any given time (currently about 18,000). Financing of studies, either through scholarships, co-operation agreements or own funds, must be sorted out *before* a foreign student takes up studies in Norway.

## Contact Addresses to some Norwegian Universities

University of Oslo [international@admin.uio.no](mailto:international@admin.uio.no)

University of Bergen [www.uib.no/fa/intkont](http://www.uib.no/fa/intkont)

University of Tromsø [www.adm.uit.no/studie/foreign](http://www.adm.uit.no/studie/foreign)

Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU)  
[www.ntnu.no/index.html](http://www.ntnu.no/index.html)

Norwegian School of Economics and Business Administration  
[www.nhh.no/index-e.html](http://www.nhh.no/index-e.html)

Norwegian School of Management (BI) (private)  
[www.bi.no/english](http://www.bi.no/english)

Norwegian University of Biology and Life Sciences (earlier, Agriculture) [www.nlh.no](http://www.nlh.no)

Oslo School of Architecture [www.aho.no](http://www.aho.no)

Norwegian College of Veterinary Medicine [www.veths.no](http://www.veths.no)

Norwegian University of Sports and Physical Education  
[www.nih.no](http://www.nih.no)

Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Higher Education (SIU), Bergen <http://siu.no/norad>

See also, Statistics Norway [www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no)



### Box 17: Foreign Students

Foreign students in Norway come through three different routes: (a) scholarship students from developing countries; (b) students under co-operation agreements between Norwegian and foreign universities and colleges; (c) students who are self-financing students. Since Norway is a small country, there are relatively few foreign students in Norway. However, foreign students are also seen as an asset to a university and research community and deliberate policies and programmes are implemented to ensure a good number of foreign students. By the same token, as part of recent internationalization efforts, Norwegian students are encouraged to take part of their studies abroad. Currently, a total of 15,000 foreign students study in Norway and about 18,500 Norwegian students study abroad, of which almost 7,000 are on exchange or study-abroad programmes.

Website addresses have been listed at the end of that section.

### Box 18: Innovation

- It was a Norwegian Johan Vaaler who in 1899 invented the Paper Clip.
- In 1925, Thor Bjørklund from Lillehammer in Norway invented the Cheese Slicer. It is particularly practical for cutting thin (economical) slices of Jarlsberg cheese and the brown goat's cheese, which are Norwegian specialties.
- The Norwegian Leiv Eriksson, a Viking who lived in Greenland, discovered America five hundred years before Christopher Columbus (1492). He called it Vinland. But do you think people believe it?

### Box 19: Norway Cup & Right to Play

- Norway Cup is the world's largest football tournament for youth. It has for decades been an annual summer event at the turn of the months of July/August when tens of thousand of older children and teenagers from all over Norway and other countries gather to play football and have a great time in Norway's capital. Today, teams from far-way countries, including developing countries, participate and often do well in matches. Teams from the Mathare slum in Nairobi, Kenya, and teams from Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania, have won gold medals. Handicaped teams are also included, and, today, it goes without saying, girls' teams always participate.
- Right to Play (RTP) is not a Norwegian NGO. However, its founder and chairman is Johann Olva Koss, a Norwegian sports celebrity who won three gold medals in the Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer, Norway, in 1994.
- In 2009, Norway has provided assistance to IDPs in Pakistan, includinh RTP projects in Mardan, assisting children and teachers, using sports and games as a tool to delvelop better group-work skills, respect for each other and peaceful attitudes towards all people. RTP often uses the slogan, "When children play, the world wins".



## Box 20: Special Education

Equality is a main concept in the Norwegian education vocabulary, underlining the importance of every child having the same rights to learn irrespective of abilities. Children with special education needs are given special support before school-age and during the education cycle. Today, it is a principle that children with special needs should be integrated in ordinary classes and schools. Sometimes, however, when children have severe handicaps and needs they are given education separately. At Skaadalen in Oslo, a nationwide centre for the deaf, top educational, psychological and medical expertise is provided.

The issue of equality and integration also applies to adults, and in all villages, towns and cities services are available so as to integrate people with various physical and mental handicaps. The time when large hospitals were used to cater for these groups is over; in connection with mental health care the large hospitals were closed in the early 1990s. Many of the buildings are now used as reception centers for refugees.

It should be mentioned that refugees and immigrants are also encouraged to integrate in the mainstream society. For example, it is a government policy not to have separate classes or schools for immigrant children even if they speak the same language because it will delay their learning of Norwegian language and integration into the Norwegian society.

The modern principles of 'inclusive education' seem to be practiced successfully in Norway in various fields. In Norway, many class teachers have special education competence. This is essential for good results, and so is the teachers' access to further expertise when needed.

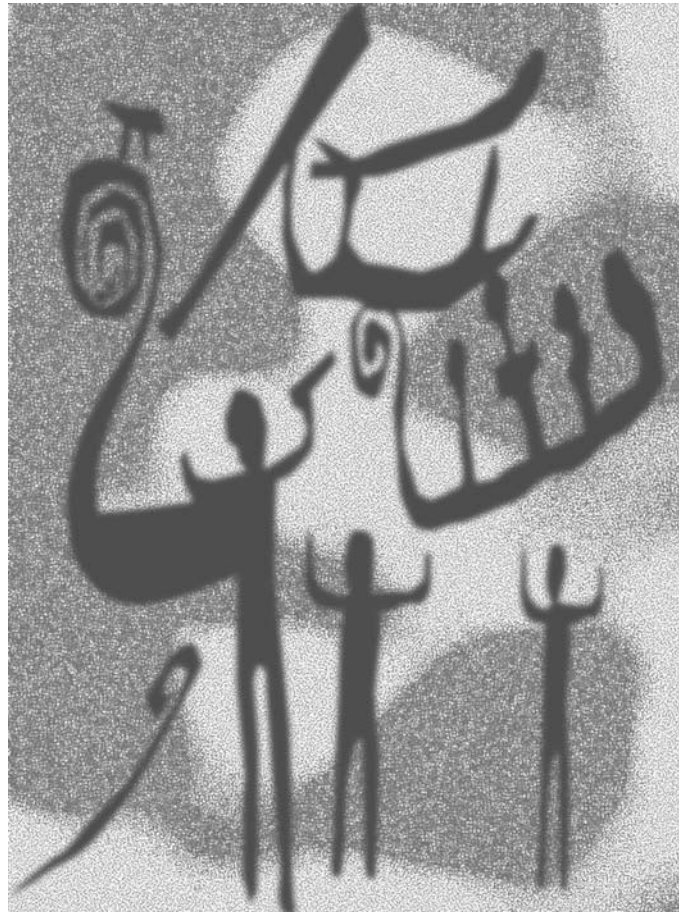






# Chapter 6

## Language, Literature, Mass Media, Sports, Culture and Religion





*The 'troll' is common in Norwegian folktales – and in Norwegian souvenir shops.*

# Language, Literature, Mass Media, Sports, Culture and Religion

## Alphabet and Language

Like English, Norwegian uses the Latin alphabet. In addition, Norwegian has three extra letters. They are written and pronounced as explained below.

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Æ æ Pronounced as the vowel in **bad**  
*In Swedish, written Ä ä*

Ø ø Pronounced as the vowel in **bird**  
*In Swedish, written Ö ö*

Å å Pronounced as the vowel in **ball**  
*In Swedish, written as in Norwegian*

---

The three extra letters in the Scandinavian languages are written as shown at the above in Norwegian and Danish. In older Norwegian and Danish, the letter Å (å) is written as Aa (aa). In Swedish, two of the letters are written differently, as shown above.

There have been many efforts for the three countries to agree on an identical alphabet in the three languages, including efforts made by cooperative bodies such as the Nordic Council and the Nordic Council of Ministers, but to no avail. However, the differences are so small that it isn't much of a problem for reading and writing, although it would save money and make typewriters and computers more easily interchangeable if keyboards were the same.

If you don't have a Norwegian keyboard on your computer, you can write the letters as follows:

Æ (æ) can be written Ae (ae). Ø (ø) can be written Oe (oe). Å (å) can be written Aa (aa).

The three Scandinavian languages are very similar, especially Norwegian and Danish, as Norway was part of Denmark for about 400 years from 1380-1814. After the separation from Denmark, Norway modernized its language several times. Standard Norwegian, 'Bokmål', was previously known as 'Riksmål' and was almost identical with Danish until the late nineteenth century, so it is easy for Norwegians to read Danish, and for Danes to read Norwegian, although Danish and Norwegian have distinct differences in pronunciation.

In the 1850s, a new version of the Norwegian language was created, notably 'Nynorsk', or as it was originally called, 'Landsmål' (rural Norwegian). This version of Norwegian was constructed from words and grammar used in remote and isolated towns and villages in Norway where the Danish influence had been less than in the capital and larger cities.

The unique task of creating a more truly Norwegian language was undertaken by the autodidact linguist *Ivar Aasen*, who came from the small twin town of Volda-Ørsta on the west coast of Norway where he happened to deem 'Nynorsk' was most correctly spoken!

'Nynorsk' is used in all walks of life, but remains a minority language. There are many regulations connected to language in Norway, for example, all

textbooks must be made available in both versions of Norwegian at the same time, cost and form, and graduates from secondary schools must be able to write both versions, and all civil servants should be able to correspond in both versions of the language. The state broadcasting channels must use nynorsk in at least 25% of their programmes.

In recent decades, it has become common to use dialects more than before (and Norway does have many dialects), not only in the hometown and village, but also when people travel or move to other locations, including the capital and other larger cities, where more correct standard Norwegian is spoken. A common slogan used by advocates of 'Nynorsk' is; 'Speak dialect, write Nynorsk'.

However, there is a decline in the use of 'Nynorsk' in schools; only about 14% of pupils in primary and lower secondary schools use 'Nynorsk', down from 19% some years ago. There is also a growing concern formulated by parents and teachers that it is an imposition on pupils who use 'Bokmål' to have to learn 'Nynorsk' but not vice versa. As the curriculum in general is getting crowded and more and more demanding for pupils, some parents would like to reduce the 'Nynorsk' requirements.

English encroaches on Norwegian and the many other small languages in Europe. One can therefore argue for the need for strengthening teaching of Norwegian language in general, which to the vast majority of Norwegians means 'Bokmål'. One can also argue for reduced use of dialects in order to strengthen correct, standard Norwegian, 'Bokmål' as well as 'Nynorsk'.

To a certain degree there is a language conflict

(*'språkstrid'*) in Norway, and Norwegians seem to be fascinated with it, and with a debate about other cultural issues. In many ways, it represents an urban-rural conflict, or a conflict between the large-scale society versus the small-scale society and connected values.

Many of these language issues and cultural values were given attention in connection with the referenda for Norwegian membership in the European Union (EU) in 1972 and 1994, in which the Norwegian majority voted "No". There was only a clear majority for EU membership in the capital Oslo, nearby centers and the other larger cities in the country. It is probably correct to say that many Norwegians, living in a small country with less than five million people on the outskirts of Europe, fear or detest many of the urban, large-scale cultural values at home in Norway and certainly in the larger countries in the rest of Europe. But maybe the upcoming generation is becoming more international and more willing and able to use English, without fearing that their mother tongue will disappear?

## Literature

Reading is a very popular activity in Norway. The Encyclopedia Britannica have it that Norwegians read more than any other people in the world, spending about NOK 700 (approx. USD 100) per year per capita on books. However books are expensive in Norway as the population is small and most books are printed in limited editions. Norwegians are also keen newspaper readers and in addition to the large national papers, there are a number of regional newspapers and more than a hundred local newspapers.

Icelanders are also known for their reading and book-writing. It is sometimes said that no Icelander with respect for himself or herself can go through life without having written at least one book! This is obviously an overstatement but there may be some truth to it. All the Nordic countries have highly developed book publishing and printing industries, but today, printing costs are high and books are often printed in the Baltic states and other former Soviet block countries, or as far away as Malaysia.

More than 4,000 book titles see the light of day in Norway every year, but only about 10% can be termed 'literature', experts claim, i.e., fiction in the form of novels, books of short stories and poetry. It should be noted that a number of titles, with a limited readership, but of cultural and other importance, can only be published if they are subsidized by the government, or receive other support, such as sponsorship from private companies or organizations. The government subsidizes book publishing through purchasing 1,000 copies of most literary books for distribution to libraries around the country.

Looking back, let us first mention the Norse *runic inscriptions* or stone carvings, the oldest dating back to several hundred years AD. *Tunesteinen* is one of the oldest examples of a text written in verse in Norway.

The famous Icelandic *sagas*, depicting the history and stories of the kings, are part of Norwegian general knowledge. The Icelandic historian *Snorre Sturlason* made the first account and documentation of the Norse Mythology and Norwegian (Nordic) history in writing in his two volumes entitled the *Younger Edda* and the *Older Edda*. Icelanders are mainly

of Norwegian descent; the country has a small population of 320,000, living in a modern welfare state. However, Iceland was recently particularly hard hit in the current economic recession.

During the Danish Era, '*dansketiden*', 1380-1814, when Norway was part of Denmark and the country was known as Denmark-Norway, little happened in Norwegian literature, with a few exceptions, such as, for example, the psalms written by the poet-priest *Petter Dass* (1647-1707) and the poetry, essays and comedies written by *Ludvig Holberg* (1684-1754), a Norwegian-born professor and author who lived his life in Denmark. He was the leading figure in what is known as *the Age of Enlightenment*, '*opplysningstiden*'.

In the decades after Norway's independence from Denmark (1814) and in an era of growing patriotism and national pride, one of Norway's greatest poets emerged, notably *Henrik Wergeland* (1808-1845). His sister, *Camilla Collett* (1813-1895) is one of Norway's first female authors of major standing. She was a pioneer advocate of women's rights and wrote prose in the genre of social realism.

The second half of the nineteenth century is known as the *Golden Age in Literature*, with the Nobel Prize Laureate *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson* (1832-1910), the author of the National Anthem, and the world famous playwright *Henrik Ibsen* (1828-1906). *Knut Hamsun* (1859-1952), who began his writing career around 1890, and *Sigrid Undset* (1882-1949), both received the Nobel Prize for Literature, in 1920 and 1928, respectively. Amongst other prominent writers in the twentieth century, we can list the following: *Arne Garborg*, *Olav Duun*, *Johan Falkberget*, *Sigurd Hoel*, *Tarjei Vesaas*, *Johan Borgen*, *Torborg Nedreaas*, and

the poets, *Olaf Bull*, *Herman Wildenvey*, *Olav Aukrust*, *Arnulf Overland*, and many others, several of whose works have already become Norwegian classics.

Recently, there has been a growing number of female writers, with emphasis not only on psychological studies of individuals but on social criticism. This was especially the case in the political radical decade of the 1970s. In the 1980s, the pendulum swung back to include more psychological portrayals but including elements from sharp political observers, analysts and writers from the earlier decade or two. Amongst the best known Norwegian writers today, we can list the following: *Axel Jensen*, *Knut Faldbakken*, *Kjartan Fløgstad*, *Karsten Alnæs*, *Kjell Askildsen*, *Roy Jacobsen*, *Jon Bing*, *Tor Åge Bringsværd*, *Erik Fosnes Hansen*, *Herbjørg Wassmo*, *Karin Fossum*, *Bjørn Wiik*, *Tor Edvin Dahl*, and many others. The list of dramatists include: *Jens Bjørneboe*, *Finn Carling*, *Peder W. Cappelen*, *Edvard Hoem*, and *Cecilie Løveid*.

Of special mention is *Jostein Gaarder*, who has achieved fairy tale success abroad. His 500-page novel, *Sophie's World*, in Norwegian, '*Sofie's verden*', from the mid-1990s, has been sold in close to twenty million copies worldwide, translated into some 45-50 languages, and it has been turned into a musical and a film – and a Pakistani publisher has made it available to local readers.

The *Sami minority* has a rich oral tradition. One of the most famous poems is the *Son of the Sun*, in Norwegian '*Solsonnen*', written down in the 1800s. Since the 1970s, several Sami writers have appeared, and more are likely to publish their works in all the four 'Nordkalotten' countries.

Several significant Norwegian writers have published their works in the Norwegian minority language version 'Nynorsk', which is particularly well suited to poetry and ballads. However, the majority of Norwegian literature is written in the majority language version, Standard Norwegian, 'Bokmål'.

The most prestigious publishing houses in Norway, dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century, were bought back from Denmark and re-established in Oslo. Earlier, Norwegian writers' works were published by Danish publishing houses, making the nationality of the writer obscure. To publish Norwegian books in Norway was part of the strong Norwegian nationalism that developed after Norway became independent from Denmark in 1814, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is important for any country to control its own publishing sector and also its mass media sector with newspapers, radio, TV, and other new and increasingly technologically sophisticated information and communication devices.

## Mass Media

Norwegians are a newspaper loving people. Every day, about three million dailies are distributed in a country with a population of 4.8 million. Who can beat that! Opinion polls show that Norwegians on average spend about an hour reading newspapers each day and about 3 hours watching TV.

There are a total of about 220 *newspapers* in Norway, and in addition more than 100 *local community papers*, which appear two to three times a week.

Only a handful of Oslo-papers are national papers although some other regional papers are published in the major cities along the coast. The majority of papers are local papers published all over the country. The government subsidizes papers through reduced prices for newsprint, reduced postage rates and in other ways. The second largest daily in a town receives more government support so that it can survive in a competitive climate in order to safeguard difference of opinion. Previously, most newspapers had political party affiliations, but today most papers have declared themselves 'politically independent'.

As for ownership, three media corporations control about two thirds of the market, notably Orkla, Shibsted and A-pressen. Most Norwegians read a national or regional paper and a local paper. In small towns and rural municipalities, every household usually subscribes to the local community paper if there is such a paper in their area, and usually there is.

*Verdens Gang (VG)* is Norway's largest newspaper with a circulation of more than 400,000. The second largest is *Aftenposten*, with two daily editions, and it is generally considered a high quality paper. *Dagbladet* is the third largest. VG and Aftenposten are owned by Schibsted, which also owns the TV 2 channel and the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet.

The *Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK)* was established in 1933, with permanent TV broadcasts from 1960. NRK had a monopoly for broadcasting in Norway until 1992 when private radio and TV channels were introduced, following more than a decade of political debate about future media policies. The government appoints the Director

General of NRK. Whereas NRK gets its funding through licensing fees and government support, the private channels mainly rely on advertising and sponsorship to finance their productions. Although the private channels have had some success, NRK remains dominant. In recent years, foreign TV channels have become popular using cable and digital technology. In many parts of the country, Swedish and Danish TV channels can be received.

During the Second World War it was strictly forbidden to keep a radio receiver in Norway. Times have certainly changed, and even in countries experiencing war and conflict today, such as Afghanistan, it is unthinkable to have that kind of information control. Yet, today's control and propaganda may take different forms. Sometimes, we may not notice that the many media outlets basically feed us the same content, which is closer to propaganda than 'neutral' coverage.

Journalism and other fields of mass media studies are very popular among young students in Norway and entrance requirements are often as stiff as those in medicine. There are several courses to choose from, with the *Norwegian School of Journalism* in Oslo and the Mass Media degree course at the *Regional University College* at Volda as the leading ones. Other colleges and universities, have mass media courses and research-based studies. NRK and other channels have special pre-service and in-service training courses for various categories of programme and technical staff.



## Sports

Norwegians are fond of outdoor sports and recreational activities. Some 40% of the population takes active part in sports, as athletes, trainers and leaders. The *Norwegian Sports Federation, Norges Idrettsforbund* (NIF) enjoys expanding membership at a time when other organizations have difficulties recruiting members. The *Norwegian Football Federation, Norges Fotballforbund* (NFF) is the largest sports organization approaching 300,000 members.

Today football is no longer a male-only sport as more and more girls and women enjoy the sport as athletes and spectators. However, there are more male than female spectators at sports events, and football is the most popular spectator sport. In all other fields of culture and art, more women than men attend events, i.e., concerts, theatre performances, exhibitions, and so on.

Recently sports for handicapped has been given more attention, and many Norwegian sports organizations, or branches of other organizations, have been established to cater for the handicapped. In the *1994 Winter Olympics at Lillehammer*, Norway won most medals in the *Para-olympics*.

The largest sports event in the world for older children and youth is the *Norway Cup*, which is held in Oslo every year in early August, with more than 20,000 young football players from all over the world, some of them handicapped. They play some 3,000 games in the course of one week. It is a colourful event noticed and appreciated by everyone living in the capital city.

*Norway is regarded as the birthplace of skiing.* But skiing was originally not for sport and fun; it

was a practical way of walking, or moving on top of several feet deep snow-covered fields, forests and mountain-sides. Later, mostly in last century, different forms of skiing developed into sports and recreation activities. To start with skiing was mostly for men. In the 1920s, postcard photos were made of Queen Maud skiing, and these photos became popular and the Queen was considered a role model for other Norwegian women.

Today skiing is a recreational activity enjoyed by most Norwegians; children, adolescents and young adults in particular. If there isn't enough snow in the lowlands and along the coast, people travel to ski resorts in the highlands and mountains. In the second part of February, schools are closed for a few days for 'winter holidays', and many families use it for skiing, either where they live or at hotels or in cottages in the mountains.

The most popular skiing holiday time is Easter in March or April. The weather is milder and the sun has gained some power. The 'in thing' to do for Norwegians during Easter is to go skiing and come back to school or work with a suntan as proof of it. Many may have gained the suntan from sitting on the apartment balcony at home, or any other pleasant outdoor spot on the coast or in the mountains. The social aspects related to outdoor recreational and sports activities are considered very important. Skiing holidays include socializing with friends and relatives, enjoying the beauty of nature, even if the weather is overcast, snowy or rainy, and it includes long, quiet evenings in a cottage or a guesthouse. Sometimes, it also includes hotel visits with food and drinks, dancing parties and other entertainment. In-door swimming pools

are common at most highland hotels and popular among children and adults of all ages.

Cross-country skiing is most popular for adults while young people prefer downhill or slalom skiing, with a ski lift to take them back up on the hilltop again. Alpine skiing is also gaining popularity. Ski jumping is a major sport but it requires skill and a lot of training. All forms of skiing have been turned into sports, with competitions in the winter months of January until March. There are Norwegian, Nordic, European and World Championships in skiing, and a number of local competitions in schools, villages and towns.

We have dwelt quite a bit on skiing in this section, and it is the most popular winter sport in Norway. Yet, *skating* is popular, too, especially speed skating amongst boys and adolescent males. Ice dancing is popular amongst girls and ice halls have been built to extend the season beyond the winter months. *Ice hockey* is also a relatively common sport.

In the 1994 Winter Olympic Games, the Norwegian *Johann Olav Koss* won three gold medals and set three world records in skating. He became a hero and celebrity after that; helped by the fact that he donated a large amount of his prize money, and collected donations from others, to establish the charity *Olympic Aid*, which later changed its name to *Right to Play*. The organization has activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Pakistan its activities are especially benefiting Afghan refugees, IDPs and children affected by the earthquake in 2005.

In the summer season, from April to October, Norwegians are fond of all kinds of sports, such as football and handball, the two most popular genres

amongst men and women, and tennis, golf, sailing, rowing, various kinds of athletics, and so on. Cricket is not common in Norway as it is mainly a sport enjoyed in the Commonwealth countries. Sport is included in development aid activities, either as an end in itself, as a positive social activity, or as a means to achieve other goals, such as, for example, teamwork and respect for one another, irrespective of being winners or losers.

*There is an ongoing debate about the role of competitive sports versus sports and other physical exercise for recreation.* All kinds of sports and exercise are encouraged from school age throughout life for physical, mental, and social reasons. Competitive sports at top level have become quite exclusive activities, and often business aspects may count more than the sports aspects in what is supposed to be 'games'.

At the same time, the top sportsmen and women are also role models for tens of thousands of others, especially children and youth, encouraging them to take part in sports at all levels. We have mentioned Johann Olav Koss as one such role model. The two women marathon runners, *Grete Waitz* and *Ingrid Kristiansen*, are great role models for girls and women, the same way as *Sonja Hennie* was in the late 1920s and 1930s when she won three Olympic medals, ten World Championships, and dozens of other championships in *figure skating*. Together with her husband Niels Onstad, she established the Hennie-Onstad Art Centre at Høvikodden in Oslo, which opened in 1968.

The *Norwegian University of Sport and Physical Education* in Oslo has managed to shed light on many important issues in sports through studies and teaching of sports, including the role that sports play

in educational, health and other institutions, and in society at large.

## Culture

### • History and the Broader Context

Since the ‘cultural revolution’ in the 1960s, the definition of culture is much broader than it used to be. ‘Everything’ can be said to be culture, or to have cultural dimensions, the same way as politics can be said to include ‘everything’. However, in this book, we are not only modern, we are also old fashioned, focusing on the typical cultural sector as per a more traditional definitions of culture.

Norway is a small country, with a small population and Norwegians live in a few cities but mainly in towns and sparsely populated rural areas, in a remote corner of the world. Until recently, Norway was a relatively poor country, and could not afford huge amounts on elite culture, which would be enjoyed by relatively few, such as theatre, opera, orchestras, art museums, film production, etc. Today, Norway has a rich cultural life, including elite culture as well as popular culture. The broader cultural perspective is useful when trying to explain culture in Norway – and beginning to understand Norwegians.

It was not until 1827 that a professional theatre began performing in Norway, when Johan Peter Strömberg, a Swede, opened his theatre in Oslo (then named Christiania). *Den National Scene* in Bergen opened in 1876. The *National Theatre* in Oslo was opened in 1899.

*Henrik Ibsen's* plays influenced developments strongly, in Norway and all over the world. Together

with *Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson*, Ibsen dominated the Norwegian literary scene for half a century from the 1850s. Emphasis was on the tradition of *social awareness in literature*. Ibsen and Bjørnson played an active part in the political and cultural debate and they played key roles in Norway's important nation building process and the establishment of a true national theatre in the country – making Norwegians independent from Denmark's, and in particular Copenhagen's domineering position. Ibsen worked as ‘Theatre Poet’ at Den Nationale Scene for six years and he later became Director of the National Theatre in Oslo.

Since the *Norwegian and Danish languages* are very similar, and since Norway had been part of Denmark for four hundred years (1380-1814), Norwegian writers used to publish their works in Denmark. As we have mentioned above, unless it was particularly stated in a book published in Denmark, one think that it had been written by a Dane. As *Norwegian nationalism* grew, Norwegian writers became more and more concerned about this and it became politically and culturally important to establish good *publishing houses in Norway*. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the publishing houses Aschehoug Forlag and Gyldendal Norsk Forlag were bought back, termed ‘*hjemkjøpet*’, and Norway gained control over its own publishing industry, which was important to Norwegians, not least symbolically.

Let us underline that in the second half of the nineteenth century, Norwegians became increasingly self-conscious and began to appreciate their own cultural heritage, including folktales, rural building traditions, crafts, folk art, language, etc. However, it was not until recently that ordinary, working

class people's culture has begun to be given more positive attention, appreciating diversity and numerous sub-cultures, based, *inter alia*, on vocation, geography and gender.

To some extent, working class culture was valued earlier, but more as a way of describing inequality and hardship rather than being appreciated in itself. It was generally the bourgeoisie, the upper-middle and upper class culture that was taken as the sought-after norm.

In the years to come, as Norway has grown more multicultural and heterogeneous, immigrant cultures will form new sub-cultures and demand their space. They will enrich the traditional Norwegian cultural scene and they will compete for attention and recognition not only from their own folks but from the mainstream society and the cultural elite in Norway as well as their countries of origin. The annual *Mela festival*, held in Oslo in connection with Pakistan's Independence Day on 14th August, focuses on music and other arts from Pakistan.

Today there is general understanding in Norway of the importance of documenting and preserving the *Sami cultural heritage*, which was often greatly neglected in the past. Furthermore, there is a need to prepare basic documentation of the cultural heritage in the polar areas, with focus on Svalbard and Jan Mayen.

Greater interest and understanding in preserving whole communities or cultural environments and not only specific historic sites, buildings, etc., has developed in recent years. Architectural conservation remains a key sector, and many buildings and sites need constant maintenance, restoration and protection. The old wooden buildings, such as the

*stave churches* and other churches, and the wooden houses of the German harbour in Bergen, called '*Bryggen i Bergen*', are in this category. They are included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage, '*Riksantikvaren*', falls under the ministry dealing with *environmental issues*.

The Cultural Heritage Year 1997 was very successful, and it was soon decided that the second cultural year should be held, notably the *Cultural Heritage Year 2009*, and thereafter every ten years. It seems that Norway will place more emphasis on preserving and restoring *tangible cultural heritage* in the years and decades to come, and through that, there will hopefully be a growing interest in gaining knowledge about the related *intangible cultural heritage*. Cultural heritage is not only that of the magnificent and unique, not only the history of leaders and the upper classes, but indeed also the history of ordinary people. The theme of the Norwegian Cultural Heritage Year 2009 is *Cultural Heritage in Everyday Life*.

Tourism is well developed in Norway, and domestic as well as foreign tourists and other travelers enjoy the highly developed travel network and facilities throughout the country. It is important for tourists to come to a country and communities where the cultural heritage is well preserved, and also where communities are natural, living communities, not museums. There is greater understanding for these perspectives, in line with a new emphasis on *cultural diversity*.

Many Norwegians live in small communities and towns and in scattered settlements in rural areas as a result of deliberate policies. Farming

is subsidized so that farms can be viable, and without farmers, many small communities would be deserted except for a few summer months. This is often the case in Sweden where urbanization has gone much further than in Norway, making the countryside less pleasant for the few who live there and for tourists and other visitors. As seen from a cultural perspective, it is important to preserve and modernize local communities. Local inhabitants can do much of this themselves, with government and private sector support, including professional and expert advice when required.

### • Some Aspects of Present Day Culture

In an earlier section in this book, we explained the importance of Voluntary Organizations in Norway. Here, we will draw attention to a few aspects regarding *people's participation in cultural activities*. It is interesting to note that there are more women than men attending cultural activities, such as concerts, theatre and opera performances, movie theatres, etc. More women than men visit the public libraries. In 2007, there were some 17 million visiting the public libraries, 11-12 million visiting the movies and about 2 million visiting theatre and opera performances, concerts, museums and other exhibitions. Although women are more culturally active than men, more men than women attend sports events. The statistics also reveal that people with higher education are more likely to attend cultural activities than people with less education.

Traditional Norwegian arts and crafts are well known and appreciated by locals. 'Rosemaling' is a typical form of oil painting to decorate furniture, wooden bowls and other utensils and display items.

Although Norwegians often believe that 'rosemaling' is quite unique to rural Norway, its origin is actually continental Europe, especially France.

Norway experienced a golden age in painting in the nineteenth century, with famous painters such as *J.C. Dabl* (1788-1857). In the twentieth century, *Edvard Munch* (1863-1944) is undoubtedly the most famous painter, whose works are represented in galleries worldwide. Among Munch's most famous works are 'The Scream' and 'The Women on the Bridge'. Of contemporary painters, we can mention *Odd Nerdrum*, representing neo-romanticism.

*Gustav Vigeland* (1869-1943) is the most famous Norwegian sculptor. Over one hundred of his sculptures are displayed in the Vigeland Park, also known as 'Frognerparken', in Oslo. *Arnold Haukeland* (1920-83) was the pioneer of abstract sculptures in Norway. Today, there are a number of excellent younger sculptors, who will make their mark in due course, and there are excellent artists and designers in other fields, using all kinds of materials such as textiles, wood, stone, clay, metal, plastic, and combinations thereof. *Tone Vigeland* is an outstanding jewelry designer, *Kari Christensen* is a potter, and *Synnøve Aurdal* is a weaver. Many others could have been mentioned.

Let us also draw attention to Norwegian furniture design and architecture. 'Scandinavian design' has become a concept, emphasizing the simple and functional. Norwegian and other Nordic designers and architects are among the leaders in the world. Modern Finnish architecture is unique in its use of stone and (light) wood. The Danish architect Jørn Utzon designed (in 1957) the famous Concert House in Sydney, 'Australia's landmark'.

The Swedish furniture chain IKEA represents ordinary people's modern taste everywhere in the world, it seems. 'Snøhetta' is one of the most renowned Norwegian architectural firms. It won the contract for 'the world's oldest library' in Alexandria in Egypt, *Bibliotheca Alexandrina*, which was opened in 2001. It also designed the Opera House in Oslo, with a façade reminiscent of an iceberg rising from the sea, which was inaugurated in 2008.

Established theatre institutions are only found in the major cities. In addition, *regional theatres* were established in the 1960s and 1970s, giving professional performances in major towns in the region they cover. There are five such regional theatres in the country, in Tromsø, Mo i Rana, Molde, Førde and Skien.

*The National Traveling Theatre, 'Riksteatret'*, was established in 1948, based on a Swedish model. It gives highly professional performances all over the country. Central and local governments provide 80-90% of the costs, with a small amount from tickets sale, advertisements and other private sector support.

In a small country like Norway, few of the elite and high-level cultural activities would be possible without government support and deliberate policies. A number of *free theatre groups* were established in the 1960s onwards, following the 'cultural revolution' in the 1960s, as we termed it in the introduction to this section. Such experimental groups made considerable contributions and provided new ideas to the more traditional theatre but, unfortunately, most of the experimental groups could not continue operations due to economic problems.

*The Oslo Philharmonic* is the most famous

Norwegian symphony orchestra. *The Norwegian Chamber Orchestra* has also enjoyed international success. Ballet dance is a small genre within the performing arts.

Let us also mention *musicals* and *popular music*, with the pop group 'a-ha' having had great success. Pakistani- Norwegian artists include *Azhar Ali* and *Omer Bhatti*.

The most famous Norwegian opera star is *Kirsten Flagstad* (1895-1962). *Ingrid Bjoner* is another prominent singer in the classical Strauss-Wagner tradition. Others include, *inter alia*, *Edith Thallang*, *Ragnar Ulfung* and *Knut Skram*.

The *International Music Festival*, held in Bergen every year at the end of May, attracts top musicians. Performances are in *Griegshallen Concert Hall*, Edvard Grieg's home, 'Trolldhaugen', and other locations in Bergen and surrounds. Although *Edvard Grieg* is undoubtedly the greatest Norwegian composer of all time and well known internationally, the works of Ole Bull, composer and violinist, who was a contemporary of Grieg, also deserves mention. *Harald Sæverud* (1897-1992) is the most prominent Norwegian composer of the twentieth century. *Arne Nordheim* (born in 1931) is becoming even more famous, with his modern music performed all over the world.

In recent decades, a number of music and film festivals have seen the light of the day in Norway, such as the annual *Jazz Festivals in Molde and Kongsberg* and the *Film Festival in Haugesund*.

Since Norway has such a small population many cultural activities take place during the summer months when people are in a holiday mood and at a time when most tourists visit the country. Hence,



festivals play a key role in Norway's elite cultural life as well as the more popular music life.

Theatre, on the other hand, is rather an autumn and winter activity, although with lighter performances in summer. Recently open-air theatre performances have been staged, for example, at Oscarsborg in the Oslo Fjord south of the capital. Such performances have become very popular with Norwegians and tourists.

Norway, a small country belonging to a small language group, can obviously not compete with larger countries and larger language groups. Yet, Norway has managed to make a few films, which have received international acclaim, such as those made by the female directors *Vibeke Løkkeberg* and *Anja Breien*. *Ola Solum's* film, '*Orion's Belt*' also gained great international attention. A number of other films have gained great popularity with audiences at home, including '*Olsenbanden*', an entertaining series of films, which began appearing in the 1960s. Some of the best-known Norwegian theatre actors and actresses played the key roles in these much-loved films.

*Liv Ullmann* is probably Norway's most acclaimed and best known actress internationally. Her career includes films made in Norway, Sweden and the United States of America. She often worked with the famous Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman, her ex-husband. Liv Ullmann was a film director herself, *inter alia*, of her successful film entitled '*Kristin Lavransdatter*' (1995), based on Sigrid Undset's trilogy, which won the writer the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928. Liv Ullmann had a successful international (American) acting career and also authored important books, including '*Forandringen*'

(the Change). Liv and Ingmar's daughter, Linn, has followed in her gifted parents' footsteps, and became a respected writer at a young age.

It should be noted that in recent decades more women have entered cultural arenas that were earlier occupied mostly by men. This applies to film and literature in particular. In opera, too, some world famous women made their mark. Historically, though, men have dominated most of the cultural scene in Norway as in other countries.

In most cultural fields, it is useful to see the three Scandinavian countries together, although not quite as one country in spite of their languages being similar and quite well understood by the inhabitants of all three countries. Although there are distinct differences, the similarity of the three countries should be appreciated. In the years ahead, it is likely that the Nordic countries, to some extent with the Baltic States and other north European countries, cooperate more than in the past. This is probably also important to keep their identity and play a greater role in culture outside their home areas.

### **Christianity in Europe and Norway: From the Reformation Onwards**

The *Catholic Church* was unified until 1517 when Martin Luther, a Catholic Priest in Germany, established a separate and less rigid church, the *Protestant Church*, although he actually wanted changes from within rather than a separate branch. This watershed in the history of Christianity is called the *Reformation*. Some of the main principles of the Protestant Church, and the causes for its establishment, were: greater use of the mother tongue (not Latin) in the church services; less emphasis on

ceremony and more emphasis on preaching; and, in general, a more democratic attitude, including encouraging people to read and interpret the Bible themselves. However, the ordained pastors of the Protestant Church, as in the Catholic Church, have maintained most of the control under clergy leadership, although with elected committees of laymen and women. Furthermore, laymen have sometimes also established their own religious communities outside the quite academic state church. In Norway, such groups were particularly active in the beginning and middle of the nineteenth century, as part of the social-political awakening in the rural areas. '*Haugianismen*', after its leader Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771-1824) played a very important role, uplifting ordinary people and helping them with income generating projects at a time when the state church was losing its relevance. The contemporary '*charismatic movement*' has aspects resembling the lay movement and the many religious awakenings of the nineteenth century.

Protestantism became the official religion in Norway in 1536 when the King, in Copenhagen, decided that Denmark-Norway should belong to the Evangelical-Lutheran Protestant Church. There was no popular discussion about the issue. Norway had been a Christian, i.e. Catholic, country, since about 1000 when King Olav (Saint Olav) accepted Christianity and made it the common religion, taking the place of Norse Mythology. Force was sometimes used to convince ordinary people to accept the new religion, which took more than a century.

The Protestant Church has dozens of major sub-groups and denominations, and hundreds, if not thousands of further sub-groups. The Norwegian

state church, the *Church of Norway*, belongs to the Evangelical-Lutheran tradition, as stated in the Norwegian Constitution, with the Head of State, the King, as Head of the Church. The Church of Norway is closely related to the Anglican Church in the UK, the Methodist Church and, obviously, the dominant state/people's churches in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, and the Protestant churches in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. The Church of Norway's Bishops and Priests are civil servants.

The Protestant Church does not consider the Pope its head but there is respect for the Pope, the Vatican and Catholics in general, although Protestants consider themselves more modern and open-minded than the Catholic Church. It is probably correct to say that the Catholic Church is more orthodox, principled and intellectual than the Protestant Church, but then there are conservative Protestant groups, too, and in recent decades, new religious waves, such as the *charismatic movement*, which can be quite fundamentalist. Furthermore, in order to distinguish the two main branches of Christianity from each other, we should mention that the Protestant Church does not have *saints*, i.e. religious men and women canonized by the Pope, to whom people may pray, as Protestants consider it wrong to elevate people to such a high, almost semi-godly status, risking placing them between ordinary people and God.

When the Church split into two main branches at the end of the Middle Age we should consider that process in a broad religious-political perspective. Religion always belongs to the society it is a part of, and when there are major social, economic, cultural and political changes, religious and moral changes



follow; or religious leaders take part in the general debate and even initiate and spearhead change.

The Reformation was part of developments in the Church and State. Religion, i.e. Christianity, began to lose its authority as the *sole reference point* in the sciences and in people's intellectual thinking at a time of major inventions and explorations. There had long been a competition for power between the State and the Church. Yet, the role of the Church remained very important in people's everyday lives and as an institution of highest authority in religious, philosophical and moral fields until our time. The fact that the Church split into two main branches seems not to have weakened the Church, rather the opposite.

It is astonishing that the Church generally remained unified in the West without separate branches for more than 1500 years until the Reformation, with numerous thinkers and groups disagreeing on many issues through the centuries. Those who disagreed on major issues were prosecuted and many even executed. The theological thinkers in the Middle Age were often living and working in intellectual and religious houses called *monasteries* or *convents*, affiliated to major churches. They had to remain unmarried to be able to devote all their time to the Church. (Priests in the Protestant Church can, or rather 'ought' to be married.) The Church had over the centuries become very wealthy and could afford to have institutions where intellectuals spent all their time on studies, teaching, preaching, writing, and performing related tasks, including social work.

Many of the oldest European universities were established at the end of the Middle Age. Theology

and philosophy were usually key cornerstone disciplines, and were a continuation of the Church-related intellectual communities, but with the opportunity to question dogma and the often quite rigid and limited thinking of the Church. The process of greater intellectual and religious freedom was often full of conflict. Although thinkers questioned religious dogma and the world outlook, they were usually not non-believers, and they could not afford to be seen to be such thereby getting ostracized from the 'good society', or even persecuted. Blasphemy was not only a sin but also a crime.

Norway was not a central part in this debate and development. Besides, Norway was part of Denmark (the country's name was Denmark-Norway); the country's intellectual centre was in Copenhagen. Norway's first university was established as late as 1811 and opened for students in 1813, a year before Norway gained independence from Denmark. Cultural impulses traveled from central Europe through Denmark before reaching Norway.

Yet, Norwegians were seafaring people and also outward-looking. The Norwegian Missionary Society (NMS) was established in 1842 and Norway has a proud missionary history, sending missionaries, preachers, doctors, nurses, and social workers to Madagascar, Cameroon, India, and other countries. Generally, Norwegians were God-fearing and religious people, especially in the rural areas, on the coast, in the remote mountainous villages where they often lived at the mercy of the elements – and an almighty God. This was true until a generation or two ago, but today, Norwegians, along with most other Europeans, have become quite secular, giving religion less room in their daily lives, or so it seems.

## Christianity and Islam in Norway Today

### • Role of Religion and Debate about Issues

82% of Norwegians are members of the *Church of Norway*. Many of those who do not belong to the Church of Norway are members of other Christian denominations, and other religious and philosophical societies. *Islam* is the single largest religious group outside the Church of Norway due to the relatively large immigrant and refugee communities from Muslim countries, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Turkey, Morocco, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and other countries.

Only some 3% of the Norwegians go to church on a regular basis on Sundays. That leaves the many churches in Norway, built to give room for hundreds of worshippers, not only half-empty, but almost completely empty, often with congregations of no more than 30-40 people. How to encourage more people to go to church and take part in other religious activities is a major concern to the Church, although it may be too late to stem the tide.

Even if the Church does not have large congregations attending service on a regular basis, the Church is used by most Norwegians to handle certain important ceremonies in their lives, such as baptism, or Christening, which is the ceremony required for a person to become a member of the Church. This ceremony usually takes place when a newborn baby is a few weeks or few months old. Confirmation is still a major feast for most teenagers at the age of 14-15, and it is also a kind of initiation ceremony for the young entering adulthood. Most weddings are still administered by the Church, and an even higher percentage of funerals. Furthermore,

on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, the National Day of Norway on the 17<sup>th</sup> May, memorial services, and festive occasions, people throng to the churches. 40% goes to church at least once a year. Thus, although few Norwegians use the Church on a regular basis, the role of the Church still remains important.

It should be noted that the above generalizations apply to the general picture of the Church of Norway. There are many churches, which have active members, with sub-groups of different kinds, such as youth groups, Sunday school classes for children, etc., and there are many other denominations outside the Church of Norway, which have very active members, including the Catholic Church, in the larger cities, the Pentecost, etc., where there are also large groups of foreigners, for example, from the Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Latin American countries, and the United of America, who come from traditions where religion plays a more prominent role in people's daily lives.

Many people argue that it is an anachronism to have a *state church* in a well-developed democracy like Norway. However, it may also be appreciated that when the state, the secular power, oversees the activities of the Church, it becomes impossible for the Church to develop ultra-conservative and sectarian policies. It is the state's task to ascertain that the Church is all inclusive and acceptable for all citizens. The Head of State, the King, is also the Head and Protector of the Church of Norway. Hence, the King must be a Member of the Church of Norway.

Norway has a total of eleven *bishops*. The bishop in Oslo is '*primas inter pares*', first among equals, but

Norway does not have an archbishop. Norway has a Minister of Church often combined with another portfolio, usually Education or Culture. The Minister must himself, or herself, be a Member of the Church of Norway. The bishops, parish priests and other staff, such as deacons, social workers and others, are civil servants. They handle all day-to-day issues as well as policy issues, together with elected bodies of laymen and women. The government in cabinet appoints the new bishops, based on nominations made by the Church's highest elected body and all the serving bishops. There is quite a bit of public debate about nomination of candidates for bishop vacancies and the media presents and discusses the candidates and their views on various theological, social and political issues.

The first woman priest, *Ingrid Bjerkaas*, was ordained in 1963. She worked in a hospital, not as a parish priest. Today the Church has *three female bishops* out of eleven. Recently a few pastors who live in same-sex relationships have managed to remain in their posts (as they are civil servants) and these and other priests organize blessings of men and women in the congregation who live in similar partnerships, angering many who hold conservative religious views, and being welcomed by many others for inclusiveness. The Norwegian marriage law is now *gender neutral*. Many people think that the Church should not judge people but rather show special care for those who fall outside mainstream society, be it for sexual orientation or other reasons, and one could argue that this is in line with the true spirit of the teachings of Jesus.

Many Muslims have reacted strongly to the modern Norwegian society's (and the Church's)

acceptance of the secular marriage law, which recognizes homosexual partnerships. The state on its side, considering the law from a legal and human rights perspective, finds it unacceptable that mosques and other Islamic organizations actively work against the new law and propagate for illegal means to be used to change it, and withdraws government grants from those who do so.

Values and moral standards change over time. In Norwegian society today, there is great openness towards many issues. However, modern views may not be accepted, but rather tolerated, by the dogmatic sections of the Church and other religions. For example, a generation or two ago, it was difficult for divorced, and in particular, remarried pastors to gain employment in the Church, and it was sometimes also difficult to find a priest who would marry couples where one or both of the partners had been married before. In this field, the Christian tradition has been more restrictive than the Muslim tradition, where men have been allowed to divorce, or take another wife, without losing social status and moral standing. Divorced Muslim women have always faced great difficulties – and it is also true that it was and is more shameful for a Christian woman to be divorced than it is for a Christian man. The religions are not so different after all!

Today, the Norwegian judicial system permits women to decide on abortion (in the first four months of a pregnancy) without the Church or anybody else stopping them, or even asking them for justification. Many priests consider pro-choice, in Norwegian termed '*fri abort*', to be wrong, but the Church has not been able to reverse the law. Many pastors and other Christians accept the law, and

hope that the number of abortions can be reduced and that active information and other programmes can contribute to that. They take a practical and pragmatic approach rather than a principled approach.

Today, in the broad and inclusive people's church that forms the Church of Norway, the Church has had to adjust its teaching and does not always expect that people accept the dogma of the Bible literally. For example, many people may not believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus, or his ascension to heaven, both of which are Christian dogma. (In Islam, only Jesus's ascension to heaven is a dogma.) Modern theologians will teach that the important aspect is the message Jesus brought to people, the power of his words, and that specific miracles are of less importance. Modern theologians will explain that Jesus's message was so powerful that it lives forever and that that is the real religious meaning of resurrection and ascension and the entire faith.

Modern men and women may find it foolish to believe in dogma and teachings, which cannot be explained, or just feel that it is wrong to accept the Church's traditional teachings wholesale. People want to think for themselves. They want to consider and question religious teachings in the same way that they question other issues and values. This should not necessarily be mistaken for people being less religious, or taking issues casually and lightly.

*Helge Hognestad* discussed such issues in his doctoral dissertation in 1978, and it created uproar within the establishment of the Church. But he drew large crowds to his sermons, especially from liberal Norwegians, who would normally rarely go to church, but might quietly have an interest in religion

and ethics. Many people felt that in the present day the Bible should be interpreted in ways which people of our time can accept, without diminishing the importance of the Church and religion in general.

After some time, the 'Hognestad debate' became so heated that he had to leave his post as parish priest and devote his time to research. He has later only been a parish priest for short periods of time and has devoted his time to research as a '*statsstipendiat*'. Hognestad became a mouthpiece for liberal theology in Norway. In many other European countries, for example, in England, such liberal groups are quite large and common. However, the recent debate was by no means the first debate, for example, in the 1950s, Norway had a heated debate about how heaven and hell should be described. It was argued that the understanding of hell and the way it was described was outdated and did not go with people's general understanding of it. The concept should rather be understood in a figurative sense. Today, most theologians in Norway subscribe to this definition. In the future, we are likely to experience many debates about Christian dogma – and dogma in Islam and other religions.

### • Islam

Recently Norway has received relatively large groups of believers from other religions for the first time, especially Muslims. Today, some 10-15% of the inhabitants of Oslo are Muslims, and about two thirds of the approximately 80,000 registered Muslims in Norway live in Oslo and Akerhus counties. Very few Muslims live in small towns and rural areas. The number of registered Muslims excludes many people of Islamic background who

have not registered as members of a mosque. In Muslim countries it is not common to have membership registration. In Norway, government support is allocated to religious organizations on the basis of membership. Scholars estimate the number of people of Islamic background in Norway is in the range of 120-150,000. Most Muslim immigrants have come to Norway from the late 1960s onwards.

The largest groups of Muslims originate from Pakistan, Iraq and Somalia, with sizeable numbers from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iran, Turkey, Morocco, and Afghanistan. About 500 non-immigrant Norwegians have converted to Islam. When a woman marries a Muslim man it is common that she converts to Islam, either for the marriage ceremony or permanently. There are about one hundred registered Muslim congregations in Norway, with the northernmost mosque in the world to be found in the city of Tromsø. The first purpose-built mosque was opened as recently as 2005. There is no Muslim school in Norway.

*Islamic Council Norway (ICN)*, 'Islamsk Råd Norge', is the umbrella organization for the diverse group of mosques. ICN and the mosques are essential to Muslim religious life and they play important roles for immigrants and other Muslims in the country in religious and cultural fields.

There are some other Muslim organizations in Norway, including the *Islamic Women's Group Norway*, 'Islamsk Kvinnegruppe Norge', initiated by the Norwegian convert Nina Torgersen in 1991. The *Muslim Students Society*, 'Muslimsk Studentsamfunn', was established at the University of Oslo in 1995.

It is important to Norwegians to learn to live

with people of other faiths, and to learn about what the teachings of Islam and other religions are. In general, Muslims know more about Christianity than Christians know about Islam, but the knowledge is shallow. Norwegian society, especially the education system, mass media and religious institutions ought to work more deliberately to create greater understanding for and knowledge about other religions.

Norway and Norwegians, which for more than a hundred and fifty of years have sent missionaries to faraway countries, are likely to have an understanding for this, and due to most Norwegians having an openness to the outside world, Norwegians in general are likely to realize that their culture will be enriched from new diversity. However, to be realistic, most Norwegians will probably behave the same way as most Muslims behave; they will try to convince the others about their misconceptions, and out of concern try to explain what the correct interpretation of God's word should be.

The co-operative body for Christians and Muslims in Norway is called the *Contact Group for the Inter-Church Council of the Church of Norway and Islamic Council Norway*, 'Kontaktgruppa for Mellomkirkelig Råd for Den norske kirke og Islamsk Råd Norge'.

It is often claimed that in Europe in general, and in particular in the Nordic countries, religion is disappearing. At first glance, this may seem correct, and it is true that peoples' daily lives are very secular. However, the lack of religion in peoples' daily lives may also lead people to feel and express their need for the presence of religion in new and undogmatic ways. In Scandinavia, this may well be the case.

Besides, how do we really know if people are, or aren't religious? In Norway, personal belief is seen as a very personal and private issue,

Norwegians are very concerned about values; moral and ethical issues, which derive from Christianity, other religions, humanist thinking, political ideologies, especially socialist ideas, and ordinary common sense about what is fair and right. Norwegians are very good at deciding what is fair, for themselves and for others, and the Swedes probably place even more emphasis on such principles. Everybody must have equal rights and feel they have the same value. The *universal human rights* are seen to be very much alive and advocated at home and abroad, including through development aid, the United Nations and other international work.

In Norway and the other Nordic countries, equality and fairness are key cornerstones in the fabric of society. Hence, many Norwegians will also be critical of right-wing political ideas and ultra-capitalist economic policies in developed and developing countries, making inequalities large and living conditions for the poorest intolerably bad. It should be admitted that even in Norway, we seem

to be more willing to accept some inequalities than we did a few decades ago, making Labour Party veterans feel that people are giving away rights they fought hard to achieve.

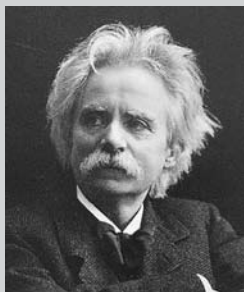
Are these values Christian, or Muslim for that matter, or just humanistic values and common sense about fairness? We would suggest that they incorporate a bit of all, but are to a major extent Christian, as Norwegians understand what it is to be Christian, or "culturally Christian", without dogmatic views and belief systems but with broad-based common religious understanding.

It is considered impolite to ask a Norwegian direct questions about religion, or whether he or she is a personal Christian. Although Norwegians are relatively open in conversations and dealings with others, they are at the same time quite reserved and private about many issues, and one such issue is religion and personal belief. Most Norwegians, especially men, feel shy discussing their religious beliefs with others, even their closest family members and friends.

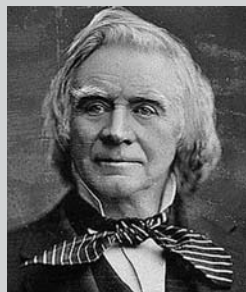


## Box 21: Composers and Writers

- You did know that Edvard Grieg and Ole Bull are Norwegian composers? And that the great Jean Sibelius (1865-1957) is Finnish?
- August Strindberg and Selma Lagerlöf are the best know Swedish writers. Lagerlöf won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1909, and a Norwegian woman, Sigrid Undset won it in 1927.
- For the younger readers in Sweden and all of the world, Astrid Lindgren is much loved, and nobody can compete with Denmark's H.C. Andersen and his many beautiful and often sad, human stories.
- The first Nordic writer was the Icelandic historian Snorre Sturlason (1189-1241).  
The best-known recent Icelandic writer is Halldor Laxness (1889-1975), who was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1955. It is said about the Icelanders that it is a matter of self-respect that every person writes a book in his or her lifetime.
- The Norwegian Henrik Ibsen is the world's most performed playwright after William Shakespeare.



Edvard Grieg



Ole Bull

## Box 22: Christian State

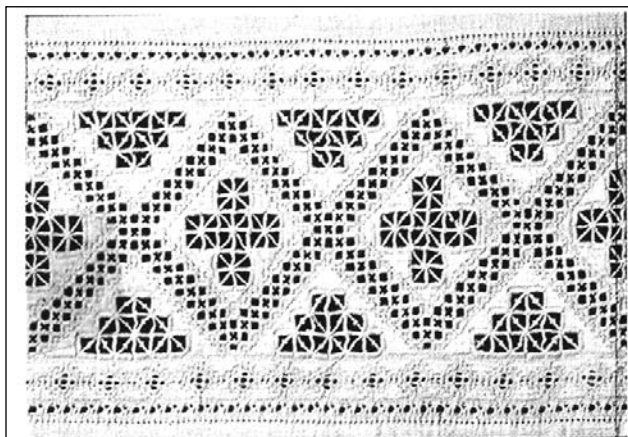
The Norwegian Constitution (1814) states that Norway shall be a Christian state. The King shall be the Head of State and the Protector and Head of the Church of Norway, the Evangelical-Lutheran Protestant Church, which is the state church. The rule that at least half of the Cabinet members must be members of the state church is about to be changed. The bishops, pastors and other staff members of the Church of Norway are civil servants.

- However, there is religious freedom in Norway and people may choose to belong to any religious society, or none at all. Today, there are about a hundred Islamic congregations in Norway.
- The world's northernmost mosque is in Tromsø. With long days and a few months of midnight sun in summer, and equally short days and total winter darkness, special timing for fasting during Ramadan must be found.
- Muslim associations as well as other religious associations outside the Church of Norway, receive government support.
- Islam is the largest minority religion in Norway outside the Church of Norway. However, only some 2.4% are Muslims while about 82% belong to the Evangelical-Lutheran Protestant Church and some belong to other independent (free) church denominations, other religions, the non-religious humanist-ethical association and the atheist association.





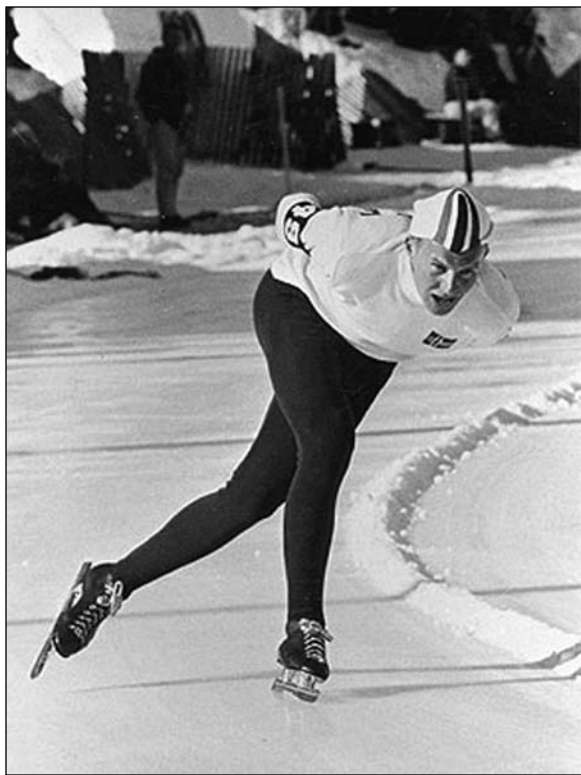
*Rorås Church is the third largest church in Norway with 1600 seats, built in from wood in 1784. Rorås town has been included in UNESCO's World Heritage List.*



*The Hardanger technique is a form of cutwork that originated in Italian Renaissance embroidery. It has been used in Norway since the 17th century for altar cloths, etc.*

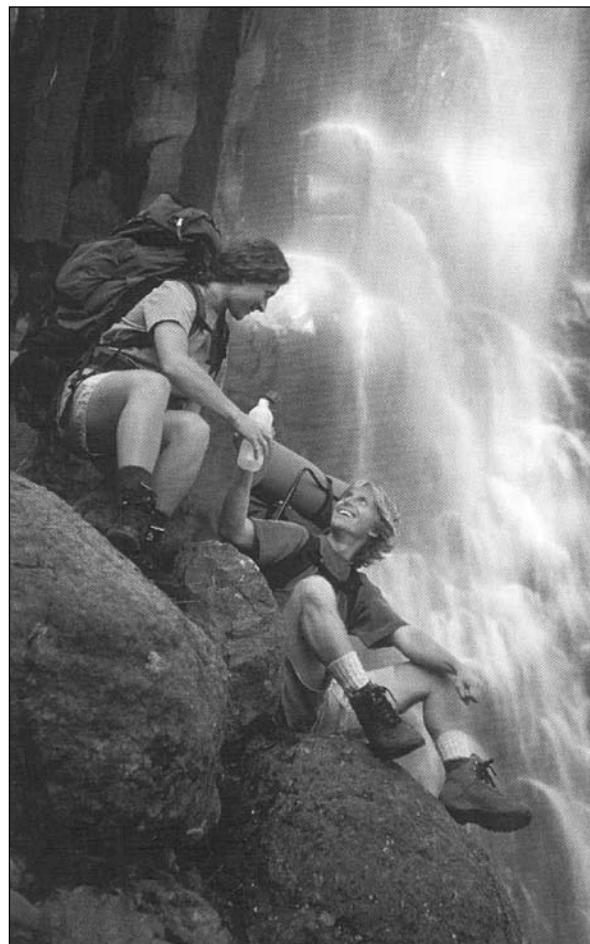


*Norway is famous for knitted sweaters and other warm winter garments. Many designs are indeed unique to Norway, while others are international, and some designs can even be found in Pakistan.*



Knut Johannessen, nicknamed “Kupper’n” (top left) and Hjalmar Andersen, “Hjallis” (bottom left) were living legends in speed skating in the 1950s and 1960s. When the major sports events took place, young and old were glued to their radio sets before TV had become common. Johann Olav Koss is a more recent skating hero. He excelled in the Winter Olympic Games in 1994, held in Lillehammer, Norway, with no less than three gold medals.

Sonja Henie (top right) is in a class of her own with three gold medals in the Winter Olympic Games in the 1920s and 1930s and ten times World Champion. Grete Waitz (below left) and Ingrid Kristiansen (bottom right) are also in the top league of sportswomen.



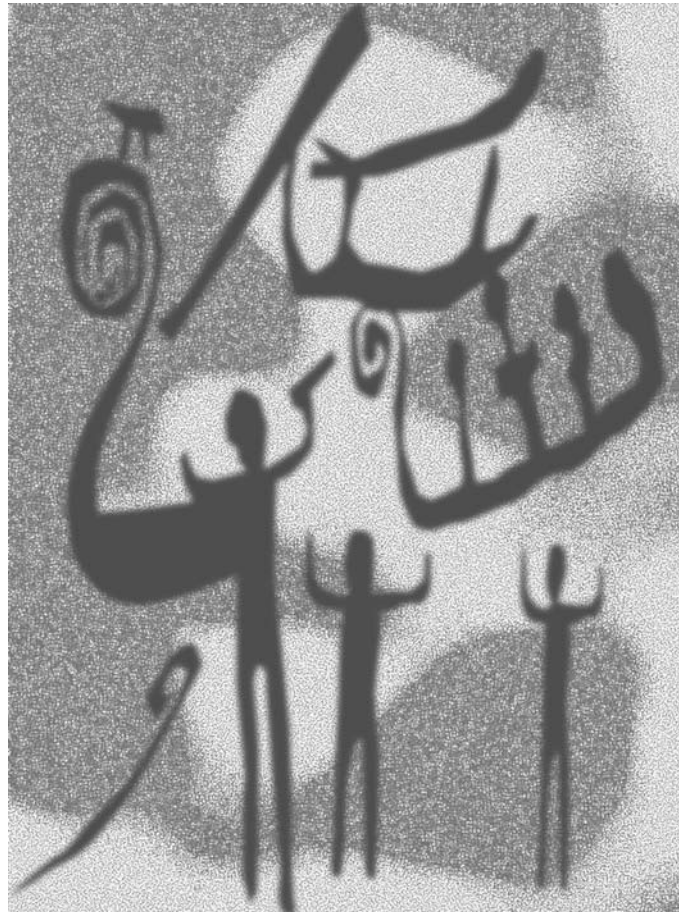
*Norwegians feel close to nature and are generally environmentally concerned. Sports and outdoor activities form part of most people's life and spare time activities, especially young people. Many Norwegians seem to live by the wise saying "Sound mind - Sound body". Norwegian sports heroes and heroines are role models for the youth and many sportsmen and women take part in social work and other good causes following their sports careers.*





# Chapter 7

## Traditions, Customs, Identity and Food





Most churches in the Norwegian countryside are made of wood, usually with white painted clapboard and a spear. The medieval 'stave churches' like the one in this photo belong to the country's cultural heritage.

# Traditions, Customs, Identity and Food

## Traditions, Customs and Identity

- **History and foreign influence**

People who know Norway and the Norwegians well will know when something is typically Norwegian and when somebody behaves in a typically Norwegian way, but to describe and define it is quite another thing. Besides, many Norwegians are probably not very typical and we are also beginning to become more multi-cultural. A Norwegian social anthropologist, Anders Johansen, states that 'the Norwegian culture is not very Norwegian'. How true Johansen's analysis is, will certainly be debatable, and how Norwegian the Norwegians are, will vary from person to person, from group to group, and even the same person may change from one situation to another. However, the anthropologist points to the fact that Norway has been influenced from abroad, perhaps more than many other countries – and that Norwegians themselves are not quite aware of it.

Let us use *Aunt Helga* as an example. She cannot imagine celebrating Christmas without the traditional Norwegian '*pinnekjøtt*' dinner, i.e. smoked mutton ribs, boiled with ash sticks and served with mashed rutabaga and boiled potatoes. Yes, we can agree, it is delicious! But the same aunt Helga does not want to move to a better apartment in her neighbourhood until they get cable TV connection in that block because she wants to watch English and other foreign TV channels. On Sundays, aunt Helga goes to church, but only 3% of Norwegians do that. It would be more typical if she went for a long walk in the woods. But then, maybe she finds time to do

that as well? She is also going to read the newspaper and log into internet and check a couple of other papers. Norway is technologically advanced and soon almost all homes will have internet access.

Many Norwegians own a modest, second country home, which they call cottage, '*hytte*', often in the mountains or on the coast, and they go there as often as they can over the weekend and during holidays. '*Å dra paa hytta*' is actually quite typically Norwegian, and it gives people a chance to be close to nature, be outdoors and also get physical exercise, which the health conscious Norwegians find a duty. We also exercise to look healthy and to avoid getting overweight. In summer, it is important for the young Norwegians to be suntanned. It is a symbol of good health. Norwegians and other Scandinavians are good looking; the ideal men are tall and muscular and the dream women are blond and sexy, at least in popular Swedish films from the 1960s onwards.

Many Norwegians actually look down upon city dwellers and would themselves rather be seen as practical, down to earth rural folk. Furthermore, it is important for the identity of a Norwegian to come from and have roots in a particular village or town in Norway, and speak the particular dialect of that village or town. Children who have grown up in several places in Norway, or who have lived abroad, may feel that they lack an important aspect of what makes them '*skikkelig norsk*', real Norwegian.

We should recall that Norway is part of Europe and the Western culture and cosmology. This is a truism but it is probably necessary to spell it out, since Norway is a remote part of Europe and the



world, felt much more in earlier centuries than today, and much more in inland valleys than in coastal settlements.

As we have already mentioned, the larger European countries as well as immediate neighbours have influenced many of Norway's customs and traditions, and its culture in general. A few hundred years ago, France and Germany were standard setting, especially for the leading upper classes, many of whose values trickled down to the middle and lower classes in due course. France was the leading country worldwide. Germany was also very influential. Later, Great Britain became more dominant. Other European countries and certainly the USA have also influenced the 'old world', including Norway, either directly or via other countries. Today, English is the first foreign language in Norway as it is in most other countries in the world. The popular culture everywhere borrows from the English-speaking world. German language is seen as less important today than just a few decades ago. Spanish may well take over from French as the second 'lingua franca', or maybe it will be Chinese?

*Cultural borrowing* is common. Small countries are usually more open to borrowing than larger countries, which prefer to influence smaller ones rather than learning from them. Everybody embraces new technological inventions, such as computers and mobile phones, or advances in medicine. Little heed is given to where the inventions and advances come from. Today, new developments often take place because people from many countries and companies co-operate.

Many things that Norwegians consider typically Norwegian may actually be the result of cultural

borrowing and influence from foreign countries, adapted and changed over time. Take, for example, '*rosemaling*', rose painting, a popular form of decorating furniture, doors, cupboards, chests, bowls, and so on. This originates from France and elsewhere in continental Europe. 'Rosemaling' was more common in homes of well-to-do families than amongst the average, relatively poor Norwegian farmers a few hundred years ago. However, the fashion spread and now we find it to be typical of old, Norwegian farm culture. Most Norwegians admire 'rosemaling' and other aspects of the tangible rural culture, displayed at Norwegian folk art museums, such as the beautiful *Norske Folkemuseum* at Bygdøy in Oslo, or *Maihaugen*, Lillehammer. Rose painted wood items are among the most popular items you find in Norwegian souvenir shops, together with wooden '*trolle*', carved Vikings with helmets with cow horns - never mind that the Vikings never decorated their helmets with horns!

Much of what we consider typically Norwegian was defined after Norway's independence from Denmark in 1814, and during the awakening of Norwegian nationalism, including the period known as '*nasjonalromantikken*', the national-romanticism, in the nineteenth century, with the golden age of Norwegian literature, painting, history, linguistics and other cultural, social and political fields. Sometimes, better off people from the cities traveled to rural villages and small towns where they found tangible and intangible culture, which they thought valuable and worth preserving. Local people might well have known that the origin of much of it was the result of influence from outside, often having arrived for economic and other reasons. Culture represents

class, vocation, geographical background, and so on, and it often has religious symbols, which in Norway mostly means Christian symbols.

Norwegians often see themselves as being very homogenous and living in a country where there is great equality. Historically, this was to a great extent a myth. Maybe the class differences were not as big in Norway as in some other European countries, but there were still differences between the rich and the poor, the big farmer and all the small farmers, and indeed the farm worker. And there were differences between the businessman in the city and the rural shopkeeper, the ship owner and the many Norwegian sailors, the owner of a motorized fishing boat and all those fishermen who only had a rowboat, with a supporting sail. In Norway, people in different parts of the country always feel a bit different.

When the union between Norway and Sweden was dissolved in 1905, there was no discussion about changing the border between the two countries. However, the culture in the lowland and valleys in eastern Norway, including the capital and the Oslo fjord towns and settlements, was probably much more similar to the Swedish culture, on the other side of the border than, say in the west coast city of Bergen or coastal North Norway.

Some Norwegians are quite like Swedes and Danes as Norway was part of Denmark for 400 years, and after that followed the union with Sweden for close to 100 years. And what about the German influence in the Middle Age? There has been a lot of influence from neighbouring and nearby countries. Proof of this is, for example, all the foreign surnames you find in Norway. Well, those that are still left because a couple of generations ago it was

popular to change such names, especially the Danish surnames. Many Norwegians took more typically Norwegian names; often farm or place names. But the German names from earlier centuries have mostly stayed, with Norwegian spelling if required, and they are considered prestigious names.

- **Lack of self-esteem**

Norwegians must not be smug and sophisticated. They should strive at being modest and ordinary and not think highly of themselves either, according to *Janteloven*, a popular guide to Norwegian behaviour.

Norwegians have often suffered from lack of self-esteem, or what in Norwegian has been known as *'busmannsånd'*, cotter mentality. They have felt less clever and more mundane than their Scandinavian neighbours, not to speak of the French, British, and Americans, including Norwegian relatives 'over there'. A similar mentality also exists between urban and rural Norwegians. Rural Norwegians in general have often felt looked down upon, and people from North Norway were often discriminated against in the past, in particular the Sami minority.

Norwegians' lack of self-esteem is a double-edged sword, because Norwegians in general, and people from remote rural areas and towns, are also *proud of their own culture, language and customs*. Besides which people in remote villages often catch up with the latest developments and international fashions faster than people in the big cities, who may feel complacent and self-sufficient and in no hurry to change. In recent decades, after Norway became a rich oil producing country, complacency is seen more often than before, and it is not very becoming

for people who are otherwise quite down to earth.

- **Changing habits**

Daily habits and ways of socializing vary for people in different cultures and sub-cultures. Today, differences are getting smaller as we move closer to a universal urban, middle-class culture with many similarities everywhere in the world. To a great extent, ways of socializing have to do with material and economic conditions, and a number of other social and cultural factors. Often, it is difficult to describe and pinpoint what it is that makes ways of socializing different for different cultures and sub-cultures. We know how to behave in our own culture but it is difficult to explain many aspects to others. And we also notice differences in other people's behaviour, and can say that he or she must be a foreigner. "They just look American", we may say, knowing that it is a pretty sweeping generalization.

There are typical ways that many Norwegians behave and ways they socialize, which are quite unique, and they help define the Norwegians. Let us try to disclose some of them. But before we do that, let us mention that there are immigrants and other newcomers to Norway who only adopt parts of the 'typical' Norwegian habits and ways of socializing. In a multi-cultural society, which the larger Norwegian cities are beginning to become, it is also important to allow and welcome 'new Norwegians' to feel proud of their own backgrounds.

- **Informal Norwegians**

Norwegians and people in the Nordic countries in general, are very informal, especially in the rural areas and small towns, and certainly in North

Norway. The polite form of the personal pronoun is hardly ever used any more, and titles are rarely used, not even in relatively formal meetings and seminars. In high-level, formal meetings, titles and the polite form of the personal pronoun may be used when a person is first introduced. At the same time, the friendly and informal tone is full of unwritten rules, and it is not always as informal as it seems.

At schools, children refer to their teachers either by the teachers' first name or, the first and second name, and when speaking directly to the teacher, they would simply say '*du*' (you). At lower level, a female teacher may in some parts of the country be called '*froken*', which literally means 'Miss'. (Recall then that when independent women a few generations ago wanted work, teaching was one of the few respectable professions, and since women teachers became economically independent, many of them did not marry, hence, the term 'Miss'.)

In general, there is lack of 'protocol' in Norway and Norwegian children themselves may sometimes find it a bit difficult to address their teachers directly in a way that is both friendly and respectful. The same uncertainty can be found amongst adults. The way staff at work address their superiors seems to lack some protocol and standards. In the course of the last couple of decades, it has become common to use first name among colleagues at work. Sometimes both first and second name are used, hardly ever, just the second name. Younger staff often use first and second names of more senior colleagues in higher posts who are significantly older.

Sometimes, the informal ways of addressing and talking about colleagues can be quite surprising. The mother of a young staff member at a Norwegian

Embassy in Africa was very surprised to hear her daughter using the first name only when she spoke about the ambassador and other senior staff at the embassy. She wondered if her daughter was being a bit cheeky. She was glad, therefore, to hear that when her daughter changed to English, the tone usually became much more formal and ‘correct’.

- **Formal Norwegians**

When Norwegians travel by bus, train or other public transport to and fro to work, they don’t usually talk to other travelers unless they know each other already. This is especially the case in Oslo, where a newspaper or book, or just a time for reflection, are the most common travel companions. In smaller towns and villages, there is usually more easy communication, and in some cities, too, such as Bergen. Bergeners are known for enjoying a good conversation, a joke and a debate. Why not also engage a fellow traveler?

When Norwegians arrive at work in the morning, they usually engage in short conversations with colleagues; often as they collect the universal cup of coffee (mostly black, without sugar) or cup of tea (mostly with no milk or sugar). The lunch break is usually only a brief half-hour, counted as part of the working day, so the conversations in the cafeteria can only be short at that time, and are often about sports, TV programmes, politics, children, etc. The lunch break is often also used for quick errands if there are shops or public offices nearby. Many colleagues also enjoy their home made, and maybe microwave-heated sandwiches, in their own office, alone with a newspaper, or together with a colleague or two. Recently smoking has only been

allowed outdoors, and Norwegians don’t try to cheat whatever the weather.

- **Old habits die hard**

Norwegians know that some of their habits are out-dated and they may feel slightly embarrassed if outsiders notice – especially if the Swedes make fun of some of the Norwegian ways of doing things such as the Norwegian habit of carrying a couple of homemade sandwiches in a lunchbox to school or work while the Swedes, having become wealthy a long time ago, have developed the continental tradition of having a warm meal for lunch, in a cafeteria or a restaurant.

Although Norwegians may be proud of their own culture while in the hometown or village, they may be more hesitant about advertising it when they travel to other wealthier and presumably more developed parts of the country, the larger cities and the capital. These attitudes and ways of behaviour vary by county, town, profession and so on, yet there is still some truth to them.

In one field Norwegians have become more confident in our generation; notably in using their own *dialects* when they travel. Today, you can hear the hundreds of Norwegian dialects spoken everywhere, at any occasion and used by people of any profession and trade. Thus we should not make the mistake of concluding that someone speaking a rural dialect must be ‘uneducated’, a ‘simple factory worker’, or a ‘farmer in town’. On the other hand, whether this is good for the preservation and development of the Norwegian language is another question.

It should be mentioned that *Norwegians are quite*

*particular about many of their habits*, which are based on long tradition and custom. One such habit, or 'national ritual', is to go for walks, '*gå tur*', which is especially common among city dwellers, typically mid-morning on Sundays. The earlier you rise and the longer you walk, the more Norwegian you are! Hiking in the mountains is considered better than a stroll along the city pavements. If you don't find time for a Sunday walk at all, you'd better find a very good excuse to tell your neighbours, or your colleagues at work the next day. In winter, you should not just go for a walk, but you should go on cross-country skis!

In general, *sports and physical exercise* are considered good activities, enjoyed by most Norwegians. During the Easter holiday in spring, for example, 'young and successful' Norwegians should go skiing in the mountains. This has also become a 'national ritual' and statistics show that up to a third of the inhabitants of Oslo leave the city at that time of the year when there is a week's holiday. However, many probably travel to the countryside or other towns and cities to visit relatives, not to go skiing, or to the coastal areas to open their vacation house for the summer season, or make the boat ready for use after the long winter.

When it comes to *eating habits*, Norway is well equipped with its own traditions, and foreigners will soon realize that it is not only the French – and Pakistanis and Afghans – who should be seen as being over sensitive to what they eat and when, and how the food is prepared, down to quite minute details. However, Norwegians are not as rigorous in their food habits as they used to be. Typical food habits and traditions are related to the major

Christian feasts, especially Christmas, with variations from one location to the other.

Alcoholic beverages such as beer and wine are getting more common, but traditionally alcohol was only served at special occasions, and in many homes it was never served. At dancing parties and similar gatherings, especially during weekends, many teenagers and other young people drink too much alcohol. The authorities try to reduce consumption through high prices and in other ways. There are strict penalties for drunk driving. Cigarettes, too, are very expensive and only about 20% of Norwegians are smokers.

The way people live influences their ability to maintain customs and traditions. In the cities, most Norwegians live in *apartments*. Older apartments for ordinary people are quite small, while apartments and semi-detached houses in the suburbs are larger, and often built more recently. Outside the cities, most Norwegians live in good, modern *one-family houses*, well insulated and heated, and easy to maintain. A Norwegian 'standard house' is different from a Swedish or American house, not so much in construction but rather in size and house plan. Norwegian houses have small bedrooms, often without separate heaters, but still warm enough for sleeping, and a large sitting cum dining room and a separate kitchen. Most one-family houses in the countryside are one-story, or one and a half storey wooden houses with a basement, with a living space in the range of 120-150 sq meters.

The typical older houses from the middle of last century are chalet style houses. In recent decades, it has become common to furnish a large basement room, with a wood burning stove or sometimes an

open fireplace. This room is used for parties and as an activities room for children and teenagers. In more recently built homes, there are two bathrooms, but otherwise there is usually only one bathroom in most homes, possibly with an additional toilet. In most one family houses, in-door bathroom with toilet became common only from the 1950s. At the same time, refrigerators began to appear, and then in the 1960s, TV. We should recall, that the 1950s and 1960s were the decades when large numbers of women began to take up work outside the home as housework became less time consuming, and children began going to school for longer hours.

Time and cost are key factors when people change habits. Today, people are very conscious about how they spend their time. Housework, for example, should not take too much time. In Norway, average is less than an hour per day. People opt for frozen and canned food, which they just warm up and serve with boiled potatoes and some vegetables, and since rice and pasta are easier and quicker to prepare, the potatoes are even getting less common. Just a generation ago, most Norwegians would not feel that they had eaten a decent meal if a day passed without at least one meal with boiled potatoes as the main staple. Bread, too, especially brown bread is a must in most Norwegian households, but is not usually eaten with potatoes!

### **Towards a multicultural Norway**

Soon the immigrant population in Norway will be 0.5 million, and well over half of the immigrants come from countries and cultures further away than Europe and North America. The Pakistani and Turkish immigrants, the Afghan and Somali

refugees, and many other groups, have arrived and settled in Norway in recent years. They bring with them their own traditions and cultures. Over time they borrow aspects from each other's cultures, for example, Muslims may borrow from people from other Muslim countries. They adopt a lot from their new homeland, especially the children and teenagers who go to Norwegian school. After a generation or two, they become Pakistani-Norwegians, Turkish-Norwegians, Afghan-Norwegians, Somali-Norwegians, and so on. Often, they are probably much more Norwegian than they realize, and yet they also want to keep traditions from their country of origin, or their parents' home country.

In a few generations, many immigrants may be assimilated into the Norwegian culture. However, in our day and age, when large numbers of people immigrate and settle in far away countries, it is not likely that distinct ethnic groups and cultures will be assimilated, and in most cases they should not be entirely assimilated.

### **Pakistani thoughts about Norwegians**

When preparing this section of the book we interviewed a large number of Pakistani-Norwegians and Pakistanis who have friends and relatives in Norway. Below, we summarize a few observations made by a handful of the respondents. They help us in describing what it is that is typically Norwegian. (We have changed names to ensure privacy.)

**Mohammad Murad** says that Norwegians are generally decent and genuine people, not at all into pretences. "They take time to get around, but they have the potential of becoming good friends." He has known Norwegians for many years and he adds



that he has noticed that Norwegians are not just polite for the sake of it, which, he says is common to people in many Asian countries, but it doesn't mean anything. "It just shows that someone has good manners. Norwegians, on the other hand have told me that they find it almost dishonest to be polite, or agree with someone, if they don't mean what they say. They say that it smells of urban salesman's behaviour."

**Professor Mariam Chaudhry** says that she has found Norwegians to be good friends and colleagues. It takes a while to develop a good relationship, but once you have done that you know where you stand. "I have visited Norwegian university colleagues in Oslo many times and I have been impressed by the energy and dedication people have. They resemble Pakistanis in the Northern Areas, I think".

**Ali Khan** works for an NGO in Pakistan, and he too is of the opinion that Norwegians are quite reserved, sometimes even formal. "It takes time to get to know them."

We suggest that they sometimes think they know things better than others. "No, I disagree entirely", Ali Khan says. "They are not arrogant in any way and they don't think highly of themselves. I'd rather say that they lack self-confidence", he says.

Based on his work experience, Ali Khan says that Norwegians are process oriented, taking their time at tasks rather than just looking for quick results. "I have also found that they are quite concerned about details, sometimes to the extent of losing sight of the actual goal for some time, until they get back on track. "This is positive", he says, "because it gives everybody a possibility to gain greater understanding and see different aspects of the tasks at hand."

We suggest that Norwegians are known for short intensive all out efforts and then take it easy until another major task needs attention. "I don't know if this is typical for Norwegians, but we say it is typical for Pakistanis", he says.

**Dr. Kamran Qureshi** on the other hand, who was a student in Norway for many years a decade ago, thinks that Norwegians think they are the best in the world! "They just think so because they have often not inter-acted much with foreigners and seen much of the world", he claims. "But when I traveled with Norwegian students to England and Italy, I noticed that Norwegians were very impressed by the infra-structure and other things they saw abroad."

"Still, I think Norwegians feel very comfortable in their own land and in their own skin", Kamran says. "Sometimes I thought that they disliked foreigners, who had come to 'disturb them', I guessed, or wanted to change their way of life. I don't think they wanted anything to be changed. In a way I can understand them, too: They have a beautiful land with fantastic nature. Norwegians are very much appreciative of that and they are great environmentalists. It is peaceful and quiet. They have a well-organized society in all ways. Yes, I think people can have a good life in Norway, without changing much", Kamran Qureshi says. "But then Norwegian politicians and leaders in the private sector want something more. They want Norway to be a major player in development aid and other international fields. And Norwegians have to invest their oil money wisely, too. They have to change and cooperate more closely with the rest of the world."

**Safia Kamran** says that Norwegians don't open up to foreigners. "Foreigners can easily notice that



most Norwegians are quite sceptical and almost hostile to foreigners.” She was a student in Norway, together with her husband over a decade ago. “I don’t think they mean to be impolite but many foreigners, especially from developing countries, can easily feel hurt when the Norwegians just want to stick to themselves. I am sure there are historical or other reasons for it, which can explain their reserved behaviour. One obvious reason is that the Norwegians have lived very sheltered from the outside world. Up until the late 1960s, very few Norwegians had seen a person with dark skin, for example, and they had little experience of dealing with foreigners, except for people from Sweden and Denmark, whom they don’t really consider foreigners”, Safia says.

**Farooq Asim** has lived in Norway since he was a schoolboy. He says that Norwegians in general are very good people. “Sometimes, I think they are as good as they get”, he says, and he admits that he feels really at home in Norway, perhaps even more than in Pakistan. We suggest that the Swedish are better than the Norwegians in many ways. For example, that they are more independent and hold their own opinions without letting others push them around. They are also more concerned about fair play and equality than Norwegians are. “Yes, I agree with those things”, he says, but we don’t think he would have believed it, after all he is a Pakistani-Norwegian, and more polite than average Norwegians!

“In recent years I feel that many Norwegians have become more *‘selvopptatt’*, *self-centered*, than they used to be. Everybody is so busy with his or her own things that they don’t even find time to visit their own parents and best friends. This leads to a

lot of *‘ensombet’*, *loneliness*, especially for older people in the cities. And it can lead to psychological and social problems for some. Perhaps the Norwegians can learn something from the Pakistani way of living and socializing?” Farooq Asim suggests. But he adds that it is probably too late to change the trend, and besides, “Pakistanis are getting more like the Norwegians”, he says.

**Ahmed Ullah** has dealt with Norwegians in Pakistan for many years. “I knew a Norwegian Pastor particularly well, who even served as Bishop, before he eventually retired and went back to Norway. He was a unique and very principled man to the degree of being stubborn. Sometimes he had his own agenda and forced his own opinion on the rest of us.”

“This was in NWFP and my Norwegian friend became like the other Pathan leaders, we used to say! He was a character, a good man and a good leader, but he could have listened a bit more to others.”

“I imagine he behaved like a strong-willed Norwegian could behave in a small town or rural community a generation or two ago. He belonged to the old school and his ways might have been more difficult to get away with today, in Norway and Pakistan. The old, Norwegian bishop remains a living legend and even now, over twenty years after he left, we keep asking what the Norwegian Bishop would have done in this or that case.”

## Food History from Jæren

Pater Kjell Arild Pollestad is a Catholic Priest from Norway. He grew up on a farm in Norway's rich agricultural region, Jæren, a rainy, windy and mild place, almost like a little piece of Denmark, situated south of Stavanger on the southwest coast of Norway. Pollestad is as rare and exotic to Norwegians as a *Molvi*, well, today a Molvi may perhaps be more common! But then the Catholic Church (with 54,000 members only, fewer than Muslims with 80,000) has a tradition for attracting intellectuals and unique personalities.

Pater Halvard Rieber Mohn was another rare species just before Pollestad, making the Church and religious debate in Norway more diverse and broad. Today, the Muslims have a chance to bring in new angles and views relevant in men's - and women's - search for God and high moral standards in our time.

Kjell Arild Pollestad is a Priest but in the text below, he writes about food as he remembers it from his childhood in Jæren. This is not theology, it is rather food and rural sociology or anthropology, and it is cultural history, too.

*"It was because of a family tragedy that Grandfather had come into possession of the old ancestral farm. In the 1920s, there had been a lot of stock-market "speculation", even among the well-off farmers. My great-grandmother's brother, who had taken over Hognestad, had made a fortune on the stock market. Then came the crash and bankruptcies, and the farm, which had been in the family since the Reformation, was in danger of being sold to strangers. Great-Grandfather, who was the oldest of the siblings, must have felt his parents turning in their graves. So he bought the farm and gave it*

*to my Grandfather, who was then in his early twenties; he had endured quite a bit of spanking while growing up and was easy-going. So he was never a real Jæren farmer, but he found a wife who was so capable that he himself had plenty of time to cultivate his passions: hunting and fishing, singing and trotting."*

*"Also he could cook, and the greatest delicacies, the kind that ignorant people throw out, always went to him: if there was cod, he would get the head; if there was a sheep's head, he would get the eyes. I can still see them before me lying on the plate, and looking quite disgusting in their blue, jelly-like half-transparency; but nor can I forget, either, the look of enjoyment on Grandfather's merry face as he slurped them down. He was the only person we knew who fished and ate eel; he fried them fresh and boiled them in salt. He helped scald the sheep's feet and heated up the flagstone when flatbread was to be made. In his entire life he never ate flatbread that wasn't homemade. I'm reminded of the big piles in the hayloft. Grandmother "sharpened" the flatbread in the oven before we ate it; I believed it tasted best when it was almost burned."*

*"On the afternoon of Christmas eve, the men in the family got together at Grandmother's and Grandfather's for sheep's heads and molje – this was flatbread covered with so much juice from the feet that it had to be eaten with a spoon. Then there'd be beer and shots of spirits in the middle of the day (and there was no danger of being pulled over for drunkenness on the roads). I was able to take part in all this after I turned twenty, but I'll readily admit that the honor was greater than the enjoyment: sheep's heads have never been a delicacy in my life. But Grandfather ate and laughed heartily at old jokes, while he looked forward to the huge cod head he would polish off that evening. And the two eyes!"*

Kjell Arild Pollestad: "Food in Rogaland", Gunnar Roaldkvam: "From open sea to open port.", in *Capital of Culture. Stavanger* 2008, p. 102.

### **Pakistani-Norwegians' impact on Food Habits\***

Today, I can smile about the situation, but when it happened, it was a very bad experience: I was very young sitting on an almost empty bus in Oslo one night in the early nineteen eighties. Two elderly Norwegian women started to speak loud about the only Pakistani young man on the bus. They stated again and again that he smelt badly of garlic, and both he and I looked down and tried to overhear the women's complaints about the smell. As far as I understood, he did not smell at all. I was the one! I had been eating garlic almost every day since the Pakistani-Norwegians introduced me to this heavenly taste. And that day, I had eaten a lot of garlic. Because I was young and shy, like the man on the bus, I did not say anything when they accused him so impolitely of smelling bad. However, he must have been used to such comments. The Pakistani-Norwegians, like people from other countries, smelled different, not only because of garlic, but all kinds of different foods, and the Norwegians did not understand that they also smelled because of food habits. At that time my brother used to say that he could smell garlic if I was home 100 meters before the entrance door. I have not heard him say so for many years. Garlic is now part of the Norwegian cuisine.

When the first few Pakistanis came to Norway in 1967 as migrant workers from a village in Kharian in Gujrat in Punjab, Norwegian society was culturally very homogenous. At that time we were eating fish and fish balls in white sauce, bread for breakfast and lunch, and boiled potatoes with salt for all kind of dinners. Only upper class people and people with international contacts had seen or tasted garlic. The

rest of us did not even know about the existence of garlic, ginger and spices other than the green ones and black pepper, we used for special dishes. Mostly spices were put on top of dishes, and not used during food preparation. Now I know better. The use of spices and oil in food changes so much of the taste.

About 40 years later 30,000 people with a Pakistani background live their lives, mostly in Oslo and nearby, in a very different society when it comes to many things, including food habits. Today, people from all the some 200 countries are settled in Norway and many more different languages are spoken.

Boiled potatoes are not on the dinner menu every day any more, but *if* eaten, potatoes are prepared in so many different ways. I love these changes! Norway is definitely a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society. And I have been so lucky to spend most of my life in interaction with the Pakistani communities, individuals and families both as a researcher and a friend. And what is very important when friends and family meet? Food!

Food is not only nutrition. Food *is* also a cultural concept. To eat is a matter of culture. Food habits are dependent on culture and will differ from different cultures. What we are eating, when we are eating, where we are eating, how we are eating and with whom we are eating are dependent on many factors, like socio-economic cultural factors. Religion is included in my concept of culture, and religious food taboos are important to know about. And of course, who is making the food and how different foods are prepared, or transformed into different dishes for different occasions and purposes, are

dependent on culture. However, culture is not static, but dynamic. What we eat etc. has changed in so many ways not only because of immigration, but *also* because of emigration. And immigrants have also changed their food habits, for worse and better.

Nowadays fish balls are not only eaten with white sauce (but I still like that, too), but with curry and other spices. When I was a child and the first Pakistanis came to Norway, we did not have access to many different spices, vegetables, fruits, rice, lentils etc. Pakistani woman complained that they could not prepare the food they were used to and the taste differed from Pakistani dishes in Pakistan. The prices on imported vegetables and fruit were high, and people had to spend time trying to find some of what they needed and wanted. Going to cafés and restaurants was very difficult before the nineteen nineties for Muslims and vegetarians, but now, halal dishes are available in many restaurants and good vegetable dishes are available everywhere. So what is the Pakistani-Norwegian contribution to

these changes?

The impact on Norwegian food habits has for instance to do with the following:

- Pakistani-Norwegian shops' import of vegetables, fruit, spices, rice, lentils etc. gave us all access to many new and different kinds of foods.
- The Pakistani-Norwegian restaurants did the same.
- The Pakistani-Norwegian friendships where Norwegians have been introduced to and offered Pakistani *khana*; Pakistani dishes.
- Noman Mubashir's TV programmes from Pakistan on Norwegian TV, and also his interest in food and productions of food programmes.
- Pakistani hospitality when Norwegians are visiting Pakistan.

\* **Torunn Arntsen Sajjad**, who is a Norwegian Social Anthropologist, has written this section. She works as a Researcher at NAKMI, Oslo, and has specialised in medical anthropology, with emphasis on health and nutrition issues related to the Pakistani immigrants in Norway.



## Norwegian Food Recipes

### • Mutton with Cabbage – Fårikål (Serves 4)

Mutton is popular in Norway, especially for stews, since it is tasty and easy to prepare. *Fårikål* is a Norwegian national dish.

- 1.5 kg mutton or lamb, with the bones, cut into serving-size pieces
- 1.5 kg garden cabbage, cut into segments
- 2 tsp salt
- 3-4 tsp black pepper
- Some whole pepper (peppercorns)
- 2 tbsp flour
- 3-4 dl water
- Parsley

Place the mutton and cabbage into layers in the saucepan, starting with the lamb. Sprinkle flour, salt and pepper between the layers. Pour water over it. Bring to boil and let simmer over low heat until meat is tender, which takes some 2 hours. (Add water and cabbage if more cabbage is needed.)

*Fårikål* should be served very hot, together with plain boiled potatoes, sprinkled with cut parsley. This dish is often served with beer and aquavit, or cold sparkling soft drinks. And the next day, when you serve the leftovers, just put the potatoes in the stew, making the dish resemble Irish stew.

### • Norwegian Meatballs – Kjøttkaker (Serves 4)

This dish is often known as mother's meatballs. It used to be a point of pride for newly married women to be able to make meatballs that were as good as those mother made. Today, young couples share the cooking, but meatballs are still popular. The dish competes with *Fårikål* for the top slot as Norwegian national dish.

- ½ kg minced beef meat
- 1 ground small onion
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp ginger and/or ½ tsp nutmeg
- 1 tsp potato flour

2.5 dl water

1 egg

Butter/margarine for frying

Parsley

Mix the minced meat with the spices, flour and ground onion, and add water a little at a time, and stir in the lightly beaten egg. Shape by hand and wet tablespoon fairly large meatballs and brown on both sides in a frying pan. Let the meatballs and some fried onion simmer in the gravy for at least 15-20 minutes so that they are cooked through.

Serve with plain boiled potatoes, sprinkled with cut parsley, boiled vegetables such as carrots, green peas and cabbage. Traditionally, it is common to serve with creamed cabbage or green peas (cabbage or green peas in white sauce). Add nutmeg/other spice, salt and pepper to taste. Norwegians often serve meatballs with cranberry (lingonberry) jam, but plum jam also does the trick.

### • Fish baked in Foil (Quantity depending on number to be served)

Fish (cod, red snapper, trout or other available fish)

Salt and pepper

Butter

Parsley

Carrots and other vegetables

Potatoes

Optional: Lettuce and cucumber salad, yogurt, flatbread

This recipe can be used for almost every type of fish. Norwegians would mostly use cod, but red snapper or trout is also delicious. You can use fillets or fish steaks. Make "one package" per person, or place all in one or two large foils.

Butter a piece of aluminum foil and place the fish on it. Season with a little salt, pepper and other spices you may like, chopped parsley, chives or dill. Add chopped onion, spinach, apple vegetables, leek rings, carrots and a dash of butter.

Seal the foil packages tightly and place them in a roasting pan in the center of the oven. Bake for 15-20 minutes, or longer, depending on the size of the packages.

Serve the packages unopened on hot plates with plain

boiled potatoes. If desired, serve with melted butter, lettuce and cucumber salad, yogurt, and flatbread.

### • **Everyday Fish Dishes**

Norwegians are quite spoiled for top quality fish, bought fresh, or deep frozen, in the shop, or fished in the rivers, lakes or fjords. People simply boil or fry the fish, season it with salt and pepper, and serve with plain boiled potatoes, carrots, cabbage or a lettuce and cucumber salad, melted butter and yogurt. Fish in white sauce is also common. Instead of potatoes, use rice or pasta. Children are not always keen on fish and all its bones. A simple trick is to mix fish into mashed potatoes and serve with melted butter, flatbread and a salad. You can also add bacon or some salt meat or sausages, and it becomes a great meal.

### • **Waffles** (About 10 waffles serve 8-10)

100 g butter  
2-3 eggs  
4 tbsp sugar  
1 tsp vanilla sugar or essence  
5 dl milk  
3½ dl flour

Melt the butter and pour it into the bowl. Add all the ingredients and beat until smooth. Let it rest for at least 15 minutes. Ladle the batter into a waffle iron. Serve with butter and sugar, or jam and sour cream.

If you don't have a waffle iron, add more milk and simply make pancakes. Serve in similar ways to the waffles, with jam, honey, ice cream, or whatever children and adults in your household 'demand'.

## What do Norwegians drink – and do they still smoke?

Many foreigners believe that Norwegians consume a lot of alcohol and that it is readily available everywhere, but they don't know that Norway has very strict regulations for the selling and serving of alcohol as well as cigarettes. Advertising is strictly forbidden. There are age limits for buying alcohol and tobacco products. Most alcohol products can only be bought in government stores ("Vinmonopolet"). Restaurants are granted permits to serve alcohol and must abide by the rules, which, for example, includes not serving alcohol before noon, and in many cases, only serving alcohol with food, and not serving alcohol to persons who seem to have consumed too much, or who, for other reasons, seem not to do well drinking alcohol. Hard liquor cannot be served to teenagers. Restaurant owners who do not follow regulations will be fined, or lose their license if offenses are serious. Furthermore, in Norway drunken drivers are sentenced to a minimum of three weeks in prison and their driving licence is taken away for several months. More than two small cans of light beer usually result in higher occurrence of alcohol in the blood than permitted.

High prices for alcohol and tobacco products contribute to reduced consumption, especially among the young – in addition, the taxation gives income to the government.

In parts of the country, especially in the southwest, many people are teetotal and do not consume alcohol at all – although some may do it secretly, and young people may experiment with it. At many social gatherings, alcohol is not served, especially if organized by the church, school, local or regional municipality, or other groups with educational and role model functions.

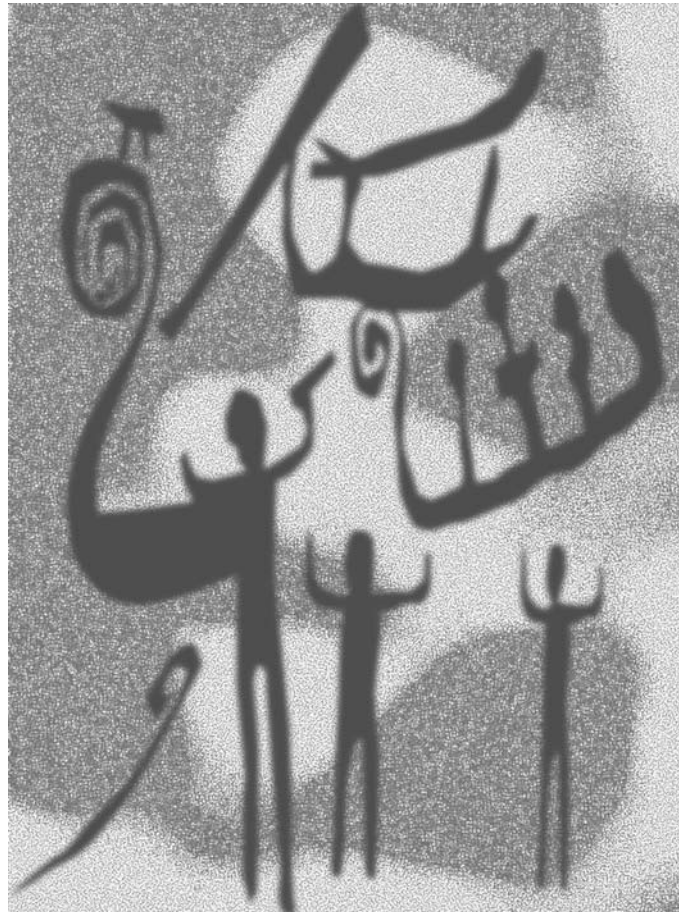
In spite of strict policies alcohol and drug abuse are serious problems in many towns and cities in Norway, especially among young people. Many crimes are committed under the influence of alcohol.

Fewer and fewer Norwegians take up smoking and today only about one fifth of Norwegians are daily smokers. Most work places, restaurants, etc., prohibit smoking, and few people allow smoking in their homes.



# Chapter 8

## **New Norwegians** - Pakistani Immigrants and Afghan Refugees





*It is important that foreigners learn to enjoy what Norway can offer, including making 'angels' in the snow! About 0.5 million people in Norway were born outside the country. They constitute about 10% of the total population of 4.8 million. Over half of the immigrants come from outside Europe and North America. Pakistani immigrants and Afghan refugees are about 40,000.*



# New Norwegians

## - Pakistani Immigrants and Afghan Refugees

### Introduction

Norway received a large number of immigrants from Pakistan during the boom in the late 1960s-1975. After this visa regulations were tightened and the *immigration stop* (*innvandringsstoppen*) was introduced leading to much reduced levels of new arrivals. There are now about 30,000 immigrants of Pakistani origin in Norway, with about two-thirds living in Oslo, making the Pakistani diaspora the single largest immigrant community in Norway. In neighbouring Denmark, there are about 20,000 of Pakistani origin, and in Sweden, about five or six thousand. In all there are about 460,000 foreigners living in Norway with less than half from Europe and North America.

As there are draconian restrictions on immigration most of the new Pakistanis as well as other foreigners who have arrived in recent years, come under exemption rules for family reunification, asylum seekers (refugees) and some other special categories, such as specialists, but few if any Pakistanis and Afghans have qualified for the latter group.

The Afghan diaspora in Norway of about 8,000 people is made up mainly of former and current refugees and their families, who have mostly come since Afghanistan has experienced wars and foreign invasions and internal conflicts in recent decades.

According to UNHCR figures there are about 10 refugees per 1,000 inhabitants in Norway. In Pakistan, there are about 7 refugees, mostly Afghans, per 1,000 inhabitants. In absolute numbers, Pakistan has a far larger number of refugees than Norway, bearing in mind that Norway's population is less than 5 million

while Pakistan's population is now about 180 million.

In principle, Afghan refugees will return home when the situations allows it. However, in practice, many refugees will stay on, in Pakistan, Norway and other countries where they have sought asylum, based on application of various forms of humanitarian law applicable to protracted refugee situations.

There are almost 23,000 Iraqis in Norway and almost as many Vietnamese. Sri Lankans are about 14,600, Iranians 15,700, Philipinos 9,500, Thai 8,700, Indians 7,600, and there are smaller numbers from other Asian countries. From Africa, Somalis are about 22,000, constituting the largest group, and Moroccans are the second largest group, with well over 7,500.

From Europe, there are large groups from a number of countries, including about 15,600 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina and 12,500 from Serbia. There are about 15,000 Turks who are mostly immigrants. From EU countries, especially from Norway's neighbouring countries, there are large groups, with Sweden topping the list with about 24,500, Poland with over 19,000, Germany with 15,000 and smaller numbers from other countries. From the Americas, the USA has the largest number with about 7,000, followed by Chile.

Since almost all Pakistanis and Afghans in Norway are Muslims, and religion is important in people's lives, also as seen from a cultural perspective in immigrant communities, we think it is important to repeat and add some information about religion in this section, although we have already discussed some aspects earlier.

Norwegian government statistics show that there are about 80,000 members of the one hundred Islamic religious congregations in the country, with about two thirds living in Oslo and Akershus counties. Scholars estimate that the number of people of Islamic background in Norway is in the range of 120-150,000, but many have not registered with any mosque and are therefore not included in the statistics. In Norway, government support is allocated to religious associations outside the Church of Norway on the basis of membership in each congregation. Muslim congregations are entitled to government support

Most of the Muslims in Norway have immigrant and refugee backgrounds, with Pakistani-Norwegians being the single largest and oldest. The Islamic community in Norway is highly diverse. The *Islamic Council Norway* (*Islamsk Råd Norge*) is the umbrella organization for all Muslims in the country. There is a cooperative body with the Church of Norway, the Norwegian state church. As per its constitution, Norway is a Christian country. However, there is religious freedom and those who are not members of the Church of Norway can be a member of any other religious or non-religious life-stance association, or none at all.

Most Muslims have come to Norway as part of the arrival of relatively large numbers of immigrants and refugees from the late 1960s. Prior to that time, the population of Muslims in Norway was miniscule. The Church of Norway, which belongs to the Evangelical-Lutheran Protestant Church, was the all-dominant denomination, with only a few hundred thousand belonging to other Christian denominations, such as the Catholic Church, and a number of small Protestant denominations and sects. The Muslim

congregations with a total of about 80,000 registered members outnumbers the Catholics, with about 55,000 members, but if all the 'free' Protestant churches/denominations are counted together they have in the range of 150,000 members.

Considering the homogenous religious tradition of Norway, with religious freedom for all faiths as well as atheists and other non-religious life stance societies, one might have expected more turbulence after the relatively large influx of Muslims, belonging to a different world religion in recent decades, especially in Oslo and some other larger cities. After all, historically and even today, it is common that religious groups have disputes, even within the same religion. Christians have had conflicts and wars based on religious differences, not withstanding the fact that Christians and Muslims emphasize that their religions represent *peace*.

Norway, like the rest of Scandinavia and Europe, is quite secular and religion seems to be less of a theme for conflict to Norwegians than it is to many other people. Norwegians pride themselves of great tolerance and openness to other faiths and values. Besides, Christianity and Islam are closely related religions and they might in future enrich each other. Some 40% of the text in the Koran is also found in the Bible.

Average Norwegians have very limited knowledge of other religions, including Islam, but the knowledge may be scant and coloured by own religion. Most Muslims seem to have more knowledge about many aspects of Christianity than Christians do of Islam. The Norwegian school system, the media, religious organizations, etc., face major information tasks in order to improve the situation and help develop a foundation for deeper inter-faith dialogue. Muslim immigrants in

Norway also have a duty to inform themselves about Christianity since it is the main religion in their new homeland. And we should all inform ourselves about other religions and help people who belong to small minorities to practice their religion in our midst.

### New Mosque in Oslo

The new mosque at the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC), *Tøyenbekken* in Oslo (see photo) was finally opened in early 2009 and now the second purpose-built mosque in Norway is in full use. It took a long time to complete the building, partly because it has been built without loans. It is against Islamic principles to



take loans that require payment, or receipt, of interest. However, many Islamic congregations in Oslo have had to accept ordinary bank loans, and pay interest in accordance with general Norwegian business practice.

*Najam-ul-Saqib Farhan* in ICC tells us that he is proud of the new mosque. It has cost about USD one million to build, excluding the plot, which was obtained many years ago. The mosque can house about 1,500 worshippers. In addition, the building has a library, offices and two shops for rent, and it has modern wireless Internet and audio-video technology. Turkish floor carpets, Polish chandeliers, and a few things from Pakistan, bought or received as donations from Muslims and non-Muslims, have created a pleasant Islamic atmosphere at the new centre. The centre will also be open after school, opening so that children can go there to do their homework.

### Pakistani-Norwegian Marriage Practices

Norwegian *Leena Mishbah Sehota* and Pakistani *Khurran Ali Akhtar* (see photo) had barely been married for a week when we met them in Islamabad in the summer of 2009. Leena Sehota is almost through with her medical degree at the University of Oslo. Her husband, however, who has lived in Pakistan all his life, has several years of study ahead of him. First, it will take him a year or two to learn the Norwegian language, since the couple intends to live in Norway. Then he needs to take an education, which can lead to a salaried job or self-employment in Norway. He has married a Norwegian citizen, but he will still have to wait for several months, possibly up to a year, since neither he nor his wife has a regular income or their own apartment, before all immigration and visa formalities have been sorted

out and he can be allowed travel to Norway to live.

The newly weds are still lucky and they can look forward to the likelihood of a good life as well-to-do Pakistani-Norwegians in one of the world's richest countries with good health, education and social services for all – and even an income allowing them to travel to Pakistan often, so they can keep in contact with relatives and friends, and give a helping hand to some who may need it.

It is still common for most Pakistani-Norwegians to find their spouse in Pakistan, often marrying a relative, and take him or her to Norway. About three quarters of Pakistanis in Norway do that, and obviously they marry within their own religious and cultural group (endogamy). Only some 4% marry ethnic Norwegians. Along with Turkish-Norwegians, the Pakistani-Norwegians are the most conservative in this respect. Iranians are less traditional; also Iraqis and Moroccans, and even Somalis.

Most marriages are arranged, at least in some way or the other, and the bride's and bridegroom's families always know each other. 'Love marriages' are not yet common, but the husband-to-be always voices his opinion before the final marriage decision is made, and normally also the wife-to-be has a crucial voice. Obviously, those who have grown up in Norway, where arranged marriages are not common in the general population, are influenced by the dominant Norwegian culture. Increasingly young Pakistani-Norwegians want to have the final word in their choice of life-partner – and they expect that they will then be more likely to live happily ever after! But is that true?

Compared with the general Norwegian population, the divorce rate among Pakistani-Norwegians is much lower. In the general population about 45% get divorced; in the Pakistani community the figure is only about half that. Yet, there may be a large number of Pakistani-Norwegians who live in *unhappy marriages* as it is considered a failure for a couple to divorce, and it is a special burden on a woman to be divorced. A woman who gets divorced may be seen as bringing shame on her family and



This photo is from a Pakistani-style wedding in a January-cold Oslo in 2008, but it can certainly be mistaken for the real thing, with specially made furniture from India and Pakistan.



Newly wed Norwegian *Leena Misbah Sehota* and  
Pakistani *Khurram Ali Akhtar*

she may be disowned and isolated from her family

(‘Honour killings’ are very rare in Norway and are treated like other murder cases.)

For a Muslim man, it is in general quite easy to obtain a divorce and less stigma is associated with it for him than for a woman. Some men may have extra-marital relations. For a Muslim woman, this is all much more complicated, even in Norway

In the West, including in Norway, the individual’s rights are well taken care of in the judicial system. This also includes marriage and partnerships,

including same-sex partnerships, and domestic violence.

Judging from the looks of Leena Misbah and Khurram Ali in the photo, and the way they communicate, they must indeed have played very important roles in their marriage decision, as they should in this day and age.

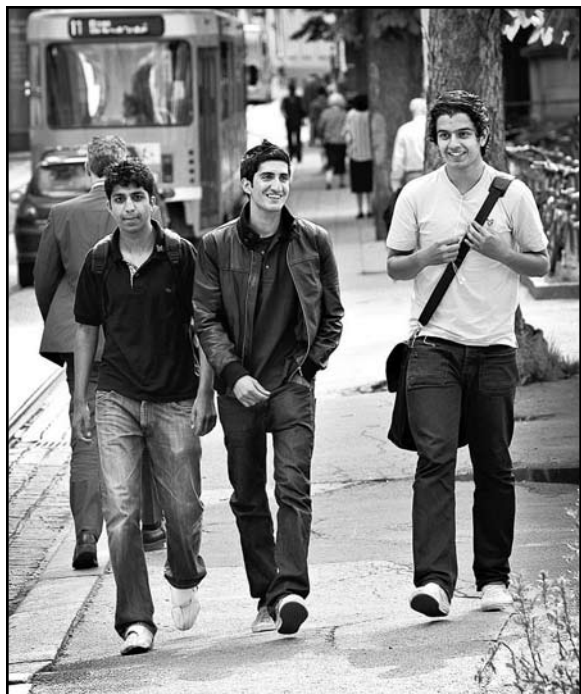
If the opposite were the case in connection with marriage, i.e. that undue pressure, threats and direct force, has been put on either of the parties, but usually the woman, Norwegian traditions and laws look very seriously on such practices, which are characterised as unacceptable. In Pakistan, such practices are still culturally acceptable in many communities and families.

Currently, the Norwegian government, through its Immigration Department (UDI) and embassies abroad, collects data about and studies marriage practices in different countries, including in Pakistan, where many Norwegian citizens marry local citizens, specifically with a view to finding ways of curtailing forced marriage practices and providing assistance to Norwegian citizens when they are victims of such practices.

### **Pakistani-Norwegian School Boys and Girls**

In the photo you see seventeen year olds *Usman Ishitaq*, *Ismail Saeed* and *Sofyan Raja* photographed in downtown Oslo. They all have top grades at secondary school at Heltberg Gymnas in Nydalen in Oslo. After graduation they plan to go on to university and the aim is to score high enough to get into medicine or engineering. Status is an important factor when deciding on what profession to choose, and parents can be very pushy in this connection.





Many girls who do not get into medicine, or who want a less competitive and demanding career, often choose bio-engineering or other subjects which have high status and good pay. Teaching, on the other hand, even at secondary level, is not considered a very high-status job any more. There seems to be a need for using special incentives to motivate more Pakistani-Norwegians to get into teaching.

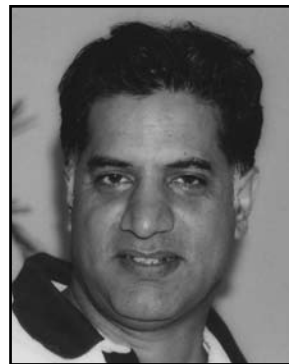
A few years ago, Pakistani-Norwegian girls outclassed the boys at exams, as the boys seemed to be more focused on business than academic careers, and some boys could be delinquent and simply wasted valuable school years. Girls continue

to do well at school and there are more Pakistani-Norwegian girls than boys at university. But now Pakistani-Norwegian boys too have realized that in Norway it is important to do well at school in order to do well in life.

Most Pakistani-Norwegians do quite well at school, and they do better than most other minority groups. A recent survey carried out among students at the Oslo University College, *Høgskolen i Oslo*, confirms this. At the same time there are many minority students who do not perform particularly well, or drop out before they have obtained a full degree. The reasons are manifold, but lack of *motivation, support and strong knowledge of Norwegian language and culture* are the main factors.

### **Pakistani-Norwegian: Member of Two Cultures**

*Amjad Iqbal is 44 now.* He came to Norway as an 11-year old schoolboy. His father went first and found a job in a factory in Oslo, and then four years later, he brought the rest of the family from Rawalpindi.



“We were poor in Pakistan”, Amjad explains, “and in Norway we had little money when I grew up. I remember very well that in our first apartment in Oslo there was no indoor toilet, which was not uncommon in cheap apartments even in Oslo at that time.”



Amjad left school early and started working with an elder brother in a grocery store. When he sold the last shop he had at Skoyen in Oslo, he made a good profit and could afford to become a partner in *Tyrkisk Bakeri* in Oslo. He works half time in the bakery and spends the rest of his time in Islamabad, where his wife and three young children live. His eldest son stays in Oslo where he has just been admitted to the International Baccalaureate programme at Berg Secondary School.

“I am proud of my son doing so well at school”, Amjad says. “I can afford to give him the education that I could not get and I hope he will make use of the opportunity.”

To live in two countries is part of a new trend among a few Pakistani immigrants in Norway and other European countries, especially better-off businessmen, who wish to have a foot in both cultures and allow their children to have a good Muslim upbringing as well as good Western schooling. It is also important for many parents that their children can learn to know their grandparents and other relatives in Pakistan. “Often, I am worried about the loneliness that many people in Norway experience”, Amjad says. “Besides, it is cheaper for the family to live in Pakistan, especially now after we have built our own house in Islamabad, and we even have tenants in one portion”, Amjad says. He underlines that he likes both Norway and Pakistan and he feels very lucky that his father became an immigrant in Norway.

### Unemployment amongst immigrants

Immigrants generally do well in Norway. They

work hard and make the best out of their lives and new living conditions. Many adults would probably have been happier in their home country, but they ‘sacrifice’ for their children. A typical feature of Norwegian society is that anybody can succeed through hard work and good education. Parents know this and they invest in the future, their children, and often push them hard to do well at school.

However, not all do well, and the general crime rate in Oslo is higher amongst Pakistani-Norwegians than in the general population, in fields like domestic and other violence, economic crimes and tax evasion.. Social problems and drug abuse are often part of the picture.

Normally, Norway has a low unemployment rate of about 2-3%. However, amongst immigrants, the figure has climbed up to double digits at about 10-12%, and it has also affected Pakistani-Norwegians, especially unskilled, young job seekers and workers above 55 years of age. For most in the latter group, i.e. if someone in his late fifties loses the job, early retirement is probably the only solution. Many in that age group speak poor Norwegian and it will be difficult to be trained for a new job, and the employer will be sceptical about employing an old worker, especially since there are many young people waiting in line, including refugees, who are initially subsidized labour.

In addition to those who register as unemployed, there is a large group of female immigrants from Pakistan, Somalia and other countries who do not register as unemployed as they consider themselves as housewives. But many of these women actually want a job and they are an untapped resource for Norwegian society. Only about a third of Pakistani-

Norwegian women have a job outside the home, but this is likely to change markedly in the next generation.

Like many Norwegian women who have been housewives all their lives, Pakistani women will receive their first 'pay cheque' at 67 when they receive the universal government pension.

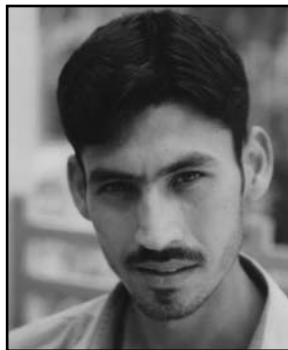
### **Kashmir and Swat: The "Switzerland" and "Norway" of Pakistan**



*Zulfiqar Farooq* comes from Pakistani administered Kashmir, often referred to as the Switzerland, or perhaps we should say, the Norway, of Pakistan, because of its mountainous and beautiful terrain at the foot of the Himalayan Mountains. However,

due to the disputed sovereignty of the Pakistani as well as the Indian administered Kashmiri territories, and some conflict along the Line of Control, there is little development and hardly any tourism in Kashmir. Young men leave and work in Pakistan and India, and many immigrate or become foreign workers in the Middle East and Europe, including in Norway. In the UK, the majority of Pakistani immigrants are Kashmiris. Zulfiqar has relatives in Norway, but he is not well educated and sees no possibilities of emigrating. Most Pakistanis in Norway come from Gujrat, Kharian and Lalamusa, near Lahore.

Many parts of Pakistan are beautiful and have distinct character and beauty. Yet, Kashmir and the Northern Areas, including Swat, Dir, Malakand and Gilgit have their uniqueness; often with breathtaking views from the foot or the top of mountains, of several thousand metres. These areas are different



from the lower plains of Pakistan and India, which have their own beauty and culture.

*Khamar Khan* is from Swabi, bordering the Northern Areas, including Dir, Swat and Buner districts, from where 2-3

million internally displaced persons (IDPs) fled in the summer of 2009 to seek refuge in areas like Swabi, Peshawar and other towns in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and elsewhere in Pakistan. Repatriation started a few months later, when the military operation was over, staged as a result of America's demand to eliminate the Taliban in the area. Many IDPs have returned but others are more hesitant to do so. Often, women, children, elderly men, and professionals stay behind in more secure areas, and the able-bodied young and middle-aged men go back and try to make a living, rebuilding their houses and restoring their businesses, agricultural activities and so on. Most returning IDPs are likely to rely on food aid and other assistance at least for the winter, and many for longer.



Afghan refugees are spread all over the world; in Norway, there are about 8000.

constantly turning to issues related to women!

Pakistanis are glad that Afghans come to Pakistan for training. In a field like banking, Pakistan has a good reputation as one of the leading countries. In this field as in many other fields, it is important that Afghanistan and Pakistan co-operate closely. They are neighbours and they will always have to co-operate. Perhaps they can learn from the Scandinavians? Few countries have better co-operation than they do!

## Afghans

As we mentioned above, most Afghans came to Norway as refugees. Most of them are doing well in their new country of residence, which may become their long-term or permanent country of residence. Afghans are hardworking and well liked wherever they live.

*Amir, Shbžad and Ali* (photo right) are from the *Afghanistan International Bank (AIB)* in Kabul. In August 2009, they completed a 3-month training course at the Academy of Banking in Pakistan and returned home to Afghanistan, in time for the country's general election and to take up posts of high responsibility at AIB after further training. Most of the AIB trainees were former refugees in Pakistan and other countries. We noticed, though, that in a group of more than twenty there was not a single woman. Lack of female course companions led to their spare time conversations



Several million Afghans are spread all over the world in no less than some 60-70 countries. In California, USA, there are many hundred thousand Afghans, enough to keep traditions and make their own sub-culture. *Khaled Hosseini* is one of them, a UNHCR goodwill ambassador and the author of the international bestsellers, *"The Kite Runner"* and *"A Thousand Splendid Suns"*.

In 2002, *Åsne Seierstad* from Norway published *The Bookseller of Kabul*. She tells about women's issues, family life, trade practices and many other aspects of Afghan society. The young journalist's debut novel/travel book became an instant bestseller in Norway and abroad, making the author a wealthy woman almost overnight. She has donated some of the money to charities in Afghanistan.



Anita and Amina Malkiar (see photo) are from Afghanistan. This picture was taken in March 2009 when the two sisters took their oath as part of the *Norwegian Citizenship Ceremony* in Oslo City Hall.

When there is a family wedding in Pakistan, the Norwegian cousins and other relatives get a chance to travel to see their relatives. It costs a lot to travel that far for the whole family. However, the children in this photo seem not to have a single worry about that.

The close family relations that are still common in the Pakistani culture is an envy to many indigenous Norwegians, who have lost much of that part of their culture as urbanization has sped up. Sometimes, though, the close Pakistani family relations can be felt as interference and a hinderance to success in life. So it seems that both Pakistanis and Norwegians should learn where to strike the balance.







Ahmed Bashir is a Pakistani-Norwegian. He recently retired after a 30-year teaching career in Norway. He is the co-author of the new two-volume Urdu-Norwegian-Urdu Dictionary, published by Fagbokforlaget, Bergen, 2008 and 2009.



Daniel Sehota is another Pakistani-Norwegian who has done well in the Norwegian education system. He is now a senior staff member in Amnesty International in Oslo.



Celebrating 14 August Pakistan's Independence Day in Oslo.

## Norwegian Immigration and Visa Policies and Practices

- Norway has had immigration stop, 'innvandringsstopp', since the mid-1970s. There are limited possibilities for foreigners outside North America and Europe to obtain a visa for Norway. A long-term visa for work and residence in Norway is almost impossible to obtain, except for *family re-unification* and *asylum seekers*, i.e. refugees. For an average Pakistani or Afghan, it is not much easier to obtain a short-term visa either, for a few days up to three months, for example, to attend a conference, business meeting, visit friends or relatives, or just be a tourist.
- Norwegian immigration authorities want to make sure – before the visa is issued – that the visitor will be able to meet all expenses while in Norway, and that he or she will return home after he or she has completed his or her stay in the country. Especially young, unmarried men, but also young, unmarried women, have to explain in great detail and show documents as proof of the likelihood of their return. Papers showing ownership of property at home is useful, as is a salary slip showing a regular income. Furthermore, it is important to document family and social responsibilities, such as responsibilities for children, parents and others.
- Middle-aged and older applicants from middle- and upper class backgrounds will generally have fewer problems obtaining a visa to visit Norway, especially if the visit is for an official purpose, or if the applicant has relatives in Norway, who are good citizens in the country.
- The Embassy of Norway in Islamabad processes all visa applications for Pakistani and Afghan citizens in accordance with the Norwegian immigration rules and regulations. From mid 2009, applications should be submitted through FedEx, a private company in Islamabad.
- Decisions about ordinary, short-term *visas* are usually taken in Pakistan while decisions about long-term visas, including residence, emigration, studies, etc., are forwarded to and decided by the Immigration Department (UDI) in Oslo, based on advice from the Embassy.
- Norway is a member of the Schengen Visa agreement, which has made the application procedures even tighter and more time consuming than they already were, and it can easily take a couple of months to receive a reply.
- In order to obtain a settlement permit ('bosettingstillatelse') in Norway, the applicant must have lived continuously in Norway for three years.
- A foreigner residing in Norway has the right to vote in local and regional elections after three years residence in the country, and in parliamentary elections after five years. It is considered important that foreigners residing in Norway for a long time take an interest in the affairs of their new country of residence.
- In many ways, there are special relations between Norway and Pakistan, and Norway and Afghanistan, due to the large number of immigrants and refugees in Norway from these countries, leading to frequent visits by relatives and others, and extensive people-to-people contact between Norway and the two countries.
- The Embassy of Norway in Pakistan and UDI in Oslo try to handle visa and other related issues in ways that honour these relations. This includes, *inter alia*, having good contact with visa applicants and all other clients.
- It is not uncommon that the Norwegian public and media criticize UDI, and embassies abroad, for their decisions, or for taking too long in reaching decisions. In order to improve services, the Norwegian Parliament, established a new directorate a few years ago, the *Directorate of Integration and Multiculturalism*. This new body will focus on improving Norway's relationship with immigrants and visitors, and on making the integration process as successful as possible for those who live in Norway for long periods of time, or permanently.
- In Islamabad, there is room for improving the services provided to visa applicants and others needing consular services from the Embassy. Improved relations between Norway and Pakistan and Afghanistan is not only important for the clients in connection with visa and related issues, it is also important in general for Norway as a country.
- Norway has a high standing internationally for its good relations with developing countries. It is one of the leading countries in development and humanitarian aid, peace brokering, as host country for refugees, and in other fields. Norway is therefore expected to maintain the same high standards in connection with visas, immigration and related fields, not least in the case of Pakistan and Afghanistan due to the large diaspora of Pakistanis and Afghans in Norway.
- It is also hoped that the private sector co-operation between Norway and Pakistan and Afghanistan can be expand, notably in trade and institutional and organizational co-operation.
- Norway has embassies in Islamabad, Pakistan and Kabul, Afghanistan. The Embassy of Norway in Islamabad, Pakistan handles visa issues for both countries.

*The above, unofficial text has been prepared by Atle Hetland. September 2009. Further information about Norwegian immigration and visa policies can be obtained from Website: [www.ndi.no](http://www.ndi.no) Email: [udi@udi.no](mailto:udi@udi.no)*



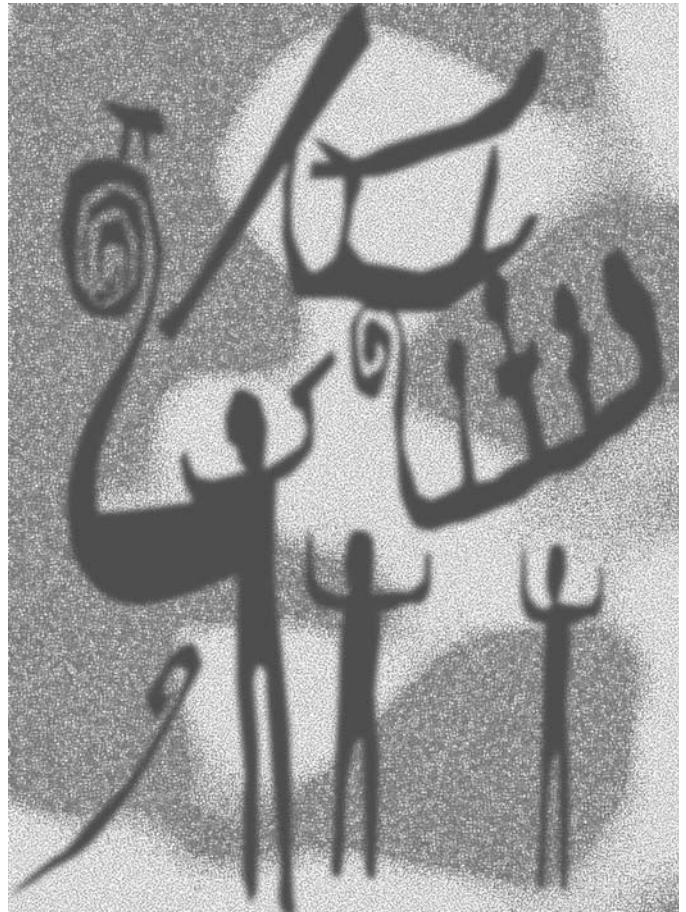
*Lake Sognsvann*, a Norwegian dreamland spot on the outskirts of Oslo city bordering the forest reservation area known as “Oslo-marka”. Uzma Farooq made this painting when she was a student in Norway in the 1980s.





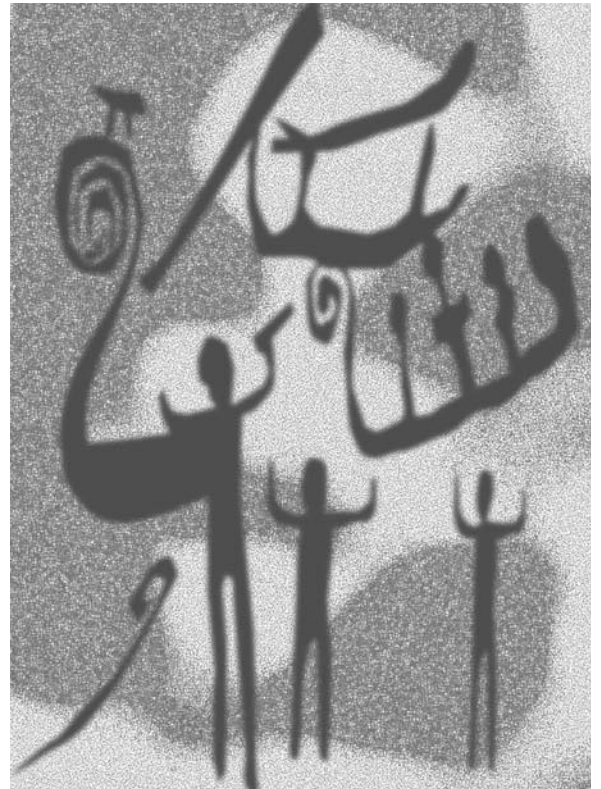
## **Annexes**

- 1. Biographies of 30 Famous Norwegians**
- 2. Basic Facts about all the Nordic Countries**  
Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland,  
Faroe Islands and Greenland
- 3. Bibliography**
- 4. Useful Addresses**
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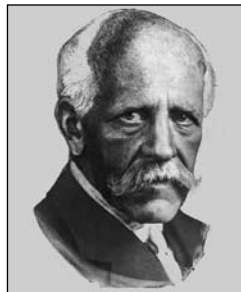




## Biographies of 30 Famous Norwegians



## EXPLORERS

*Fridtjof Nansen**Roald Amundsen*

## WRITERS

*Camilla Collett**Henrik Wergeland**Henrik Ibsen**Sigrid Undset**Knut Hamsun**Jostein Gaarder*

# Biographies of 30 Famous Norwegians

Several of the biographies are edited versions from *Facts about Norway. 25<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Schibsted, Oslo, 2000. The others have been written specifically for this book.

## **Roald Amundsen, Arctic Explorer (1872-1928)**

Amundsen, following his parents' wishes, was originally a student of medicine. After his parents passed on, however, he abandoned his medical studies in order to become an Arctic explorer. Amundsen was the leader of a Belgian expedition to Antarctica from 1897-99. From 1903-06, he led an expedition with the Arctic ship "Gjøa", which measured the earth's magnetism and located the magnetic north pole. During this expedition, they collected a large amount of ethnographic artifacts. In August 1906, this team became the first to sail through the North-West Passage.

Amundsen was then able to collect funds for an expedition to the North Pole. When the American, Robert Peary, reached the pole in 1909, Amundsen was determined to travel to the south. He did not, however, disclose his plans before his team was aboard Nansen's ship "Fram". In one of history's most daring sled-expeditions, Amundsen and four other members of his team reached the South Pole on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 1911 – five weeks before the Englishman Robert F. Scott.

This victory provided Amundsen with the possibility of focusing on his life's dream: to investigate unexplored areas of the Arctic. In 1918, he traveled with the specifically constructed ship "Maud" to drift with the ice across the North Pole, from the east towards the

west. Amundsen's plan failed, and after two winters he decided to use an aircraft. The two planes he obtained in 1922 crashed. He obtained two new planes, with economic assistance provided by the American Lincoln Ellsworth, but the new planes were wrecked. The airship "Norge", constructed in Italy by the engineer Umberto Nobile, was successful and, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May 1926, Amundsen-Ellsworth-Nobile's trans-polar expedition from Tromsø crossed the North Pole on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May, landing in Alaska on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May.

Amundsen's last years were characterized by bitter conflict over who deserved the honour and recognition for the North Pole expedition. In 1928 when Nobile crashed with the airship "Italia" north of Svalbard, Amundsen immediately volunteered for the rescue mission. He set out from Tromsø with the plane "Latham". On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1928 the plane crashed into the sea near Bjørnøya and all six crew died. Nobile was later rescued.

## **Fredrik Barth, Professor in Anthropology (born 1930)**

Barth was educated in Norway and the United States. He received his Ph.D. on a dissertation about Swat in Pakistan, where he carried out his first anthropological fieldwork in 1954 and on numerous subsequent occasions. His works include, inter alia, "Indus and Swat Kohistan – an Ethnographic Survey" (Oslo, 1956), "Political Leadership

among Swat Pathans" (London, 1959), "Features of Person and Society in Swat: Collected Essays on Pathans" (London, 1981), "The Last Wali of Swat. An Autobiography as told to Fredrik Barth" (Bangkok, 1985). His most recent book (in Norwegian) is entitled Afghanistan and the Taliban (Oslo, 2008). In addition to his focus on Pakistan and Afghanistan, Barth has also carried out studies in other parts of the world, including Papua New Guinea. Barth led the establishment and building up of anthropology at the University of Bergen in the 1960's and 1970's, when he took up a professorship at the University of Oslo, where he in the was crucial in establishing the Centre for International Development Studies (RIU) in 1979; RIU is now integrated in the larger Centre for Development and Environment (SUM).

## **Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Author (1832-1910)**

Bjørnson's breakthrough came in 1857 with the historical drama "Mellem Slagene". During that same year, he became the artistic leader at the Norwegian Theatre in Bergen. From 1865-67 Bjørnson led the Christiania Theatre in the country's capital. He mainly wrote novels and stories until 1872, inspired by the setting and spirit of the farming community Bjørnson remembered from his childhood. He also wrote several historical dramas that extended his earlier success. After two years in Italy and the Tyrol, he took up residence on a farm in Aulestad, Gausdal,

near Lillehammer, in 1875. From 1882-87 Bjørnson lived in Paris.

His poems from the mid-1870s are representative of social conflict and awareness. Bjørnson was active in political life and social debate. In Norway, the last decades of the 1800's was characterized by strong public opinion and opposition.

Bjørnson is one of the most important figures in Norwegian culture and history, but he has not received the same attention outside Norway. In 1903, he received the Nobel Prize for literature.

### **Gro Harlem Brundtland, Politician (born 1939)**

Brundtland was a Norwegian Labour Party politician and international civil servant. She obtained her Medical Doctor's degree from the University of Oslo and became assistant chief physician in Oslo from 1968-74. Brundtland was also the Environmental Minister during the years 1974-79. She was elected to parliament in 1977, and became the Norwegian Prime Minister in 1981, the first woman to hold the office, and served again in 1986-89 and again from 1990-96. She was Vice President of the Labour Party from 1975-81, and President from 1981-92. From 1983-87 she led the World Commission for Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), established by the UN Secretary General. From 1998-2003, she served as Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) when she retired to her residences in France and Norway.

### **Ole B. Bull, Violinist and Composer (1810-1880)**

Bull began studying the violin as a child, and at nine years of age, he performed at a concert in his native town of Bergen. Thereafter, Bull was self-taught in both the violin and in composition. In 1831, he traveled to Paris, and the following year he held a concert that gave him the reputation as a violin virtuoso. In Paris, Bull also heard another great violinist, Niccolò Paganini. In 1834, Bull traveled to Italy where he was highly successful in Bologna. Then, he performed in various parts of Western Europe. In June 1838, he visited Norway and was celebrated as a national hero.

In 1834, Bull toured the USA and gave concerts in the largest American cities. In 1849 he performed with the Norwegian fiddler Myllarguten in Christiania (now called Oslo). Myllarguten was one of Norway's leading folk musicians. Bull initiated the construction of a Norwegian theatre in Bergen, which opened in 1850. In 1852, Bull established the Norwegian colony Oleana, or New Norway in the state of Pennsylvania in the USA. This project was unsuccessful, and Bull lost large sums of money.

From 1870, Bull established residence in the USA, but toured extensively and played, for example, by the pyramids in Egypt in 1876. He also visited Norway each summer and owned a country home on Lysoen Island outside Bergen.

As a violinist, Ole Bull was one of the great virtuosos of an era characterized

by virtuosos. He was popular all over Europe and the USA. His work as a composer is less comprehensive and significant, but some of his pieces are still cherished and performed.

### **Camilla Collett, Author (1813-1885)**

Collett is one of Norway's first female authors of major standing. She was an advocate of women's rights and wrote prose in the genre of social realism. She was the sister of Henrik Wergeland (1801-1845), who was possibly Norway's greatest poet ever.

### **Roald Dahl, Author (1916-1990)**

Roald Dahl is actually *not* Norwegian but British, but his parents were Norwegian and some of his finest books for children are about his holidays "back home" in Norway, visiting his grandparents, aunts and uncles, noticing their particularities and peculiarities – and, for example, having fish and boiled potatoes for dinner, something typically Norwegian. He is one of the most successful and well known of all children's writers. Some of his books read by children the world over include, "Boy", "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", "Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator", "The BFG", and "Matilda". Some of his short stories have been dramatized for TV and published as books under the titles, "Tales of the Unexpected" and "More Tales of the Unexpected". When Dahl died in 1990, The Times newspaper in the UK called him 'one of the most widely read and influential writers of our generation'.



### **Tor Edvin Dahl, Author (born 1943)**

Tor Edvin Dahl is one of Norway's most productive contemporary writers, with close to two hundred titles to his name. For his crime books Dahl used the pseudonym David Torjussen up until 1985. Dahl has written for children, teenagers and adults. His production includes novels, short stories, plays for stage, radio and TV, crime books, translated books, and a number of textbooks, biographies, pieces of music and technical books. The first book he got published, "En sommer tung av regn" (A Summer Heavy with Rain), a collection of short stories, came out in 1968. He still writes a book or two more or less every year. Dahl has received several prizes for his works; he has been nominated for the Nordic Council's Literature Prize.

### **Sverre Fehn, Professor (born 1924)**

Fehn received his diploma from the National School of Architecture in 1949 and opened his own practice that same year. From 1971-94, he was a professor at the Architectural College in Oslo. Fehn designed institutional buildings and schools, Norway's pavilion at the 1958 World Fair in Brussels and the Nordic pavilion at the 1962 Fair in Venice. The North Cape Church (1965) and the Colosseum cinema (1964) are also examples of Fehn's work. He designed the Hørmøysa farm museum (1972), the permanent exhibition entitled the Norwegian Middle Ages at the Historisk Museum (1979), the Norwegian Glacier Museum in Fjærland at Balestrand (1991) and the Aukrust Centre in Alvdal (1966). Fehn is one of Norway's best-known architects and is

also internationally renowned. In 1973, he was awarded the Treprisen, in 1997, the prestigious international Prizker's Architecture Prize and the Heinrich Tessenow Medal. In 1994, Fehn became Commander of the St. Olav's Order.

### **Kristin Flagstad, Soprano (1895-1962)**

Flagstad grew up in a musical household and made her debut in 1913. From 1918-27 she was associated with several opera companies in Oslo. In 1928 she was engaged by the Södra Teatern in Sweden, and was then launched on the largest opera stages in Europe and the USA. She performed in Bayreuth in Germany and at the Metropolitan in New York, and was guest performer at the San Francisco Opera and at Covent Garden in London. When the Norwegian Opera was established in 1958, she became its first director.

Kristin Flagstad possessed a uniquely illustrious voice and was considered one of the leading Wagner-singers. She was also called 'the voice of the century'. The Kirsten Flagstad Museum opened in 1985 at her native home, Strandstuen, in the town of Hamar.

### **Johan Galtung, Professor in Peace Research (born 1929)**

Galtung grew up in Oslo, where his father was a medical doctor and a prisoner during the Second World War. His family background and events at the time shaped Galtung's world outlook. He was one of Norway's first conscientious objectors in a country where conscription for all young men was compulsory, and he had to serve a prison term. Today, a large number of young

men are conscientious objectors and they are assigned civil duties in place of military service. Galtung studied natural sciences and sociology at the University of Oslo. In 1959, together with his wife, Ingrid Eide and a group of other radical academicians, he established the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO). In the late 1960's, the Norwegian Parliament established a special chair for Galtung in Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Oslo, a post he held for a decade. However, Galtung's work and life was always international and he has lived in many countries and lectured all over the world. Today, Galtung resides, with his Japanese wife, in the USA, Japan, Norway and Canada, in the latter he chairs the work of the organization "Transcend", which he founded about ten years ago. Galtung has authored over one hundred books and many hundred scholarly and popular papers and articles.

### **Jan Garbarek, Jazz Saxophonist and Composer (born 1947)**

At fifteen years of age, Garbarek aroused attention and interest in his musical ability after being selected as the best soloist during the Norwegian championship for amateur jazz musicians. During the 1960s he studied and played with the American composer George Russell. Garbarek has been bandleader, often for quartets, and has toured around the world. He is considered to be one of the foremost performing saxophone artists. Garbarek has recorded several albums and has composed music for ballet, theatre, film and television. In 1998, he was awarded Knight of the First Class of St. Olav's Order.

### **Edvard Hagerup Grieg, Composer (1843-1907)**

Grieg received his first musical instruction from his mother before studying at the Music Conservatory in Leipzig from 1858-62. In 1863 Grieg traveled to Copenhagen where he met the Norwegian composer Rikard Nordraak who was very influential in Grieg's musical career. In Leipzig, Grieg also became engaged to his cousin, the singer Nina Hagerup.

In the autumn of 1866, Grieg took up residence in Christiania (Oslo) as a music teacher and was influential in the capital's musical life in his role as, amongst others, a conductor. From the summer of 1877 he lived in Hardanger on the West Coast of Norway and moved to "Trolldhaugen" in 1885, his house in Bergen. He toured as a pianist and director and became known and loved in Europe's concert halls. In 1898 he arranged the first Norwegian music festival, which was held in Bergen.

Grieg was a composer especially known for his numerous piano concertos, including ten booklets with lyrical pieces, and for his songs composed in honour of the literary works of Norwegian and Danish poets. Moreover, on a larger scale, his music belongs to the most popular Scandinavian music from the 1800's, for example the accompaniment to Ibsen's play "Peer Gynt", and the piano concerto – one of the most popular in the world.

Norwegian folk music was very important to Grieg, and some of his most important pieces, like "Slåtter" opus 72 (from 1902-03) and "Fire Salmer" from 1906, are inspired by Norwegian

folk music. Grieg's exclusive and unique harmony has especially influenced impressionist composers.

### **Jostein Gaarder, Author (born 1952)**

Gaarder received his Bachelor of Arts (BA) from the University of Oslo in 1976 after studying Nordic languages and literature, the History of Philosophy and the Science of Religion. He has been a schoolteacher, and from 1981-91 taught History and Philosophy at the people's university, 'Folkeuniversitetet', in Agder. Since the autumn of 1991, Gaarder has been a full-time writer and lecturer. In collaboration with others, Gaarder has published several textbooks in the field of religion and ethics for students at upper secondary school. He made his debut as a fictional writer in 1986 with the book "Diagnosen og andre noveller", and later published several books for young readers. The internationally successful "Sophie's World" was released in 1991. The book has been published in some fifty different languages. Gaarder has received several Norwegian and international prizes. In 1997 Oystein Wiik's and Gisle Kverndokk's musical version of "Sophie's World" made its world debut in Germany. Gaarder and his wife Siri Dannevig have used proceeds from the sale of "Sophie's World" to establish the international environmental award, The Sofie Prize.

### **Knut Hamsun, Author (1859-1952)**

Hamsun was born in Lom in Gudbrandsdalen, but moved to Hamarøy in Nordland at the age of three. The nature of northern Norway

greatly impressed him and is an obvious characteristic of his literary work. In 1887, after a series of travels, including two stays in the USA, he published "Den gaatefulde" (The Enigmatic) under the name Knut Pedersen. His breakthrough came with the publication of "Sult" (Hunger) in 1890. The series of novels and plays Hamsun published throughout the 1900's established his reputation as Norway's greatest new author. The best-known works from the period include "Pan" (1894), and "Victoria" (1898). During these years, Hamsun traveled a great deal in Finland, Russia, the Caucasus and Turkey.

In 1911, Hamsun purchased a farm in Hamarøy and moved back to Nordland. In 1917, the novel "Markens Grøde" (The Harvest of the Land) was published, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1920. In 1918, he purchased the farm called Nørholm by Grimstad on the Norwegian south coast, where he settled. Hamsun ran Nørholm like a model farm, but also continued to write actively. During this era, he published his "vagabond" trilogy: "Landstrykere" (Tramps) in 1927, "August" in 1930, and "Men Livet lever" (But life goes on) in 1933.

Hamsun supported the occupational forces during the Second World War and was severely fined after the war ended. His last book was published in 1949, the autobiographical "Paa gjengrodde stier" (On Overgrown Paths), illustrating his poetic talent. Hamsun, along with Henrik Ibsen, is Norway's best-known writer, and his books are translated into a number of foreign languages.

**Odd Hassel, Chemist (1897-1981)**

Hassel graduated from the University of Oslo in 1920 with chemistry as his principal subject. He continued his studies in Germany and completed his doctorate in Berlin in 1924. He took up work at the University of Oslo where he was a professor of physical chemistry until 1964.

Hassel is world renowned among chemists for his work with cyclohexane derivatives and for studies in other fields of modern structural chemistry. Hassel, together with the Englishman Derek Barton, won the 1962 Nobel Prize in chemistry for pioneering research concerning organic molecular structure and conformation.

**Sonja Henie, Speed Skater and Figure Skater (1912-1969)**

Henie participated in three Olympic Games in 1928, 1932 and 1936, and won three gold medals for figure skating. She was world champion ten times, European champion six times and the Norwegian champion eight times before she began her professional career in 1936. Thereafter, she began an acting career in American skating films, and was the star of several ice-skating shows. With her husband, ship owner Niels Onstad, Sonja Henie established the Sonja Henie and Niels Onstad Foundation, which financed the construction of the Henie-Onstad Art Centre at Høvikodden in Oslo. This cultural centre opened in 1968, and the couple donated their collection of contemporary art to the museum. Henie's collection of awards and trophies are also on exhibition at Høvikodden.

**Thor Heyerdahl, Ethnographer and Zoologist (born 1914)**

Heyerdahl is one of Norway's best-known scientists. He is also famous for his many impressive expeditions. The first was made in 1947 with a balsa-raft called "Kon-Tiki". The expedition began in the harbour town Callao, Peru and ended in Tuamotu Islands. The adventure lasted 101 days and covered over 8000 km. the voyage attempted to prove that it was possible for pre-Columbian Indians in South America to use their rafts to reach Polynesia. In 1969 Heyerdahl began a new expedition, to sail from Morocco to Barbados with the reed boat "Ra I". The voyage was not a complete success, so he set sail again the following year with the boat "Ra II". With this attempt, Heyerdahl and his crew reached Barbados. The goal of this voyage was to illustrate that ancient civilizations in Egypt and Africa could have brought cultural input to the indigenous population of America. The last of these expeditions was carried out with a new reed boat called "Tigris". Heyerdahl sailed from Iraq via Karachi to Djibouti. Although this voyage was not successful, Heyerdahl achieved his goal, of highlighting trade and cultural relations in the ancient Near East.

In addition, Heyerdahl has carried out significant archaeological excavations in the Maldives, on Easter Island and in Peru. He has also been active in international environmental work and has shown, specifically, how the ocean is subject to pollution. Both the "Kon-Tiki" raft and "Ra II" are exhibited at the Kon-Tiki Museum in Bygdøy, Oslo.

**Trygve Haavelmo, Macro-Economist (1911-99)**

From 1938-39, Haavelmo taught statistics at the University of Oslo. He received a Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) in macroeconomics, and a doctorate in 1946. In 1939 he traveled to the USA as Rockefeller Fellow and remained there during the Second World War. He was employed by the Nortra Ship Fund, and then, by the University of Chicago. From 1948-79 he was a professor of macroeconomics and statistics at the University of Oslo. Haavelmo has conducted considerable research in the field of econometrics and mathematical economy for many years. His studies, which have critically analyzed various general theories, and his mathematical analyses of key issues, have given him a leading position in modern economics. Haavelmo was awarded the Nobel Prize for economics in 1989.

**Henrik Ibsen, Playwright (1828-1906)**

Ibsen was a pharmacist apprentice in Grimstad on the Norwegian south coast for six years. Under a pseudonym, he made his debut with the tragedy in verse entitled "Catelina" in 1850. Later, Ibsen taught at Bergen's Norwegian Theatre from 1851-59, and then became leader of the Christiania Norwegian Theatre until 1862. During these years he wrote several plays based on Norwegian history, like "Kongsemnerne" in 1863. In 1864 Ibsen traveled to Italy and remained abroad, mostly in Italy and Germany, for twenty-seven years. In 1866, the drama in verse "Brand" was published, followed by "Peer Gynt" in 1867. "Samfundets støtter" (1877) introduced the first of several modern dramas like "Et

Dukkehjem” (A Doll’s House) in 1879, “Gengangere” in 1881, “Vildanden” in 1884 and “Hedda Gabler” in 1890. The works from the 1890s are characterized by personal confession including “Bygmester Solnes” (1892) and “John Gabriel Borkman” (1896). During his lifetime, Ibsen was considered to be one of the world’s great dramatists and innovators. His plays are still performed all over the world, and Ibsen is one of the most frequently performed playwrights.

### **Johann Olav Koss, Speed Skater and NGO Leader (born 1968)**

Koss was already a household name among Norwegians and other winter sports enthusiasts, but his winning of three gold medals in speed skating at the Winter Olympic Games at Lillehammer, Norway made the young medical student one of Norway’s most loved sportsmen. With his prize money he established an NGO called “Olympic Aid”, today called “Right to Play”, focusing on sports and games as important not just for simple recreation but as vehicles in developing good social habits, contributing to preventing and healing conflicts, and even wider goals. Today, “Right to Play” is active in about forty countries, including Pakistan, where focus is on assisting Afghan refugee school children and teachers, earthquake victims and internally displaced persons. Koss remains the President and CEO of RTP and co-ordinates the organization’s work from its headquarters in Canada. An international magazine has listed Koss among the hundred top leaders in the world.

### **Sissel Kyrkjebø, Singer (born 1969)**

Kyrkjebø’s first performance on Norwegian television was in 1984 where her light and beautiful voice endeared her to the public. In 1986 she released her first album entitled “Sissel” which sold over 300,000 copies in Norway alone! Her album “Glade Jul” in 1987 was even more successful and over 500,000 copies were sold. The following year she played the role of Maria von Trapp in the musical “The Sound of Music” in Oslo. In 1993, Kyrkjebø married the Danish entertainer Eddie Skoller and took up residence in Denmark. Her international career was just taking off. Her performance during the Winter Olympic Games in 1994 was broadcast all over the world. In that same year, Kyrkjebø sang with Plácido Domingo and Charles Aznavour in the television concern “A Christmas in Vienna”. This performance was later released as a CD. In 1995 she participated in “A Royal Gala” in London, another internationally broadcast performance. In addition, her beautiful voice was heard on the “Titanic” soundtrack, released in 1997.

Sissel Kyrkjebø remains one of Norway’s most famous singers and her career is still in its relatively early stages.

### **Trygve Lie, Labour Party Politician and UN Secretary General (1896-1968)**

After working as a legal civil servant, Lie was employed as a legal consultant for the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions. From 1935-46, he held various cabinet posts, including Minister of Justice and Foreign Affairs. Lie was chosen as the United Nations’ first

Secretary General where he carried out fundamental work as an administrator and broker. Due to resistance from the Soviet Union, Lie resigned from his post in 1953. From 1955-63, he worked for Oslo and Akershus counties and, again, as a government Minister, for Industry and Trade.

### **Edvard Munch, Painter and Graphic Artist (1863-1944)**

The development of Munch’s style is noticeable in his earlier works like “Det syke barn” (The sick child) in 1886. The paintings from the 1880s, like “Skrik” (The Scream), “Madonna”, and “Døden i sykeværelset” (Death in the sick room), are part of a cycle of paintings that he called “Livsfrisen” (The Life Frieze). The subjects and themes from his paintings are also found in his graphic prints. Munch was a controversial artist, perhaps because his motives could be easily associated with the bohemian circle, a group of artists strongly opposed to the contemporary bourgeoisie. Great opposition was raised when Munch, supported by private funds, decorated the University Hall in Oslo in 1910. Although he began to receive acknowledgement in later years, Munch lived rather a reclusive life on his property, Eikely, in Oslo.

Munch bequeathed his art collection to the municipality of Oslo, and in 1963 a museum was built at Tøyen in Oslo to house his paintings.

Today, Edvard Munch is the most famous Norwegian painter abroad, and he is also one of the few artists who have played an important role in the development of painting as an art form

during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

### **Fridtjof Nansen, Scientist, Arctic Explorer and Diplomat (1861-1930)**

In 1888 Nansen completed his doctoral studies and presented a dissertation concerning the central nervous system. In the same year, he crossed Greenland on skis. In order to validate new theories concerning the movement of ice formations from Siberia across the Arctic Ocean to Greenland, Nansen decided to drift with the ice. In 1893 he set sail with a special ship called "Fram". From the Siberian coast, he and his crew traveled northeast, but they did not reach the North Pole. Together with Hjalmar Johansen, Nansen proceeded towards the pole on skis. They reached further north than anyone had ever been before.

Nansen then became interested in oceanography and initiated the establishment of an international commission for systematic ocean research. He led the commission's central laboratory from its establishment in 1902 until 1908. Nansen published several popular scientific works and carried out expeditions, including a trip through northern Siberia in 1913.

Nansen played an important diplomatic role in connection with the dissolution of Norway's union with Sweden in 1905. His diplomatic undertakings took up more and more of his time. Nansen was Norway's first ambassador to London. From 1920 until his death, Nansen was delegate to the League of Nations, where he played a leading role. In 1920 he received an

assignment from the League's Secretary General to lead repatriation efforts for refugees. Nansen is often considered the first de facto High Commissioner for Refugees. Later he led relief work in the Soviet Union for starving refugees and other work in southeastern Europe, especially in Armenia. Nansen received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1922.

### **Odd Nerdrum, Painter (born 1944)**

Nerdrum has painted mainly portraits and larger figurative compositions in a style primarily based on baroque art, especially Caravaggio's and Rembrandt's light and shadowed pictures. Nerdrum's art often possesses social content like the picture "Mordet paa Andreas Baader" (1977-78) and "Flyktninger på havet" (1979-80). During the 1980s his work became more characterized by his use of symbolism, for example "Skyen" from 1985. As a leader for neo-romanticism and figurative art, Nerdrum has met resistance, but is now considered to be one of Norway's most renowned pictorial artists internationally.

### **Arne Nordheim, Composer (born 1931)**

Nordheim studied at the Music Conservatory in Oslo and later continued his musical education in Copenhagen and Stockholm. Nordheim aroused interest in his abilities as a composer in 1954 during his first performance at the Nordic Youth Music Festival in Stockholm, where he presented his string quartet piece "Essay". Nordheim's international breakthrough came in 1957 with "Aftonland". Nordheim emphasizes tonal quality in his music and in the 1960's he became interested in electric

music, which he studied during a stay in Warsaw. He was also interested in new forms of media like television and music outside concert halls. With the sculptor Arnold Haukeland, Nordheim created a sound-light sculpture that is now located in Erling Stordahl's Institute for the Blind in Skjeberg, Østfold.

In 1968 Nordheim was awarded the Norwegian Council's Music Prize for "Eco", a piece composed for a soprano, two choirs and an orchestra. In this work, Nordheim was able to simulate electronic tones using regular instruments. His international position is illustrated by the large amount of commissioned work he has been asked for globally. "Greening" (1973) was commissioned by the Director of the Los Angeles Orchestra, the ballet "Stormen" (1979) for the Schweitzer Festival in Germany, and the cello concerto "Tenebrae" (1980) for Mstislav Rostropovitsj. Other works include a violin concerto dedicated to the Norwegian violinist Arve Tellefsen, first performed by him in 1997, and a large commissioned work for Trondheim's 1000-year celebration in 1997, the oratory "Nidaros" (the old name for Trondheim).

Nordheim is Norway's best-known contemporary composer. He has lived in the National Honorary Residence, "Grotten", in Oslo since 1981.

### **Liv Ullmann, Actress and Director (born 1938)**

Ullmann's debut came in 1957. She was employed by the Rogaland Theatre from 1958-59, the Norwegian Theatre from 1960-64 and by the National Theatre until 1971. Ullmann has had an

international acting career, including in several of Ingmar Bergman's films and television series. Ullmann debuted as film director for the film "Sofie" in 1992. The film "Kristin Lavransdatter" (1995) also garnered Ullmann international success and recognition.

### **Sigrid Undset, Author (1882-1949)**

Undset's debut came in 1907 with the release of the novel about marriage "Fru Martha Oulie". Afterwards, she wrote several novels and collections that portrayed the lives and plight of contemporary women. Daughter of the famous archeologist Ingvald Undset, Sigrid Undset was also fascinated with history. Her interest in this subject is apparent in her novel about the Middle Ages "Kristin Lavransdatter", which was

released in three volumes between 1920 and 1922, and in the two-volume work "Olav Audunsson" (1925-27). Apart from illustrating her extensive knowledge of history, these novels prove Undset's ability to create unique sensitivity within her characters that bring these historical figures alive. Her novels have also earned her international recognition and fame. In 1928, Undset received the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Sigrid Undset converted from Protestantism to Catholicism in 1924. During the Second World War she resided in the USA where she held many lectures about Norway. Her home in Lillehammer, "Bjerkebekk", is now a museum.

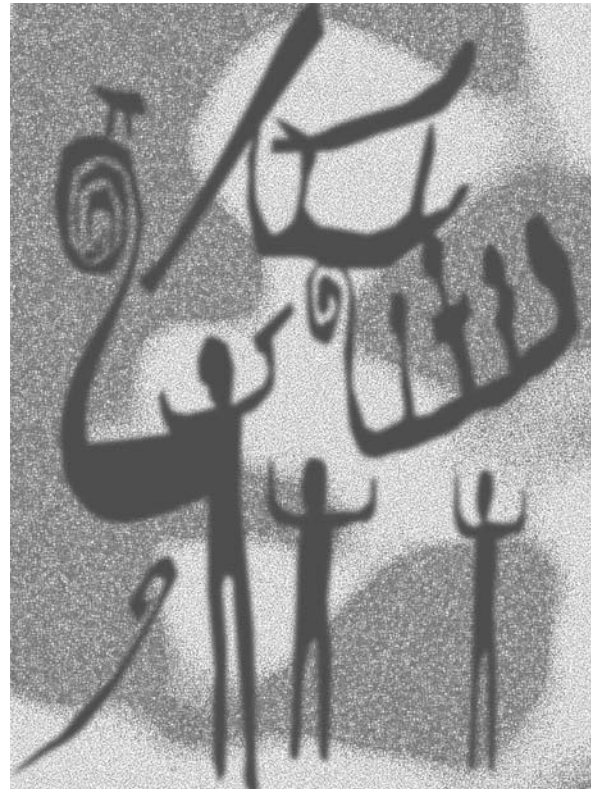
### **Grete Waitz, Distance Runner (born 1953)**

Waitz became World Marathon Champion in 1983 and won the silver medal during the 1984 Olympic Games. She also won 33 Norwegian championships and has been world champion for cross-country running five times. Waitz has won the New York Marathon and the London Marathon twice, and has set the world record for the 3000 metres twice. Including her four unofficial world record marathons, Waitz has been a role model for many female athletes in Norway and throughout the world. In addition, she initiated the popular Grethe Waitz Marathon in Oslo for women.



# **Basic Facts about all the Nordic Countries**

Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Faroe Islands and Greenland







**Table.** Basic Facts about all the Nordic Countries January 2010

	Norway	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Iceland
<b>Head of State &amp; Government - Area</b>					
Head of State	King Harald V	Queen Margrete II	King Karl Gustav XVI	President Tarja Halonen	President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson
Head of Government	Jens Stoltenberg	Lars Løkke Rasmussen	Fredrik Reinfeldt	Matti Vanhanen	Johanna Sigurdardottir
Area	324,000 sq km	44,000 sq. km	450,000 sq. km	338,000 sq. km	103,000 sq. km

*The Head of State of Norway is a 'Constitutional Monarch' while all powers rest with the Prime Minister and Parliament. If Svalbard and Jan Mayen islands in the Arctic are included, Norway is about 385,000 sq. km (about half as large as Pakistan, smaller than Afghanistan, but larger than UK). Denmark's territory is small; about the same as the northernmost county of Norway, Finnmark. About 1/4 of Scandinavia is to the north of the Arctic circle.*

### Population

Total number	4.8 mill	5.5 mill	9,3 mill	5.3 mill	0.32 mill
Population density	16 per sq. km	130 per sq. km	21 per sq. km	17 per sq. km	3 per sq. km
Population growth rate	1.2%	0.3%	0.16%	0.1%	0.8 %
Life expectancy	F: 82.7 years M: 78.2 years	80.8 years 76.0 years	83.3 years 78.6 years	82.6 years 75.5 years	81 years 77 years
Unemployment	2.6%	3.0%	6.4%	9%	7%

*There is a slight population growth in Norway due to immigration. Unemployment is lowest in Norway due to the country being less affected by the economic crisis, mainly because of its oil wealth and the strict immigration regulations.*

### Economy

Currency	Norwegian Krone NOK	Danish Krone DKK	Swedish Krona SEK	Euro (since 2002) EUR	Icelandic Krona ISK
Exchange rate to USD	5.7 PKR 13.7	5.3 PKR 15.7	7.3 PKR 11.4	1.4 PKR 118.5	128 -
GDP in USD	362.5 bill	343 bill	485 bill	274 bill	17.550 mill
GDP per capita in USD	55,400	38,200	37,500	36,800	39,600
Development aid	USD 3.7 bill	USD 2.6 bill	USD 4.4 bill	USD 1 bill	USD 22.3 mill
Aid as percent of GDP	1.1%	0.8%	0.93%	0.4%	0.35

*The financial and economic crisis in 2008-2009 has hit Iceland particularly hard. Alongside the other Scandinavian countries, Norway is one of the world's largest donors of development aid (ODA).*

	Norway	Denmark	Sweden	Finland	Iceland
<b>Urbanization</b>					
Capital	Oslo	Copenhagen	Stockholm	Helsinki	Reykjavik
Capital's population	0.6 mill	1.2 mill	0.8 mill	0.6 mill	0.12 mill
Metropolitan area	1.4 mill	1.9 mill	1.3 mill	1-1.3 mill	0.2 mill
Other large cities	Bergen, Trondheim Stavanger, Tromsø	Århus, Odense Ålborg, Esbjerg	Gothenburg, Malmö Uppsala, Linköping	Espoo, Tampere Turku, Oulu	Kopavogur, Akureyri Reykjanesbær
Percent urban population	75%	86%	83%	61%	93%

*Denmark and Sweden are more urban than Finland and Norway. In Iceland, people live in urban communities, not withstanding the country's small population. Half of all Icelanders live in Reykjavik city and two thirds live in the metropolitan area.*

**Immigrant population**

Percent (rounded)	10%	8.5%	18%	4%	8.5%
Total number	459,000	453,000	1.7 mill	120,000	25,300
Europeans	203,000	170,000	1.2 mil	80,000	16,000
- Pakistani origin	29,134	19,250	5,250	525	-
- Afghan origin	08,012	11,500	7,000	2,000	-

*Immigrant workers began coming to Scandinavia in hitherto unknown numbers in the 1960s and 1970s. From the mid 1970s restrictions reduced immigration mainly to 'family reunification' and 'asylum seekers', i.e., refugees. Immigrants make up a quarter of Oslo's population. In general, most immigrants live in urban areas.*

*Sweden is much more multicultural than the other Nordic countries, with a large proportion of foreigners. Iceland has recently received a relatively large number of foreigners especially job seekers from Poland. Finland is least multicultural. However, Finland has closer links eastwards, and Finns travel for business and work to St. Petersburg and elsewhere in Russia.*

**Religion**

Evangelical-Lutheran					
Protestant (State) Church	82%	88%	68%	86%	81%
Muslims in percent	2.4%	4%	3%	>1 %	>1%
Muslims in number	120-150,000	210,000	300-350,000	20,000	402

*The majority of those who are not members of the state/people's church, and are not Muslims, belong to independent Christian groups and some to other religions and to non-religious groups. A growing proportion does not belong to any life stance group, neither religious nor non-religious group. The larger cities are religiously heterogeneous while people in the rural areas remain mostly Christian, either as personal believers or as 'cultural Christians'.*

Note that data is not always entirely accurate and up-to-date; some data keep changing. (January 2010.)

## Nordic co-operation

There is close co-operation amongst the Nordic countries/Scandinavia. **Nordic Council**, 'Nordisk Råd', is the main body for formal co-operation amongst the countries. A number of agreements exist in various fields. No passport is needed for Nordic citizens when traveling within Scandinavia. There is a free flow of people for employment and education, and there is extensive trade between the countries.

## Languages

In all the Nordic countries, except Finland, the mother tongue is so similar to those of their neighbours, that they can quite easily be understood throughout all the countries, including, Greenland and the Faroe Islands. In Finland, a small minority of 5-6% has Swedish as their mother tongue while the rest speak Finnish, which belongs to the Finnish-Ugric language group, distinctly different from the Germanic languages in Scandinavia and more similar to the languages of the Baltic states and the Slavic speaking countries further south in Eastern Europe.

## Education

The education systems and the level of education in all the Nordic countries are very similar and amongst the best in the world. The Nordic countries often borrow ideas from each other and compare notes on performance. Traditionally, Sweden has been wealthier than its neighbours, and ahead them. Compulsory education is now 10

years and most teenagers go on to another three-year secondary education, or combined school and apprenticeship, and more than half go on to university. In the current labour force, about one third has university education.

Literacy is not an issue in the Nordic countries with a literacy rate at 99-100. Since education is seen as a human right, children with special education needs get excellent help in all the Nordic countries. Handicapped adolescents and adults are also given first-class services, today usually integrated in the local communities unless their needs can only be met in residential medical institutions.

In all the Nordic countries, education is mostly a government concern, but some private institutions can be found at all levels, and they usually receive the bulk of the funding from the government.

Study financing, mainly through loans with a stipend share, is universal so that no student will be kept from taking an education due to financial constraints. The few wealthy students that can be found will not receive government funding. All students have to pay back their study loans upon completion of their studies, which is often a burden on young people/families as it often takes one to two decades to pay back the loan. Better study financing would improve the standard of living of young people.

## Health

Except for life expectancy, where there are some small variations between the Nordic countries, our Table does not include data on health issues. The reason for this is that all health indicators are high in

all the Nordic countries so it becomes meaningless to compare one country with the other in respect of, for example, infant mortality, child malnutrition, access to safe drinking water, and other indicators that are commonly used.

It should be noted that the health services in the Nordic countries, mostly provided by the government, are among the very best in the world. Most doctors have private practice, usually in teams forming small centres, while most hospitals are government hospitals. Health insurance is universal and every person gets a pension, irrespective of having been employed or not, i.e. including housewives, from the age of 65-67, and some receive early retirement for illness or disability, or long-term unemployment benefits; sometimes from their later 40s and 50s. It should be noted that the work conditions in certain occupations are very hard in the Nordic countries due to climatic reasons. In fishing, for example, many workers are affected by rheumatism and other conditions forcing them into early retirement. Construction workers in the building industry also, face harsh work conditions.

### Greenland and the Faroe Islands

The main Nordic or Scandinavian countries are easy enough to identify for most people. However, there are two additional ones, which are often forgotten, notably *Greenland and the Faroe Islands*. The Faroe Islands are situated between Scotland and Iceland, while Greenland is situated far north, close to the North Pole and Canada.

Greenland has a population of about 60,000 and the Faroe Islands about 50,000. About 88% of the Greenlanders are Inuit (Eskimos) while the

remainder are Danish and from other countries. In the Faeroe Islands, the majority is ethnically Danish/Nordic. The majority of the Faroes and the Greenlanders are Danish citizens.

Greenland's vast territory is about 2,200,000 sq. km, with a population density of 0.03 per sq. km. The Faroe Islands have a limited territory with a population density of 35 per sq. km. In both islands the main livelihoods derive from fishing. In the Faroe Islands, sheep farming is also important.

The GDP per capita is high in both Greenland and the Faroe Islands, with high living standard and modern living conditions, including access to Internet, use of mobile phones, etc. However, in Greenland, the recent modernization and urbanization have led to increased alcoholism and existential problems.

In the Faroe Islands and Greenland, the majority of those who take higher education, usually in Denmark, will not return permanently, leaving the population on the islands with a tilted proportion of middle-aged and elderly.

Let us add that Greenland and the Faroe Islands are not entirely independent countries as they are provinces of Denmark, and they send representatives to the Danish parliament, 'Folketinget'. They have extensive **home rule** and are for most domestic affairs like independent countries, or should we say, 'Lilliput states'. Some areas still remain Denmark's responsibility, such as defence, foreign affairs and law. EU regulations do not pertain to the two territories although Denmark is an EU member.

### The Baltic States and Russia

The Baltic states, **Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania**, are not considered part of the Nordic countries although they are geographically quite near Finland and Sweden, and they have historically had close ties with their Nordic neighbours as well as Germany, for example during the time of the *Hanseatic League* from the thirteenth to seventeenth century.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1990, the three small Baltic states with a population of 3-5 million each, have re-established their historically close links with their neighbours to the north and west, in particular Finland and Sweden, and the rest of the European Union. The Baltic states still have close co-operation with Russia, and there are significant Russian minorities within their borders. Yet, they have through their EU membership indicated that they want to be part of Western Europe, and not appendices to Russia, their powerful neighbour to the east.

It should be noted that during the Cold War era, Finland, a Western country at that time and today, had close co-operation with the Soviet Union, and still maintains and expands its co-operation with Russia, at the same time as being an active EU member, and a member of the Nordic Council. Certainly, the Baltic states draw lessons from the successful Finnish example.

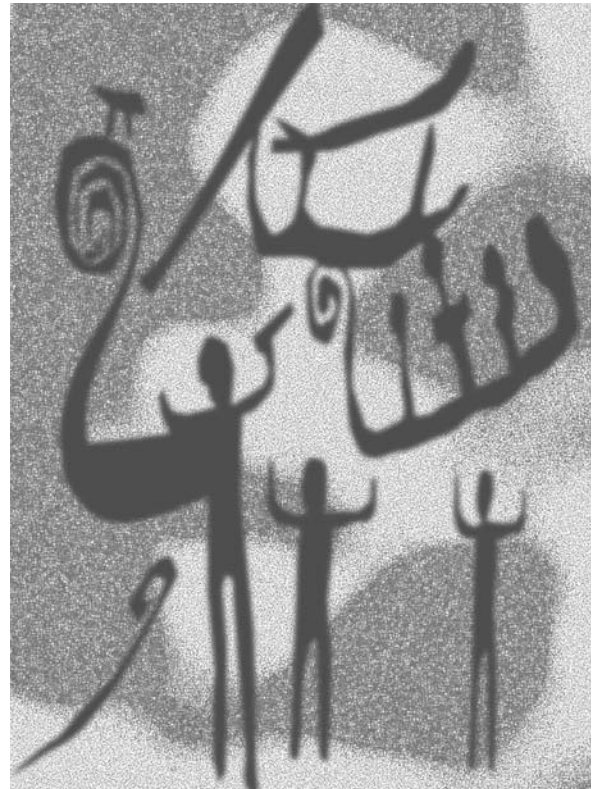
Perhaps it should be mentioned that **Russia** itself, especially the north-western areas, with major cities such as St. Petersburg, near Finland, and Murmansk, near North-Norway, have close co-operation with the Nordic countries. In future, co-operation with the West will be expanded. In the Barents Sea and the Arctic Ocean in the High North near the North Pole, Russia and Norway have clear interests. Fish, oil and mineral resources remain largely unexplored and unexploited.





## *Annex 3*

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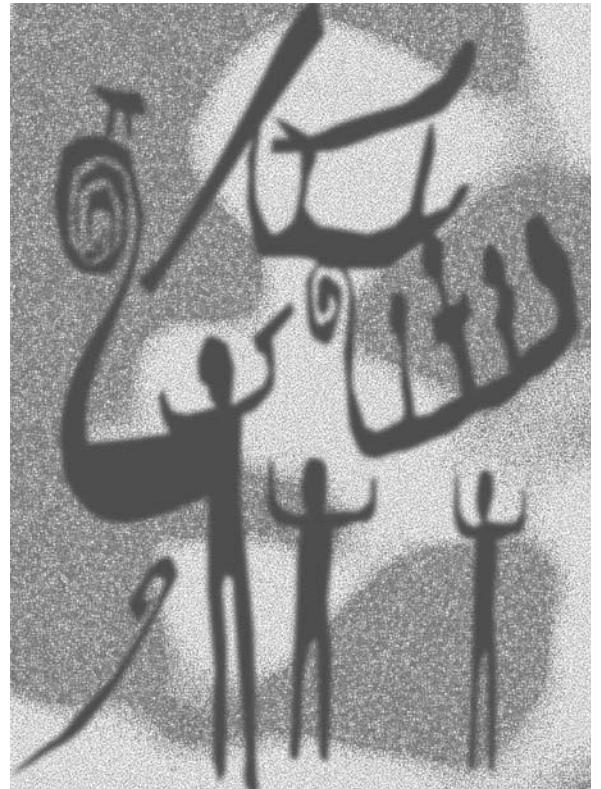
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The photos in this book originate from various open internet and printed sources, including official brochures, booklets and books. Some photos were taken by the author and professional photo journalists.

Salman Beenish designed the book cover and the illustration used as chapter divider.

## *Annex 4*

### **Useful Addresses**





*Gustav Vigeland's famous sculptures in the large park named  
"Frognerparken" in Oslo.*

# Useful Addresses

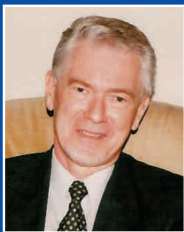
1. Pakistan-Norway Association (PANA), Islamabad  
Web: [www.pforpana.page.tl](http://www.pforpana.page.tl) Email: [pforpana@yahoo.com](mailto:pforpana@yahoo.com)
2. Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oslo  
Web: [www.norway.info.no](http://www.norway.info.no) Email: [post@mfa.no](mailto:post@mfa.no)
3. Royal Norwegian Embassy, Kabul  
Web: [www.norway.org.af](http://www.norway.org.af) Email: [emb.kabul@mfa.no](mailto:emb.kabul@mfa.no)
4. Royal Norwegian Embassy, Islamabad  
Web: [www.norway.org.pk](http://www.norway.org.pk) Email: [emb.islamabad@mfa.no](mailto:emb.islamabad@mfa.no)
5. Norwegian Seamen's Church/Norwegian Church Abroad, Bergen  
Web: [www.sjomannskirken.no](http://www.sjomannskirken.no) Email: [stein.vangen@sjomansskirken.no](mailto:stein.vangen@sjomansskirken.no)
6. Islamic Council Norway/Islamsk Råd Norge (IRN), Oslo  
Web: [www.irn.no](http://www.irn.no) Email: [post@irn.no](mailto:post@irn.no)
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Atle Hetland is the author of *The Know NORWAY Book*. He is a Norwegian Social Scientist. He has been a teacher and examiner at the "Norwegian Life and Society" course for foreign students at the University



of Oslo, and an international civil servant, diplomat and researcher. In recent years, he has worked with Afghan refugee issues in Pakistan. .

This is a useful book for everybody who needs knowledge about Norway, in fields such as resource distribution and social welfare, gender equality, environment, peace, tolerance and international understanding. I wish we had such a book when I was a student in Norway in the 1980s.

Farooq Khan, *Cand. Sociol. (Oslo)*  
*Founding President of Pakistan-Norway*  
*Association (PANA), Islamabad*

I hope that many Afghans and Pakistanis will read this book. It makes a very pleasant and informative reading. I also liked Atle Hetland's three earlier books about Afghan refugees in Pakistan, in the series, *Learning Away from Home*, Alhamra, Islamabad, 2006 and 2007.

Syed Ahmad Javed Murad  
*Former Refugee in Pakistan and NGO*  
*Administrator*  
*Jalalabad, Afghanistan*

I hope that this book will be translated into Urdu and maybe even Pashtu so that more people can read it. It is certainly worth it!

Torunn Arntsen Sajjad, *Anthropologist*  
*Researcher at Norwegian Centre for Minority*  
*Health Research (NAKMI), Oslo*

## The Know NORWAY Book

### Background for Understanding the Country and Its People

#### Pakistan and Afghanistan Edition

Atle Hetland



This book is an important contribution to maintaining and improving the good relations between Norway and Pakistan, and Norway and Afghanistan. I hope it will gain a wide readership, especially in the main sending areas of Pakistani emigrants, and the home districts of Afghan refugees. I hope that other books will be published in the years to come depicting the special relationship that exists between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Norway.

I was myself born and bred in Stavanger, Norway's 'oil capital', of Pakistani parents. I have two home countries and I love both. I loved reading this book. I trust you will too.

Atilla Amir Iftikhar Warraich  
*President, Pakistan-Norway Association (PANA), Islamabad*

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