

Norway

The total inflow of foreigners into Norway rapidly increased in 2007, reaching a record level of 53 500, 16 100 more than previous year, also a record. Migration from non-Nordic countries is largely (almost 50%) for employment, followed by family (about 30%). Family is less significant (24%) in the overall inflow of foreigners. Many (42%) of the non-Nordic immigrants came from the new EU member states, especially Poland, which accounted for much of the increase. Polish inflows more than quadrupled from 3 300 in 2005 and 7 400 in 2006 to 14 000 in 2007. Polish family migration has also been doubling annually in recent years. Other countries of origin for family migration are Thailand, Germany and the Philippines.

EU enlargement has contributed significantly to the labour migration to Norway, even though migration from Bulgaria and Romania, which joined the EU in 2007, is still limited. Out of 54 900 new permits granted for labour migrants, 88% were for EEA-nationals. The transitional rules for workers from the EU-8 countries ended in May 2009, and nationals of these countries are now able to obtain residence permits under facilitated conditions. Transitional regulations remain for Bulgarians and Romanians and may be extended through January 2012, but will be assessed annually.

Labour migration from non-EEA countries, despite its relatively small share of permits granted for employment (12% or 6 800 persons), is increasing. The number of permits issued for skilled persons from third countries increased from 1 200 in 2005 to 2 900 in 2007. A further 2 500 permits were issued from January to September 2008, with Indian nationals constituting the majority (470). In the same period 200 permits were issued to citizens of Russia, the USA, Philippines and China.

Norway has seen a sharp increase in asylum claims. In 2007, 6 500 asylum-seekers were processed, and about 20% were granted asylum; an additional 38% received a permit granted on humanitarian grounds. The major countries of origin were Iraq, Russia and Eritrea. The so-called Torshov project, part of the 2008 measures, accelerated and coordinated registration and immigration procedures, contributing to the reduction of asylum seekers from some origin countries, especially Iraq. Nonetheless, the total number of asylum seekers continues to rapidly increase. More than 8 000 persons, mainly from Afghanistan (70%), sought asylum in the first half of 2009, an increase of 2 500 compared to the same period in the previous year.

New restrictive measures in immigration policy were therefore announced in July and September 2009. The measures are aimed at bringing Norway's policy closer to that of other Nordic and European countries in order to reduce asylum seekers. Measures focus on unaccompanied minors, who represented a special challenge. The measures also address general asylum seekers, eliminating the temporary work permit during the asylum procedure for those without a documented identity. Norway also plans to establish a national identity and documentation centre, and to create a reintegration program.

The Norwegian government invested NOK 825.7 million between 2007 and 2009 in a national action plan, still ongoing, for integration and social inclusion of the immigrant population. Measures have reduced unemployment among immigrants (from 5% in April 2007 to 4% in May 2008), increased employment among immigrants (60% in the 4th quarter of 2006 to 63% in the same period in 2007), reduced the number of low-income immigrant families, and increased the number of immigrant children attending kindergarten and adult immigrants completing Norwegian language and social studies courses. A Commission appointed by the government in June 2007 led to an anti-discrimination law, prohibiting both direct and indirect discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, descent, colour, language, religion or belief. The Anti-discrimination Act came into force on 1 January 2009; it generally obliges to promote equality and prevent discrimination, and covers employment by public authorities, private and public employers and social partners. In the course of a two-year pilot project launched in 2008, some affirmative action for immigrants is used in handling applications for public administration positions.

For further information:

http://www.ssb.no/innvandring_en/

<http://www.udi.no/default.aspx?id=2112>