Working Together for Integration

Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Norway

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Foreword

This review of the skills and labour market integration of immigrants and their children in Norway is the third in a series conducted by the International Migration Division in the OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs. This series builds on previous country-specific reports by the OECD in the series Jobs for Immigrants (Vols. 1, 2 and 3), which included a first review of Norway.

With about 16% of its population foreign-born, up from just 6.5% 20 years ago, Norway has one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the OECD. Migrants in Norway are predominantly European labour migrants and their family benefiting from free mobility. At the same time, Norway is a longstanding destination for humanitarian migrants and most non-EU migrants have arrived to seek protection in Norway. As a result of this composition, migrants in Norway have very different skills and integration needs.

At the beginning of 2021, a new Integration Act entered into force. It aims to provide individualised support and continues Norway's important investment into labour market preparation. Its implementation coincided with some of the measures to tackle COVID-19, and outcomes remain to be seen, though many of the changes address previous shortcomings. Overall, integration of immigrants and their children in Norway takes place in one of the highest skilled labour markets in the OECD and in a country whose social welfare model is dependent on high employment of both genders.

This review examines the skills and labour market situation of immigrants and their children in this, the Norwegian context. The report is structured as follows: Chapter 1 presents the assessment and recommendations. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the labour market context in which integration in Norway takes place, including the composition of the foreign-born population. Chapter 3 discusses the framework for the integration of humanitarian arrivals in Norway, including the Introduction Programme and language training. Chapter 4 examines labour market outcomes of specific migrant groups, and programmes for their support. Chapter 5 turns to the educational and labour market entry challenges children of immigrants face in Norway.

This report was largely completed before the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Norway swiftly adapted its integration framework to accommodate for the specific challenges arising from the inflow of refugees from Ukraine. These measures are discussed in a separate chapter, Chapter 6.

This review was written by Elisabeth Kamm from the OECD's International Migration Division together with Hedvig Heijne. Thomas Liebig co-ordinated the report. The review benefitted from various comments and contributions by Jean-Christophe Dumont, Helen Ewald, Vilde Hernes, Lauren Matherne, Maria Sannikov, Mark Pearson, and Cecile Thoreau. The OECD Secretariat would like to thank the Norwegian Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion for supporting this review. We are grateful for their support in gathering the relevant stakeholders, organising virtual missions, and facilitating the work of the OECD Secretariat, which has been invaluable in the production of this review. Special thanks also go to the Directorate of Integration and Diversity and Statistics Norway for their data support. The Secretariat would also like to thank the authorities and stakeholders from the public and private sectors, civil society and academia who shared their knowledge and insights during the review process.

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Executive summary

In just 20 years, Norway's foreign-born population tripled and the share of migrants in the population increased from 6.5% in 2000 to close to 16% in 2020. This is one of the largest increases across the OECD. Norway has a diverse migrant population, with different integration needs. As a result of free mobility arrangements, more than four in ten foreign-born are from the EU, with over half of these having arrived in the last decade, mainly to meet labour market needs. However, Norway also has a long tradition of humanitarian migration. Refugees and their family members accounted for 22% of registered arrivals over the last 20 years, including via resettlement programmes. Norway's extensive social welfare system depends on high employment of both genders. In 2020, 68% of immigrants were in employment (OECD average: 67%). However, the difference in employment rates between EU born and non-EU-born are higher in Norway than elsewhere, for both genders. Overall employment rates of EU-born are, at 76%, well above the EU average of 70%, but this is not the case for non-EU immigrants (62% vs. 65%). The Norwegian labour market requires relatively high skill levels. Less than 4% of the overall employment in Norway is in elementary jobs, the lowest share in the OECD. Indeed, high qualification levels and labour market participation of both gender for the native-born in Norway raise the question of what outcomes of immigrants, who have been raised and educated in a very different context, would be considered a success, especially for the many low-educated refugees and their families who account for the bulk of non-EU migrants. Yet half of refugees and their family members have at most lower secondary education, compared with one in five of the native-born.

Against this backdrop, to provide the grounds for a sustainable integration into the labour market and society, Norway puts significant investment into labour market preparation. The cornerstone of these efforts is an extensive Introduction Programme (NIP) for newly arrived refugees and their families. The NIP lasts full-time for three months to up to four years and consists of training, work practise, language and social introduction courses. The programme has undergone substantial changes in a recent reform implemented since 2021, providing a stronger focus on upskilling and individualised support. One of the key characteristics of integration policy in Norway is its constant drive for reform and innovation, supported by integrated administrative data and a remarkable breadth of national research. There is also an impressive array of innovative integration initiatives and action plans. However, the actual impact is rarely assessed and many projects remain small-scale, raising questions about effectiveness and possible upscaling. There have been many substantial changes in the integration landscape in recent years, which are likely to improve integration of current and future immigrants. While the impact of these reforms – most of which coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic – generally remains to be seen, there are remaining shortcomings and issues which require attention. One such issue is the fact that family of refugees with more than five years of residence are not entitled to the NIP – for reasons that are not entirely clear. Another issue relates to skill recognition and assessment which is fast and free of charge, but the initial skills mapping is not standardised. What is more, bridging offers for migrants with prior vocational skills are underdeveloped. These issues require further action, along with a further strengthening of training offers to adapt to the changes in the labour market which have been accelerated by the pandemic. Another area for concern are the longer-term outcomes. While the initial progress in the employment rates of vulnerable migrants is better than found in other countries, notably for women, the improvement comes to a premature and sudden end after about 6 years for men and somewhat later and less abruptly for women. This suggests that a longer follow-up and a stronger upfront investment to make sure that immigrants reach secondary qualification levels would be beneficial. The latter has been the focus of recent reforms and it will be important to see whether they deliver the expected result.

Two immigrant groups require specific attention. In Norway, half of all the long-term unemployed with low education are foreign-born. A qualification programme intends to enhance the employment chances for this

group and tends to have better results for immigrants than for their native-born peers, but reach-out to eligible immigrants needs to be strengthened. The second group are inactive migrant women, for whom an innovative second-chance programme exists, with targeted reach-out, upskilling and work placement, but its scale and geographical coverage could be enhanced. While overall employment rates of EU migrants are high, their skills are often not well used in the labour market, with more than one in three employed high-educated EU migrants being in lower-skilled jobs, three times the level of the native-born. EU migrants are also underrepresented among those receiving work-related training. What is more, language levels of EU migrants seem to be low, and there is some evidence that suggests that labour market rewards for reaching higher levels are substantial for this group. Yet, in contrast to most other countries, Norway only recently introduced language offers for EU migrants, and their scale and scope is still somewhat limited. For migrants from EU countries who are likely to remain permanently in Norway, there should be a broader consideration of their needs in language and other upskilling efforts.

Norway's integration system is highly decentralised, and co-ordination is a challenge. This is evident in many areas, including co-operation between municipalities and the welfare office, eligibility for labour market programmes where similar cases are treated differently, and support offered to young people in their transition from lower to upper secondary schooling. While local ownership of implementation is important, more national oversight is warranted with a view to ensure similar standards across the country. This is because of the wide differences in integration outcomes across the country. For example, while municipalities with the highest outcomes manage to have 80% of former participants in employment or education a year after ending the Introduction Programme, that figure reaches only 40% for the municipalities with the lowest outcomes. With the increasing role of counties in integration policy, Norway took some first steps to enhance co-ordination, and it is important to continue along these lines. Exchange and mainstreaming of good practices could also be strengthened. Given the high degree of decentralisation, the comparatively modest engagement with and by civil society in integration is surprising, and their role in the process merits strengthening.

The ultimate measure of the long-term success of integration policy are the outcomes of the native-born children of immigrants. Despite persisting gaps in education outcomes at age 15, almost half manage to obtain tertiary education. However, there is a significant gender gap, with much lower outcomes for young men with immigrant parents compared with their female peers. One in three of the former does not obtain upper secondary education and an equally high share of over one in three fails to complete vocational education tracks, in part because of difficulties in finding an apprenticeship. What is more, youth with migrant parents do not always manage to get their qualifications valued in the labour market and in 2019, overall employment rates of immigrants' offspring remained 10 percentage points below their peers with native-born parents, and gaps increase with qualification levels. Given the lack of networks and knowledge of labour market functioning, along with discrimination, more needs to be done to support labour market entry. This should include mentorships, which are currently underdeveloped. Norway's ongoing reform of the secondary school system should also pay specific attention to the needs of the children of immigrants, notably the men. Stronger involvement of employers and extension of existing diversity measures to vocational training are also required to smoothen this transition. The best assurance of future successful outcomes for children of immigrants is a head start at primary school. To reach this objective, systematic prior Norwegian language screening and follow-up needs to be introduced. Notwithstanding the significant progress already achieved, participation of children of immigrants in early education and care (ECEC) needs to be strengthened further. The current cash-for-care benefit should be abolished, as it does not only provide disincentives for participation in ECEC, but also negatively impacts on the employment of immigrant mothers.

In summary, Norway invests more than many other countries into immigrant integration, especially for new arrivals, and these efforts seem to bear some fruit. However, longer-term outcomes are less favourable, and not all migrants in need are adequately covered or reached by existing offers, including language training and more generally the NIP. Successful programmes would benefit from broadening to groups currently not covered or not sufficiently reached. Stronger co-ordination and oversight of integration policy, which is largely decentralised, to enable more rapid dissemination of good practices, would also help in this respect.

1. Assessment and recommendations for immigrant integration in Norway

This chapter summarises the findings and recommendations of the OECD review of Norway's immigrant integration system. It outlines how Norway's highly skilled labour market requires newcomers especially those with lower qualification to upskill, and how Norway invests heavily into labour market preparation of humanitarian arrivals. The chapter argues that many of the recent reforms in integration policy go in the right direction but that the increased number of stakeholders requires national oversight, long-term follow-up, and efficient co-ordination. It also draws attention to the needs of some specific groups including EU and higher-skilled migrants, migrant mothers, and native-born offspring of immigrants.

This report was largely completed before the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Norway swiftly adapted its integration framework to accommodate for the specific challenges arising from the inflow of refugees from Ukraine. These measures are discussed in a separate chapter (Chapter 6).

Assessment and recommendations

Norway has a rapidly growing foreign-born population, and most recent immigration has been via free mobility

In 2020, about 16% of the population of Norway were foreign-born, up from just 6.5% in 2000. Among OECD countries, only Spain, Italy and Iceland had similar increases in the share of the foreign-born. Free mobility has accounted for the bulk of new arrivals to Norway, accounting for about 57% of arrivals over the past 15 years. At the same time, Norway is also a longstanding destination for humanitarian migrants and the majority of immigrants from outside of the EU have arrived either as humanitarian migrants or family of humanitarian migrants.

Norway has high overall employment rates, skills and qualification levels – raising the question of the adequate benchmark for integration

Like its Scandinavian neighbours, Norway has an extensive social welfare system. In 2019, it recorded the second-highest amount of social expenditure per head in the OECD. The welfare model is dependent on high employment for both genders and, at almost 80% and 75% for men and women, respectively, in Q3-2021, the country has among the highest employment rates for both genders among OECD countries. Norway's population is also characterised by high skills and qualification levels in international comparison – which raises the question of what outcomes of immigrants, who have been raised and educated in a very different context, would be considered a success.

Norway's knowledge-intense labour market calls for high skills, but many immigrants are low-educated

Only about 3.5% of employment in Norway is in elementary occupations, and 9% in low-skilled jobs. These are, on both accounts, the lowest OECD-wide. At the same time, more than half of all employment in Norway is classified as high skilled jobs – one of the highest shares in the OECD. About half of the low-skilled jobs are done by immigrants, and about one in ten immigrants work in low-skilled employment. Among native-born, this share is less than 2%. Projections on future labour market demand indicate that employers demand for high-skilled workers will continue to increase whilst the demand for low-skilled workers will be significantly lower.

At the same time, a significant share of immigrants from non-EU countries is low-educated (27% of non-EU-born vs. 17.5% for the native-born), and a full 5% of these immigrants did not go beyond primary education. While these figures are even higher in many other European OECD countries, they are of particular concern in the context of the highly skilled labour market.

To overcome this challenge, Norway invests heavily into integration…

To ensure that new arrivals have the necessary skills for sustainable labour market integration, Norway boasts – similar to its Scandinavian neighbours – a comprehensive Introduction Programme for new arrivals (NIP). Since 2021, its duration lasts full-time from three months to up to four years and consists of training, work practice, language and social introduction courses. Along with the flexibilisation brought be the 2021 reform, there has also been a stronger focus on upskilling and individualised support.

…and the resulting outcomes are good, at least initially

While overall employment rates of immigrants are high in international comparison (at 76% and 66% for men and women, respectively), there is a strong disparity in the outcomes between EU immigrants and

non-EU migrants. Whereas the former have overall employment rates above those of the native-born, there are large gaps for the latter. This especially holds for women, who face a gap of more than 17 percentage points compared with their native peers. Still, as most non-EU migrants are refugees and their families, the rates are not unfavourable. In particular, the early outcomes of refugees are relatively high – by the end of 2020, more than half of all refugees who arrived in 2015 were in employment and a further 16% were in education or labour measures.

While initial outcomes of refugees and their family are favourable, the improvement process comes to a sudden stop after about 6-7 years for men and somewhat later and more gradually for women. The decline for men is both earlier and stronger than what is observed elsewhere, suggesting that sustainability of employment is an issue – and improving both skills levels and job quality are important elements in addressing this.

The pandemic introduced a new context and revealed challenges for integration, but targeted relief measures cushioned the shock against integration…

The COVID-19 pandemic initially disproportionally affected immigrants' employment and living conditions. Among other challenges, the pandemic resulted in a strong drop in employment among immigrants and almost doubling of their unemployment rate from 5% in the 4th quarter of 2019 to 9% in the 4th quarter of 2020, more than three times the increase among native-born.

In response to the pandemic, the parliament adopted temporary relief schemes. One measure was prolonged unemployment benefits and the possibility to combine training and educational measures with unemployment benefits, both of which tend to disproportionately benefit migrants. The government also introduced significant changes to integration policy – notably an extension of the maximum duration of Norway's Introduction Programme (NIP) and a right to extended Norwegian language training. These measures seem to have succeeded in cushioning the effects of the crisis, and by the fourth quarter, of 2021, employment rates were higher than pre-crisis level but the number of unemployed immigrants were still higher than before the pandemic.

…and coincided with the implementation of one of the largest reforms of integration policy in the last 20 years

Assessing integration policy at the moment is particularly challenging, not only because of the challenges induced by the pandemic but also because of a number of significant changes related to integration policy. The revised NIP aims to provide more flexible and differentiated offers with "tailor-made" goals in an integration plan, which is adjusted to the participant's educational background and objectives. To that end, duration is now flexible and lasts from three months to up to four years for participants who have the goal of completing upper secondary education. This contrasts to a standard of two years before. In addition to the reform of the NIP several other recent or ongoing major reforms impact migrant integration. Along with the NIP reform, language training has also undergone significant changes, moving away from participation to a focus on outcomes, with a personalised language level goal. A new voucher scheme was implemented in 2021 which allows immigrants without free access to training and low language levels to purchase Norwegian classes.

Further changes include the regional reform, which reduced the number of counties while also giving the counties new responsibilities regarding settlement and the integration of immigrants. A further ongoing key initiative concerns the Skills Reform, which includes measures to help more immigrants get access to formal education and vocational training. Finally, changes to the Nationality Act have increased the necessary language knowledge for obtaining Norwegian citizenship while facilitating dual citizenship.

In spite of recent improvements, there are some shortcomings, notably regarding NIP eligibility….

The reforms responded to several shortcomings in the system and generally go in the right direction. For example, prior to the reform, there was little link between education levels of participants and programme duration, and the flexibilisation in programme duration with a stronger focus on upskilling is also welcome.

That notwithstanding, several issues remain in the integration structure which merit attention. One of these is the fact that eligibility to the NIP is restricted to refugees and certain family migrants. The latter are only entitled to participate in the programme if they join a refugee partner with less than five years of residence in the country. Other family migrants do not have a right nor obligation to participate in the Introduction Programme, although municipalities may offer participation nevertheless. Among recent family migrants joining a former refugee, currently only about one in three has the right and obligation to attend the Introduction Programme. Most of those excluded are women.

…and support for higher-skilled migrants

A further key issue that remains largely unaddressed is the high overqualification of immigrants, i.e. tertiary-educated immigrants working in lower-skilled jobs. This is an issue for all migrant groups but especially for refugees, among whom one in two employed tertiary-educated immigrants works in a job below his/her qualification level. At the same time, compared with their native peers, higher incidences of overqualification are not observed for immigrants with domestic qualifications, suggesting that much could be gained by ensuring that immigrants are equipped with Norwegian degrees.

With the new integration framework, individuals who already possess an upper secondary education at the start of the Introduction Programme experience a strong reduction in NIP duration, from previously two years to six months or less. The impact of this drastic cut on labour market outcomes – including job quality – should be carefully monitored. At the same time, to obtain a higher Norwegian degree, immigrants not only need advanced Norwegian skills but also proven English skills – which are not at all part of the Introduction Programme.

Priority should be on ensuring that refugees with higher education and skills in demand get to put their skills to use, including through better bridging to Norwegian degrees. Bridging courses are currently limited, and their broader use should be considered along with support in both English and higher vocational Norwegian. A dedicated programme for refugees with upper secondary education and skills in demand exists as an element of the NIP (Hurtigsporet). Yet, the programme is rarely used and difficulties in identifying potential candidates have been reported, questioning its value added given the new shortened duration of NIP for participants with higher education.

The system of the recognition of qualifications is well-developed, but information sharing on refugees' skills could be improved

Norway has a well-developed system for qualification recognition and assessment. This is fast and free of charge. In 2020, it took Norway's responsible agency to assess foreign credentials (NOKUT) on average only 8 working days to finalise an application for higher education assessment, provided all documents were submitted. This is a strong speedup of the process compared to previous years (it was 63 days in 2016), despite overall similar levels in terms of applications and decisions. However, there are no data on the impact that such recognition might have on labour market outcomes and NOKUT currently has no mandate to collect data on non-EU immigrants. These information gaps should be closed.

While recognition is well developed, this is less the case for skills assessment as large. A notable exception concerns refugees, who obtain an initial skills mapping while in reception facilities. However, the information is often not shared among the different stakeholders involved in the process. Improving the

information flow regarding migrants' skills between the integration agency (IMDi), reception centres and municipalities (via counties) ahead of settlement would facilitate planning and also allow for a better assessment of upskilling needs.

The needs of EU migrants merit more consideration

While overall employment rates of EU migrants are high – both in comparison with non-EU immigrants and in international comparison, their skills are often not well used in the labour market. More than one in three employed high-educated EU-migrants work in lower-skilled jobs, three times the level of the native-born. In contrast to non-EU migrants, who benefit from the NIP and related measures, EU migrants are also underrepresented among those receiving work-related training. What is more, language levels of EU migrants seem to be low, while evidence suggests that labour market rewards for reaching higher levels are substantial for this group. Yet, in contrast to most peer systems, Norway only recently introduced language offers for EU migrants, and their scale and scope is still somewhat limited.

Given these challenges, there should thus be a broader consideration of the needs of EU migrants in language and other upskilling efforts. To this end, a (voluntary) short-term introduction module for EU migrants could be explored, including skills mapping, basic language training and social orientation, as is for example done in Luxembourg.

Norway has impressive data and research infrastructure – but key evaluation issues remain unaddressed

Driven by a comprehensive data infrastructure and public support, research on integration in Norway is highly developed. It is one of the key motors of the country's constant and impressive drive for innovation and programme improvement. At the same time, there are some surprising gaps. In particular, in spite the significant investment notably into the NIP – the operating expenditure per participant and year amounts to around 18 000 Euros – there has not been a comprehensive effort to assess whether the benefits outweigh the costs. Indeed, many parallel changes make an assessment of programme effectiveness difficult. Assessment of the NIP is particularly challenging due to the entitlement structure and the fact that little is known about what happens at the municipal level, notably with respect to the participation of groups who are not entitled to participation but may be offered a place in the NIP by municipalities. A better registration of NIP participation and content at municipal level would be an important first step in assessing programme effectiveness. It would also allow for a better identification and subsequent mainstreaming of effective practices. To this end, monitoring of NIP outcomes should also be extended in both duration – to cover longer-term outcomes – and scope, notably with respect to job quality which is currently not assessed.

Settlement of humanitarian migrants needs to strike a balance between available offers and the long-term needs of communities and migrants

Currently, Norway's immigrants are relatively well distributed across the country. This is due to the settlement policy which places immigrants all over Norway, including in more remote areas which are often keen to host immigrants to counter demographic decline. Given the objective of providing everyone without upper secondary education with this qualification level during the Introduction Programme, going forward, newly arrived humanitarian migrants are envisioned to settle only in communities that offer a secondary schooling option. While it is key for migrants to have access to such education, the requirement also cuts off many small and remote communities without a secondary school from the reception of new arrivals. What is more, immigrants' location preferences are rarely taken into account in the settlement process. A more systematic approach to this should be considered.

Financial incentives could be strengthened

A key goal of the reformed Introduction Programme is to establish a tailored programme for every participant, but integration grants to municipalities have not been adapted to reflect this and are still largely lump-sum based. To accompany and strengthen the individualisation of the NIP, its funding structure should be re-considered to be more reflective of differing costs and benefits for the integration of migrants with different skills and characteristics, while strengthening municipalities' incentivises to provide cost-effective integration support.

A stronger follow-up after the NIP would smoothen the transition to sustainable employment

Since 2021, counties – the intermediate level of governance in Norway – are responsible to organise career guidance in career centres as a mandatory element in the NIP to support establishing an individualised integration plan. However, these efforts are currently not followed up upon despite them serving as a promising tool for not only initial reflection but also regular follow-up at the county level to ensure progress is made, increase oversight, and to adjust plans if necessary. Career centres and the county more generally can also support the transition after the Introduction Programme, ideally to employment or education, but otherwise also to ensure former participants are aware of offers in the general system provided by the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV).

Such a transition and regular follow-up is particularly important for immigrant women, who often fall into inactivity after the end of the Introduction Programme.

The decentralised integration system and increased number of stakeholders requires national oversight and efficient co-ordination

Municipalities are key players in implementing integration policy in Norway. They organise and offer the Introduction Programme, courses in Norwegian and Social Studies and housing for newly arrived immigrants. They are also responsible for co-ordinating activities provided by other involved actors, such as the county and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). The municipalities are obliged to provide the Introduction Programme in full-time but are free to decide the type and design of offers provided. This has resulted in major disparities in the organisation and content of the programme, which further increased in recent years, making both monitoring and nationwide comparisons difficult.

Co-ordination challenges are further exacerbated by the numerous actors and governmental levels that are involved in the development and execution of integration policy. Since the beginning of 2021, county governments have taken over responsibilities for skills mapping and providing language training for those in full-time upper secondary education, as well as co-ordination responsibilities at the county-level. They are thus an additional actor in an already quite fragmented and complex tissue of integration service providers. Furthermore, responsibilities at the national level change often and integration policy has been under the auspices of five different ministries in a little over a decade.

Against this backdrop, a strengthened national oversight and co-ordination should not only help in ensuring similar standards across the country but facilitate identification and exchange of good practices across municipalities, including with a view of upscaling and mainstreaming successful initiatives.

The qualification programme provides effective support for vulnerable migrants, but access could be improved

To integrate the long-term unemployed into the labour market, Norway runs a national Qualification Programme. It includes work-oriented activities, education and training as well as close individual follow-up and guidance. Immigrants account for about 6 in 10 programme participants and indeed, the programme seems to be more effective for immigrants than for their native-born peers.

That notwithstanding, a recent investigation by Norway's auditor however finds that many immigrants who have a right to participate in the KVP are not offered a possibility to participate. However, the report also stresses that this differs greatly by the municipality as overall many NAV offices and municipalities assess similar cases differently and that regulations offer a lot of room for individual interpretation.

There is an innovative programme for immigrant women, but coverage could be strengthened…

Immigrant women outside the labour force are specifically targeted through an employment qualification programme (Jobbsjansen) designed to reintegrate stay-at-home immigrant women. It combines language training, career guidance, work placed training and regular follow-up measures. The scheme appears to achieve better results than the NIP in getting women into work or education although a full assessment is difficult, given the selection issues involved and non-negligible dropout numbers.

Since 2016, around 900 participants have taken part in the programme annually, which is offered in around 40 municipalities. Increased funding would allow more women to participate as well as expand the geographical reach of projects.

…and the same goes for mentorship, which is currently underdeveloped

Many vacancies in Norway are not advertised publicly. Norway's Employment Agency estimates that about one in four employers fills their positions through their networks or internal recruitment. This puts not only immigrants but also their native-born offspring at a disadvantage, as they have fewer relevant networks. One way to overcome this is through mentorship programmes. Norway has several local examples of mentorship programmes supported through public funding. However, no large scale or nationwide programmes exist. Given the limited cost and high effectiveness of such a programme, an upscaling would be welcome.

Discrimination in the labour market is a problem but has received strong attention in recent years

One persistent structural impediment to integration, in Norway as elsewhere, is discrimination. Incidences of self-reported discrimination are relatively high in international comparison, notably for native-born youth with migrant parents. While this seems at least in part to be due to a high awareness of the issue, its pertinence has also been underlined by testing studies in Norway, notably regarding employment and the housing market. Combatting discrimination is a key policy priority for Norway and public awareness of discrimination is high. Norway has comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation in place encouraging public and private employers to diversify their workforce. Since 2020, all enterprises with more than 50 employees are obliged to have active, targeted, and systematic efforts to combat discrimination. This includes an obligation to report on their efforts. Companies may also receive support from Norway's Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, who is working to establish agreements with large national firms to provide guidance on this obligation.

The public sector functions as a role model for integration

OECD-wide, Norway is among the few countries that have achieved an equal employment rate in public sector jobs among native-born youth, irrespective of parental origin. This is, at least in part, the result of longstanding and strong policies to foster equal opportunities in this sector. For public sector jobs, employers in Norway must invite at least one applicant with migrant parents for an interview, and in case of equally qualified candidates offer the job to those with migrant parents first. There is also a pilot in place to test anonymous CVs in the public sector.

Overall educational outcomes of offspring of immigrants are not unfavourable, but important gaps remain

The ultimate measure for the long-term success of integration policy are the outcomes of the children of immigrants who have been raised and educated in Norway. This group is both substantial and rapidly growing. In 2021, over one in three children in Norway (34%) under the age of 15 had at least one foreign-born parent, about twice the figure observed 15 years earlier.

Their outcomes show a differentiated picture. While data on educational outcomes at age 15 show a gap of the equivalent of one school year (and thus well above the OECD average), many still seem to manage to acquire good formal educations. In 2018, almost every second 25- to 34-years-olds native-born with parents born abroad had completed tertiary education, a high share in international comparison. There are high gender gaps in outcomes, with immigrant boys faring much worse than girls.

Children of immigrants have benefited from the expansion of early childhood education and care, but Norwegian language screening and support needs to be more systematic

Participation of children of immigrants in early childhood education and care (ECEC) has expanded massively over the past 15 years, and this can be expected to give a boost to educational outcomes at age 15 in the years to come. These efforts need to be accompanied by ensuring that all children in kindergarten have sufficient proficiency in Norwegian before starting primary school. Introducing systematic language assessments earlier in the process is one possible solution going forward. Systematic language support for those children with insufficient skills should complement these assessments, as is already standard practice in many other OECD countries.

Cash-for-care subsidies should be reconsidered, and the money saved invested into free kindergarten offers

Norway provides cash-for-care subsidies for mothers who raise their children at home rather than sending them to ECEC. While access for migrant mothers has been systematically restricted in recent years, immigrant families are still disproportionately obtaining this benefit, which also impacts negatively on employment of migrant mothers. While ECEC is not free in Norway, there are several subsidies and free kindergarten offers for low-income families. These offers have proved especially effective in increasing immigrant children's ECEC attendance and should be streamlined and complemented with Norway's ongoing outreach efforts to inform parents about these offers.

The employment rate of immigrant mothers is high, which seems at least in part due to the NIP

Despite the disincentives by the cash-for-care benefit for some migrant groups, with 74% of foreign-born mothers with a child under the age of six in Norway in employment, Norway boasts high rates compared to other OECD countries. While the impact of having small children in terms of employment is greatest for

refugee mothers, with motherhood reducing their likelihood of being in employment by over 10 percentage points for this group, these differences are still small in international comparison. This seems at least in part due to the gender equality norms transmitted through the NIP. To ensure that women do not drop out of the programme, municipalities can offer flexible arrangements, easy access to childcare and adapted content and duration.

Many young migrants attend upper secondary education but many fail to complete

One issue in the education system are high drop-out rates from vocational education, notably for boys. One in three foreign-born boys drops out of vocational education, compared to 9% among those in the study preparation track. The current VET model requires two years of school before entering the workplace. A more flexible VET provision with earlier work-based training may be more attractive for academically weak students, who are those with the highest drop-out rates. Introducing work-based learning would further mean that students get professional contacts and are better prepared for apprenticeships and more likely to secure a placement. In 2018, only 62% of the applicants with migrant parents received an apprenticeship contract, while the number was 78% for the other applicants.

An ongoing educational reform aims to address the low completion rates so that students who do not receive an apprenticeship will instead be enrolled in further education for two years. A number of further steps are recommended to reduce the high drop-out, including better guidance of migrant families on the Norwegian education system; combining work-based training from day one in the low vocational education tracks; early support in searching for apprenticeship via mentorships and networking events; and stronger incentives for employers to reach out and provide places for children of immigrants and other disadvantaged groups.

The skills of youth with migrant parents are not well used in the labour market, highlighting a need for comprehensive action

Of particular concern is the fact that youth with migrant parents do not always manage to get their qualifications valued in the labour market. In 2019, overall employment rates of youth with immigrant parents remained, at 73%, remained 10 percentage points below their peers with native-born parents, and gaps increase with qualification levels. Given the lack of networks and knowledge of labour market functioning along with discrimination, more needs to be done to support labour market entry. Many of the measures outlined just above regarding vocational education would also bear benefits for broader labour market integration – regardless of the chosen educational track and the level obtained.

Norway has a highly-developed integration system, and addressing the remaining bottlenecks would further enhance its effectiveness

Norway has clearly one of the most highly developed integration systems in the OECD. The considerable investment is needed to equip vulnerable migrants to integrate into one of the most skilled labour markets and societies of the OECD, with strong gender equality. One of the hallmarks of the Norwegian approach to integration is its constant drive for improvement, as witnessed by a large number of new initiatives and action plans, many of which go into the right direction but lack follow-up and upscaling. While a full assessment of programme effectiveness is currently not possible, the relatively good outcomes notably for migrant mothers and their children suggest that the significant effort that is put into migrant integration bears some fruit. That notwithstanding, more could be done to identify and mainstream successful initiatives, and to make sure that all groups are adequately covered and reached by existing offers, notably through stronger co-ordination and monitoring. To this end, the following actions are recommended:

List of recommendations

Enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the Introduction Programme

- Incentivise the development and effectiveness of tailored integration plans by replacing the current financial generic per capita transfers to municipalities with a more refined payment schedule, rewarding municipalities which undertake specific efforts in this respect. The altered financial scheme should also account for participants' characteristics and as a result, the likely estimated scale and scope of required integration support. On that basis, the scheme should include a premium for successful and sustainable integration, measured by the longer-term outcomes of participants.
- Ensure that skills mapping is done using a common framework. Improve the information flow regarding migrants' skills between IMDi, reception centres and municipalities (via counties) ahead of settlement.
- Ensure similar standards in the delivery of the Introduction Programme across the country, building on recent efforts to provide standardised course elements, with clearly defined measurement and follow-up.
- Collect information on settlement and employment preferences of refugees as part of the initial skills mapping, and consider this information in the placement decision.
- Monitor the impact of the current practice of limiting the settlement of refugees to municipalities with upper secondary schools with respect to refugees' distribution and settlement patterns. Allow for adjustments that adapt to labour market needs and population concerns of smaller and rural municipalities.
- Support inter-municipal co-operation in the NIP, to allow NIP participants in one municipality to complete parts of their programme, in a different municipality.
- Monitor the impact of the drastically shortened NIP time for those with upper secondary education since 2021 (3-12 months compared to 2 years before) and make sure that the programme allows for adequate skills development to qualify to employment and education and provide more flexibility where needed.
- Make vocation-specific bridging offers widely available and pilot profession-specific paths in the fast-track programme.
- Mainstream current efforts to include participants' feedback and suggestions in the further development and adaptation of the NIP.
- Consider an adapted Introduction Programme for parents with children below the age of 3 and investigate the intensity of the Introduction Programme for these migrants.
- Continue current efforts to use comprehensive indicators to assess long-term outcomes of the Introduction Programme and act on the results.

Smoothen the transition from the Introduction Programme

- Assess the reasons behind the high and increasing share of women who participated in the Introduction Programme and whose labour market status shortly thereafter becomes unknown.
  - Establish a systematic follow-up mechanism via a specialised caseworker when the NIP ends to ensure that women, in particular low-skilled mothers, are aware of and can access labour market support measures after the NIP.
- For higher-educated participants in the NIP, make sure that they can obtain/validate English language skills necessary for admission to higher education.

- Provide higher-skilled refugees and their family members with a trained mentor or dedicated caseworker to smoothen the transition to a job and education that puts their skills and education to use.

Make sure all immigrants in need can easily access integration offers

- Offer all immigrants who join a refugee partner access to the NIP, irrespective of their partners' length of residence in the country.
- Make sure that all permanent immigrants are offered Norwegian language training by extending the right to language training to all family immigrants from non-EU countries and promoting the new language offers for EU migrants.
- Enhance the use of vocational language training and certification of corresponding skills, accounting for both migrants' skills and labour market needs.
- Make sure that migrants benefit from available training offers, including by raising awareness among migrants and employers.
- Pilot a (voluntary) short-term introduction module for EU migrants, including skills mapping, basic language training and social orientation.

Ensure long-term labour market attachment

- Strengthen the role of career guidance throughout the integration process.
  - For NIP participants, ensure regular follow-up (after the initial one-time career guidance at the start of the NIP.
  - For immigrant groups with no right to the NIP, make the possibility of career guidance more widely known and enhance access via translators, group-specific and online offers.
- Enhance the use of the "real competence assessment" and similar tools to certify informal skills in skills assessment and qualification plans, in co-operation with the social partners.
- Scale-up and expand the geographical reach of the existing second chance programme for stay-at-home immigrant women.
- Enhance access to and participation in the qualification programme as well as of bridging offers for migrant in need of qualification and skills adaptation to Norwegian standards.
- Monitor the impact of access restrictions to social assistance on quality of employment and long-term outcomes.
- Strengthen civil society engagement by simplifying available support measures for civil society initiatives.

Strengthen efforts to integrate children of immigrants

- Abolish the cash-for-care benefits and use the money saved to further extend and promote free ECEC for low-income households, with a specific focus on immigrant families.
- Raise awareness about existing fee reductions for ECEC and the benefits of participation for children of immigrants.
- Provide for a systematic language screening well before the start of primary education, and provide targeted language support for those assessed to lag behind.
- Provide clear national guidance for conducting language proficiency assessments in the education system. Establish national minimum standards and regular evaluation to incentivise the provision of quality language support.

- Address the high drop-out of children of immigrants from upper secondary education, including through
  - better guidance of migrant families on the Norwegian education system;
  - combining work-based training from day one in the low vocational education tracks;
  - early support in searching for apprenticeship via mentorships and networking events;
  - systematic provision of contacts between youth with immigrant parents and employers during the first year of upper secondary education;
  - incentives for employers to reach out and provide places for disfavoured youth.

Tackle discrimination and enhance diversity

- Make anti-discrimination instruments better known among all migrants and inform them about their rights.
- Ensure employers are aware of the language skills they demand from immigrant candidates, and possible differentiation between competence fields (e.g. oral vs written).
- Include apprenticeship providers under the regulations encouraging employers to diversify their workforce.

Improve co-ordination

- Make sure that the increasing decentralisation and enhanced number of stakeholders in the integration process are met with a stronger co-ordination responsibility at the national level.
- Promote identification and exchange of good practices across municipalities, including with a view of upscaling and mainstreaming successful initiatives.
- Engage in regular consultation and dialogue with immigrant associations by formalising the communication channels that emerged during COVID-19 and enhanced communication during the implementation of the new Integration Act.
- Ensure that frequent changes in responsibilities do not result in under- or overprovision of integration services. Systematically track and exchange information between the stakeholders on integration activities undertaken throughout the integration process.

Improve monitoring of outcomes

- Improve monitoring of the uptake and outcomes of language training at the individual level.
- Provide for a more systematic assessment of the effectiveness of new programmes and Action plans, and act on the results.
- Ensure that immigrants in primary education after the NIP are coded as “in education” and do not fall into a generic missing category.
- Include broader measures, such as longer-term employment, job quality, and language outcomes, in the assessment of the Introduction Programme.
- Assess the impact of eligibility cut-off-points regarding age and duration of residence (for the access of family migrants who join a refugee) in the NIP on outcomes.
- Monitor the uptake of municipal NIP participation for groups who are not entitled to participation, and build on this monitoring to assess NIP effectiveness.
- Improve data collection on the usage of skills assessment and recognition services and investigate the labour market impact of these services for finding adequate employment. Provide NOKUT with the mandate to collect data on non-EU immigrants.

2. Context of integration policy in Norway

This chapter presents the context for integration policy in Norway. Starting with an outline of the economic and social conditions, with a special focus on the pandemics impact on integration, it proceeds to present a short profile of the immigrant population in Norway, their education and labour market outcomes as well as their settlement. It concludes with an overview of the development of integration policy and the main stakeholders.

This report was largely completed before the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Norway swiftly adapted its integration framework to accommodate for the specific challenges arising from the inflow of refugees from Ukraine. These measures are discussed in a separate chapter (Chapter 6).

Social and labour market context of integration policy

Norway's welfare model depends on high employment of all genders

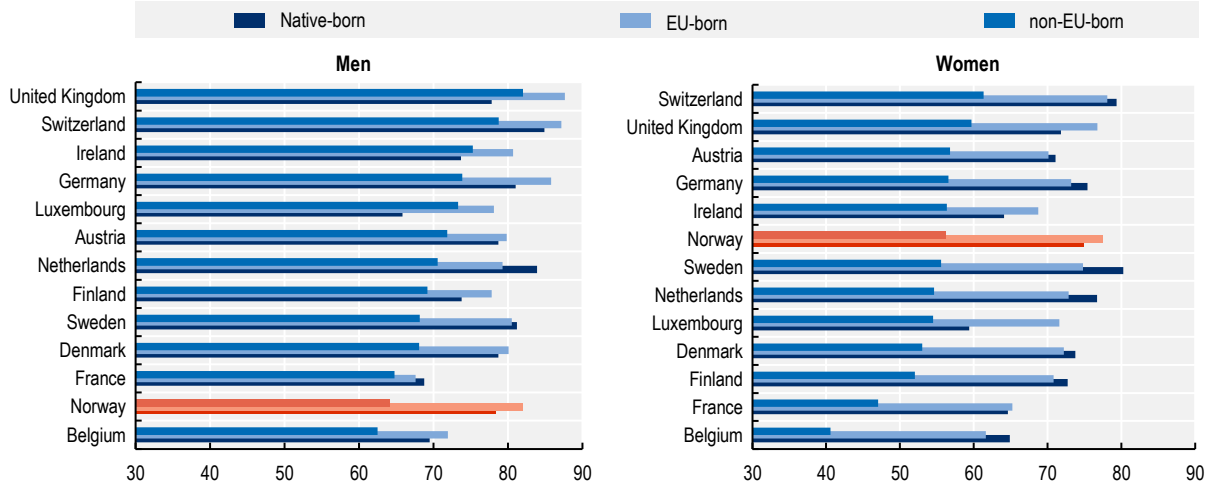
The integration of immigrants and their children has to be seen in the context of some of the specificities of the Norwegian economy and labour market setting. In particular, Norway has one of the highest GDP per capita and the third-highest productivity levels OECD-wide (OECD, 2021[1]; OECD, 2021[2]). The employment rates are above the OECD average, and labour market participation of both men and women is high. In the first quarter of 2021, 74% of the population aged 15 to 64 was employed (OECD, 2021[2]). However, labour-force participation has been declining over the last decade, particularly among native-born men. What is more, while unemployment rates are below the OECD average, they never returned to the levels preceding the 2008 global economic crisis (OECD, 2019[3]).

A first look at the labour market outcomes of the foreign-born depicts outcomes close to the OECD average. Prior to the pandemic, in 2019, the foreign-born in Norway had an employment rate of 70% and a participation rate at 75% – which corresponds to the OECD average for immigrants in terms of absolute levels but relatively high gaps (7 and 4 percentage points, respectively) compared with the native-born population. Likewise, the pre-pandemic unemployment rate for the foreign-born was 7% – 1 percentage point below the OECD average for this group, but 2.5 times higher than among the native-born in Norway.

There are large differences in employment rates between immigrants born in an EU country and those from a non-EU country (Figure 2.1). The employment rate of EU immigrants is higher than that of their native-born peers for both genders in Norway, while the rates of non-EU immigrants are well below those of the native-born. Indeed, the gap in employment rates between EU and non-EU-born is larger in Norway than in any other OECD country considered here; it is 18 percentage points among men and a full 21 percentage points among women.

Figure 2.1. Employment rate gaps between EU- and non-EU-born immigrants are large in Norway

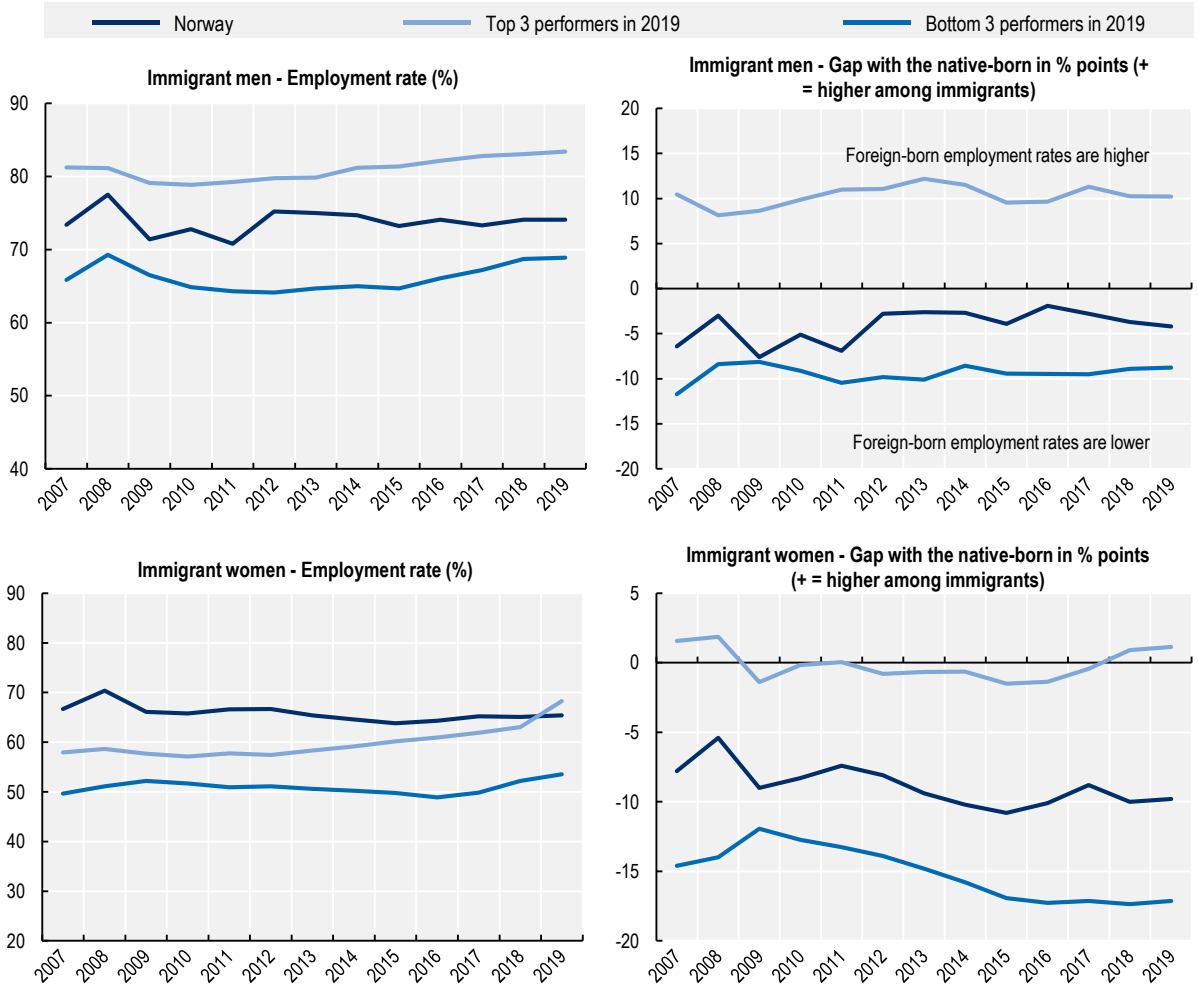
Percentages by country of birth, 15-64 year-olds, 2019



Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on EU LFS 2019.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the employment rates of immigrants stood relatively stable over the past decade. The employment rate of immigrant men in Norway has been between the top-3 and bottom-3 performers of the comparison group, while the rate among women was in fact the highest until 2019 (Figure 2.2). While gaps to native-born men were less than 5 percentage points at the end of the past decade, immigrant women lagged behind their native-born peers by about 10 percentage points.

Figure 2.2. Employment rates of foreign-born are high, but gaps to native-born women increased



Note: Top and bottom 3 performers among the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States.
Source: EU LFS.

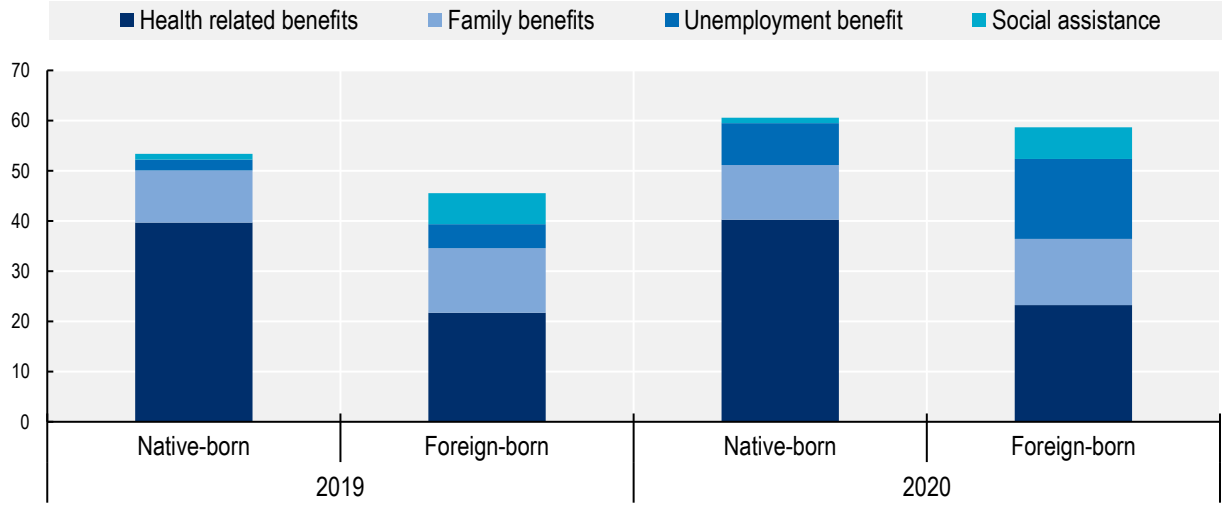
The large employment rate gap between foreign- and native-born women has to be seen in the context of Norway having one of the smallest gender gaps in employment OECD-wide. In 2021, 73% of women in Norway aged 15-64 were employed, which is 14 percentage points above the OECD average. The gender gap in labour force participation has remained at 5 percentage points (a third of the OECD average) over the past decade (OECD, 2021[4]). Norway also has one of the lowest gender pay gaps across the OECD, including among low-educated workers (OECD, 2017[5]). Mothers are also more likely to be in work than elsewhere. Only in one in ten families is the father the sole bread-winner (OECD, 2017[6]). Norway has many policies promoting full-time employment of women, including widely accessible and subsidised childcare services, parental leave and other policies supporting a “dual earner-dual career” model (OECD and Nordic Council of Ministers, 2018[7]).

Another key feature of the country is its extensive social welfare system. In 2019, it recorded the second-highest amount of social expenditure per head in the OECD (OECD, 2021[8]). That same year, Norway spent around 25% of its GDP on public social policy programmes and benefits, placing the country in the upper quarter at position 9 out of 38 (OECD, 2021[8]). Twelve percent of the working-age population receive disability benefits, a share higher than in any OECD country. In addition, the share of public spending on incapacity benefits – due to sickness, disability and occupational injury – was, at 4.4% of the GDP, the second-highest OECD-wide; only surpassed by Denmark (OECD, 2019[9]). Norway's welfare state is furthermore characterised by a high degree of wage compression, a large public sector and extensive active labour market policies (OECD, 2019[10]).

In 2019, overall expenditure per capita for public benefits was almost 20% higher among the native-born than among the foreign-born. In 2020, overall levels were similar for both groups, due to an increase in unemployment benefits which was stronger among immigrants. In both years, there were notable differences by type of benefit. Incapacity and other health-related benefits were much higher for the native-born, while unemployment and social assistance were higher among foreign-born (Figure 2.3). Accounting for age differences, the benefit expenditure per foreign-born was NOK 48 000 in 2019 and NOK 60 000 in 2020, whereas it was 54 000 for native-born in 2019 and increased to NOK 61 000 for native-born in 2020.

Figure 2.3. Levels of public expenditure on native- and foreign-born at working age are at similar levels but differ by benefit type

Benefit expenditure (excl. pensions) per inhabitant aged 18-66, age-standardised, in 1 000 NOK, 2019 and 2020



Note: Health-related benefits include sickness benefit, care benefit, training allowance, attendance allowance, work assessment allowance, disability benefit, and basic benefit. Family benefits included parental benefit, adoption benefit, lump-sum grant, child benefit, cash-for-care benefit, single parent benefit. Unemployment benefit also includes new benefits from 2020: Wage compensation and unemployment benefits for self-employed and freelancers. Social assistance also includes qualification benefits. Note that social assistance depends on household income and is meant to secure income for the whole household. Social assistance is included here for the person it is paid out to.
Source: NAV, May 2021.

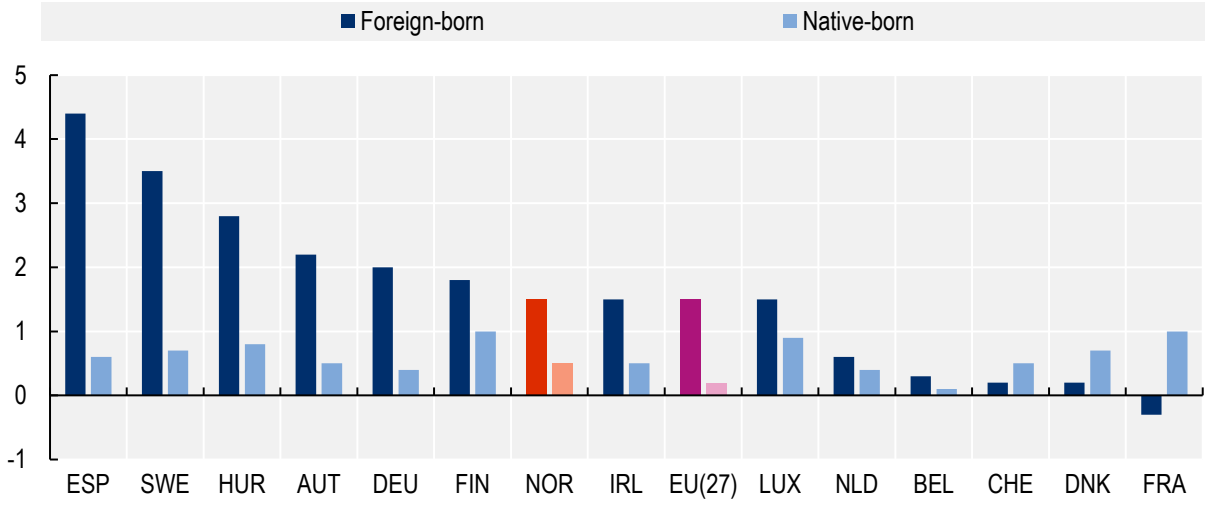
The pandemic introduced a new context and additional challenges for integration

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionally affected immigrant employment and living conditions in 2020 and 2021. On the 12th of March 2020, the Norwegian Government implemented several measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus, along with a number of changes to integration policy (Box 2.1). The containment measures led to a massive reduction in economic activity, and the number of registered jobseekers reached record levels. The sharpest increase in new job seekers was observed between the first and second quarter of 2020. In just four weeks, the share of jobseekers in the total labour force increased from 2.8% to 15.4%. The share of registered unemployed immigrants as a percentage of the labour force increased from 5.5% in February 2020 to close to 18% in March 2020. Immigrants from Central and Eastern EU countries and Asia experienced the largest increase. However, while immigrant unemployment tripled, the relative increase for the native-born was much larger – their unemployment rate rose from less than 2% to 9% and their total number quintupled. Before the pandemic the unemployment rate was three times as high among immigrants, while in March 2020 it was around two times as high. (Statistics Norway, 2020[11]).

In the fourth quarter of 2020, immigrants accounted for 42% of all registered unemployed. This share was about the same as the years before the pandemic (Statistics Norway, 2021[12]). In international comparison, the developments in Norway are similar to other OECD countries, and the increase in unemployment over the whole year was stronger in neighbouring Finland and Sweden (Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4. The unemployment rate of immigrants increased strongly during the first year of the pandemic

Change in unemployment rate by place of birth in percentage points, 15 to 74-year-olds, 2019 to 2020



Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from Eurostat, 2019 and 2020 [lfsa_urgacob].

In previous periods of economic downturn, the consequences of job loss have been much more long-lasting for immigrants than for the native-born (Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed, 2018[13]). This also seems to have been the case, at least initially, during the pandemic. Among immigrants from low-income countries who were unemployed at the beginning of 2020, 76% of women and 70% of men had not returned to a job by the end of 2020. For natives, the share was 61% for women and 63% for men (Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed, 2021[14]).

Immigrants are overrepresented in sectors that have been the most affected by containment measures, such as the business service sector, catering and hotel services, and retail. Calculations by Statistics Norway show that 29% of immigrants were employed in these sectors; the corresponding share was 13% among the general population. The share was even higher for immigrants from Asia and Africa (Olsen, 2021[15]). Immigrants are also more often overrepresented among employees with temporary and part-time contracts. Earlier research on Norway has also found that immigrants are heavily overrepresented in firms with higher risks of business closure (Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed, 2018[13]).

Box 2.1. Immediate changes relation to integration policy to respond to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and the implemented control measures severely impacted the quality and scope of the available training and tests in the Introduction Programme. The economic shock following the lockdown measures meant that immigrants finishing the programme faced greater challenges in getting a job. To counteract the negative effects of the pandemic, the government implemented several measures:

- Possibility of extension of the Introduction Programme by up to six months
- Extension of the right to training in Norwegian and Social Studies by up to four months
- Further career guidance for those in need
- Additional funding to increase the use of online tools in Norwegian language training
- Amendments to the Introduction Act, allowing municipalities to pay full benefits regardless of participants' absence due to COVID-19
- Additional funds to NGOs for awareness-raising work on COVID-19
- Additional funds to strengthen job employment programmes such as "Jobbsjansen", which is targeting immigrant women
- A temporary amendment making it easier to study or do training while receiving unemployment benefits

Source: (Expertgruppe, 2020[16]; Indseth et al., 2020[17]; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020[18]; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020[19]; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021[20]; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020[21]; Eurofound, 2021[22]).

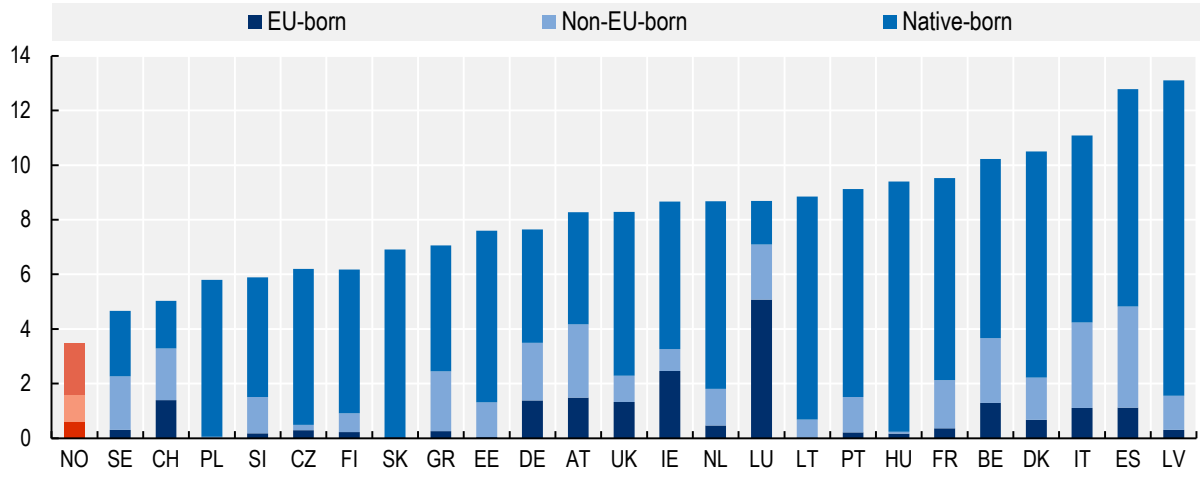
A survey on the quality of life of the Norwegian population carried out just before and after the pandemic outbreak showed that immigrants experienced a greater increase in concern about their future than the rest of the population. This is possibly linked to the fact that they were more likely to lose their jobs than the rest of the population (Støren, Rønning and Gram, 2020[23]).[1]

Norway's knowledge intense labour market requires high skills

The Norwegian labour market is knowledge-intense and employment options for the low-skilled are limited. Only 3.5% of employment is in elementary occupations, defined as jobs with simple and routine tasks that require the use of hand-held tools and often some physical effort. This is the lowest share OECD-wide (Figure 2.5.). Only about half of these jobs are done by natives. Instead, the majority of the native-born work in high-skilled jobs (52%), about two in five work in medium-skilled jobs (39%) and one in ten (10%) in low-skilled jobs. Among immigrants, 36% work in high-skilled, 44% in medium-skilled and 20% in low-skilled jobs (Statistics Norway, 2021[24]). Projections on future labour market demand indicate that employers demand for high-skilled workers will continue to increase whilst the demand for low-skilled workers will drop significantly (Walbækken et al., 2019[25]).

Figure 2.5. Few employment options exist in elementary occupations

Percentage of total employees, aged 15-65, working in elementary occupations and composition by place of birth



Note: ISCO-9 from the International standard classification of occupations.
Source: EU LFS 2019.

The high skill level of the Norwegian labour market corresponds with an adult population in Norway that is also relatively highly skilled in international comparison. Data from the 2013 OECD Survey of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) show that Norway belongs to the top performers in literacy, numeracy and problem-solving in technology-rich environments. Immigrants have significantly lower literacy scores than the native-born, although scores are higher for those with more years of residence (OECD, 2014[26]).

Access to lifelong education and training are necessary to ensure that the Norwegian workforce can meet the demands of the labour market. Indeed, lifelong upskilling is a key principle of the Norwegian education policy. While adults' access to lifelong learning and upskilling is high in Norway in international comparison, immigrants and low-skilled workers are underrepresented. The share of the foreign-born population attending adult education is 12 percentage points lower than among the native-born. The difference between the two groups has even widened over the past years (OECD/European Union, 2018[27]).

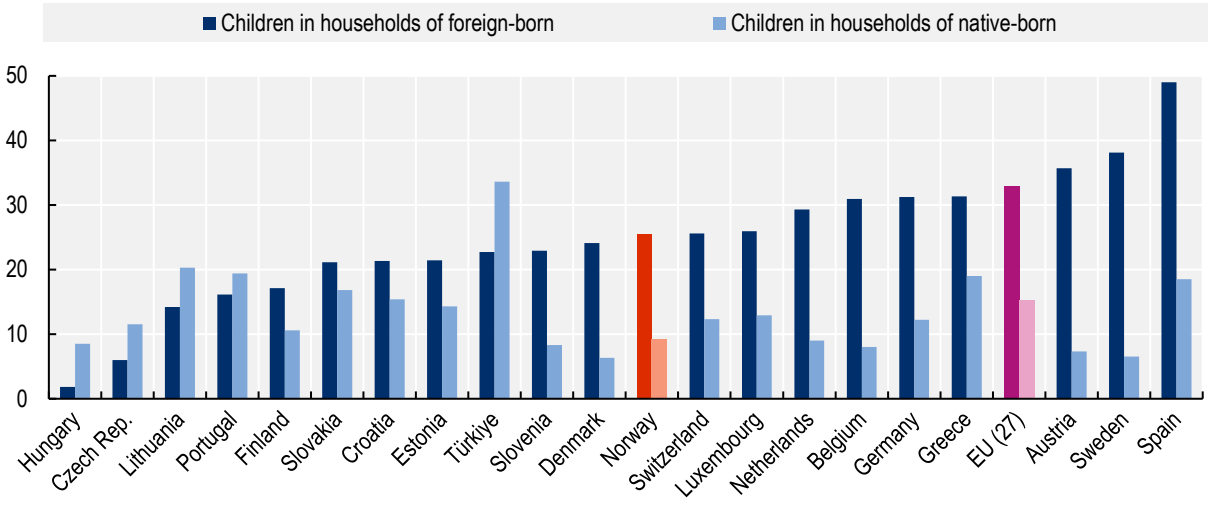
Norway has a high standard of living, but many children of immigrants grow up in relative poverty

Norwegians enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. Norway ranks well in most indicators of well-being and among the top when it comes to self-reported well-being, environmental quality and work-life balance (OECD, 2020[28]). The country has one of the highest median incomes in the OECD and at the same time one of the largest shares living in the middle class (OECD, 2019[10]). Due to low income inequalities and high net replacement, particularly for low-income families, Norway's Gini coefficient of 0.26 denotes the sixth-lowest income inequality after government taxes and transfers in the OECD (OECD, 2021[29]). At current levels of intergenerational mobility, it would take two to three generations for the offspring of a low-income family in Norway to approach the mean average income. The OECD average is four to five generations (OECD, 2018[30]). Looking at the improvements in inequality over time, Norway and the other Nordic countries have experienced a fall in these rankings since 2010.

However, children growing up in immigrant households in Norway are about three times more likely to be at risk of relative poverty than their peers growing up in native-born households. In 2020, 26% of children in immigrant households were at risk of relative poverty, compared to 9% among their peers with parents who are both born in Norway (Figure 2.6). Moreover, the share of children growing up in households with relative poverty increased by 6 percentage points over the last decade among foreign-born households, while it remained at the same level for native-born households. As a result, the gap between the two groups increased. A similar unfavourable development is only present in the Netherlands, and other (comparable) countries even recorded a positive development. Notably Finland was able to half its at-risk-of-poverty rate for children in immigrant households from 34% in 2010 to 17% in 2020.

Figure 2.6. One in four children in foreign-born households grows up at risk of relative poverty

Percentages, at-risk-of-poverty rate for children by country of birth of their parents, up to 17 years old, 2020



Note: At-risk-of-poverty rate, cut-off point: 60% of median equivalised income after social transfers.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on EU-SILC and ECHP surveys, 2021.

Among the children living in households with a persistently low income, more than half are children of immigrants – a share which has steadily increased over the past ten years. In 2019 almost every second immigrant child lived in a household with a persistently low income. Among those born in Norway but to immigrant parents the share is also high at 34%, compared to 6% for children who are native-born to native-born parents (Epland and Morten Normann, 2021[31]).

A short profile of the immigrant population

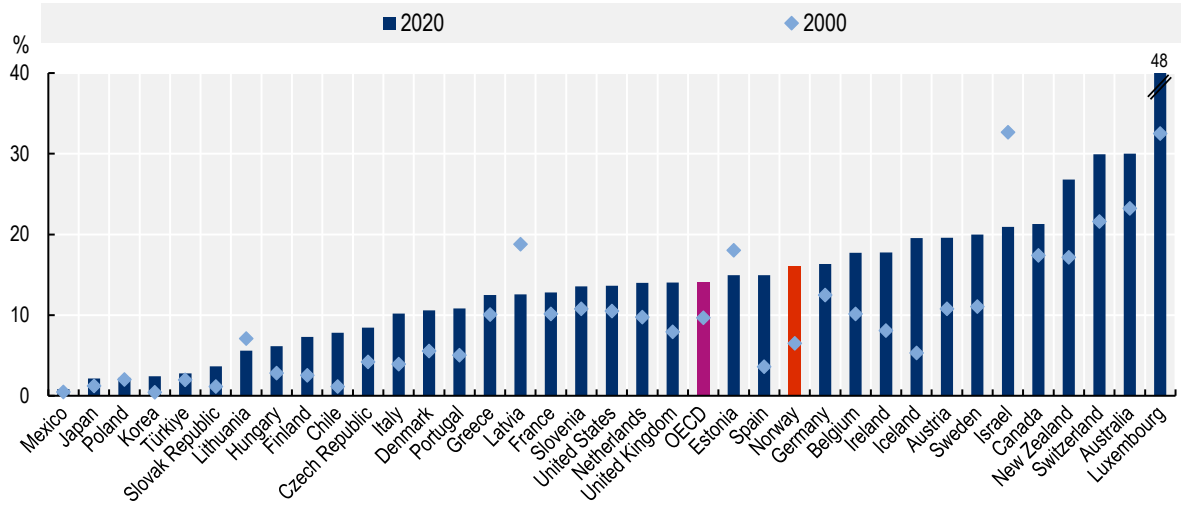
Origin and characteristics of Norway's immigrant population

Over the past two decades, Norway's foreign-born population has been growing at a compound annual rate of around 4%. While the foreign-born accounted for just 6.5% of Norway's population in 2000, they accounted for close to 16% in 2020 (Figure 2.7). Only a handful of OECD countries had a similar increase in their immigrant population over this period. A further 3.5% of the Norwegian population are Norwegian-born to immigrant parents. The number of newly arrived immigrants peaked in 2011, largely driven by labour immigration from Eastern Europe. Inflows have gradually declined since then.

In 2021, one in four immigrants had lived in Norway up to four years, and half of the residing immigrant population had not been in Norway for longer than 10 years (Statistics Norway, 2021[32]). This points to the more recent character of migration to Norway, compared to the OECD total where about 70% of foreign-born in have been residing in the country for ten years or more.

Figure 2.7. Norway has seen a strong increase in its foreign-born population over the past 20 years

Share of foreign-born as a percentage of the total population, 2000 and 2020



Source: OECD (2020[33]), *OECD International Migration Outlook 2020*, https://doi.org/10.1787/ec98f531-en; OECD (2021[34]), *OECD International Migration Outlook 2021*, https://doi.org/10.1787/29f23e9d-en.

The immigrant population is younger than the rest of the population. In 2021, 11% of the immigrants were over 60 years, compared with 37% among the native-born population. There is a slight overweight of men among the immigrants (53% versus 47%), driven by the large numbers of Polish immigrants, where men constitute over 60% of all immigrants. Among immigrants from Thailand and Viet Nam, however, the majority are women.

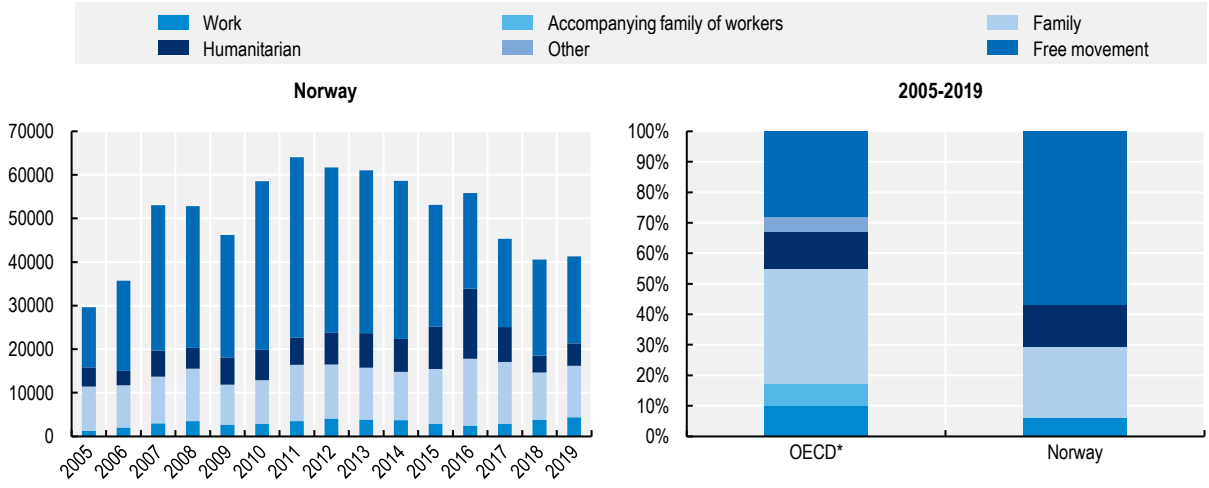
In 2020, 9% of the foreign-born population was from another Nordic country, 35% from an EU country, 10% from the rest of Europe, 13% from Africa, 29% from Asia and the Middle East as well as 5% from other parts of the world (Statistics Norway, 2021[35]). Migrants from Poland are the largest foreign-born group in Norway. In 2021, they accounted for 13% of the foreign-born population, more than twice as many as the second-largest group, immigrants born in Lithuania. Other prominent countries of origin are Sweden, Syria, Iraq and Pakistan. Pakistan used to be the leading non-European origin country for decades but was surpassed by Somalia in 2014. The number of immigrants from Syria has grown sharply over the past decade, such that in 2021, they accounted for almost 4% of Norway's foreign-born population, compared to just 0.4% in 2010 (Statistics Norway, 2021[32]).

The majority of recent immigrants to Norway have come for work. Among all first-time immigrants who have arrived in Norway between 2005 and 2020, 42% came for work, 33% for family reasons, 14% on humanitarian grounds and 10% for educational purposes. The vast majority of labour migrants have come from EU countries through the free mobility arrangements.

Indeed, free mobility has been the main category of entries to Norway over the past 15 years, accounting for 57% of new permanent arrivals in Norway over this period. This is a high share in international comparison (Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8. Most immigrants to Norway over the past two decades have arrived via free mobility rights

OECD standardised number of annual inflows of permanent migrants by entry category, 2005-19



Note: Numbers include changes of status from temporary to permanent.
Source: Standardised statistics by the OECD Secretariat. *OECD comparison group includes the following 14 countries: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States.

Following the EU enlargement to Eastern European countries in 2004 and 2007, numbers of EU/EFTA-born immigrants, notably from Poland and the Baltic States, rose sharply, leading to a rapid change in the composition of Norway's migrant population. Between 2004 and 2011, Norway attracted the same number of labour migrants from Central and Eastern Europe as Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland combined (Friberg and Eldring, 2013[36]).

In 2019, 35% of all labour migrants came from Poland, 15% from Lithuania and 20% from other Eastern European countries. While the share of EU/EEA labour migrants has fallen since its peak in 2011/12, labour migration from countries outside EU/EEA has increased, especially from India and Viet Nam. Men constitute the overwhelming majority of labour migrants (70%).

In 2019, family migrants accounted for 23% of the immigrants residing in Norway. Family immigration is composed of those who already have a family in Norway (family reunification) and those who want to establish a family in Norway (family formation). The latter category represents a third of all family immigration and has historically been a person coming to form a family with a Norwegian-born person. Yet, as the Norwegian population is becoming more diverse, more and more persons are also coming to join previous immigrants, with a majority joining someone born in Pakistan. For those coming to Norway to establish a family with a Norwegian-born, most are from Thailand. The origin of those reuniting with a family member reflects previous refugee and labour migration flows, with many coming from Poland and Somalia and, more recently, from Syria. In recent years, fewer immigrants joined their families in Norway. While men account for the bulk of labour migrants, the overwhelming majority of those coming to join a family member are women (74%). Every fourth person in the family migration category has come to join a refugee.

Norway is also a longstanding destination for humanitarian migrants – a group that faces particular integration challenges due to their forced migration. 43% of the resident non-EU migrants who arrived as adults have come on humanitarian grounds (including family migration to humanitarian migrants). In total,

more than 170 000 refugees are currently living in Norway. The main origin countries are Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Iran. Norway experienced its first large inflow of asylum seekers only in the late 1980s. Throughout the years, Norway has experienced large fluctuation in numbers of asylum seekers with peaks in 1987, 1992, 2002, 2009 and 2015. In addition to those crossing the Norwegian border to apply for asylum, Norway has since 1950 accepted a pre-determined number of refugees as part of an annual resettlement quota. In 2019, for the first time since 1999, the number of resettled refugees exceeded the number of granted asylums in Norway. The latter varied for a long time between 1 000 and 1 500 people, but since 2015, the number has been between 2000 and 3 000 persons annually.

Following the arrival of large humanitarian flows in 2015/2016 to Europe, the number of applications from asylum increased. The peak was reached in 2016, with humanitarian inflows accounting for 36% of all residence permits. However, over the 2015-20 period, cumulated applications of refugees per inhabitant remain below the EU average; an annual average of 146 applications for international protection per 100 000 citizens compared to 186 for the EU average (Eurostat, 2021[37]). While men make up the majority of refugees residing in Norway, 64% of the family migrants to refugees are women.

Norway's population holds increasingly positive views on migrants, but less so on integration policy and regards employment and language skills as key parameters for integration success (Box 2.2).

Box 2.2. Norwegian society views immigration as increasingly positive but is less optimistic about integration policy

Statistics Norway annual survey on the population's attitudes towards immigration and immigrants shows that attitudes have become increasingly positive over the years. When asked if immigrants make a useful contribution to Norwegian working life, almost 8 out of 10 answered that they fully or fairly agree. Another question measuring populations' attitudes is whether immigrants are seen as a source of insecurity in Norwegian society. When the survey started in 2002, the share that disagreed with this statement was 41%. In 2020, the share that disagreed had risen to 63%.

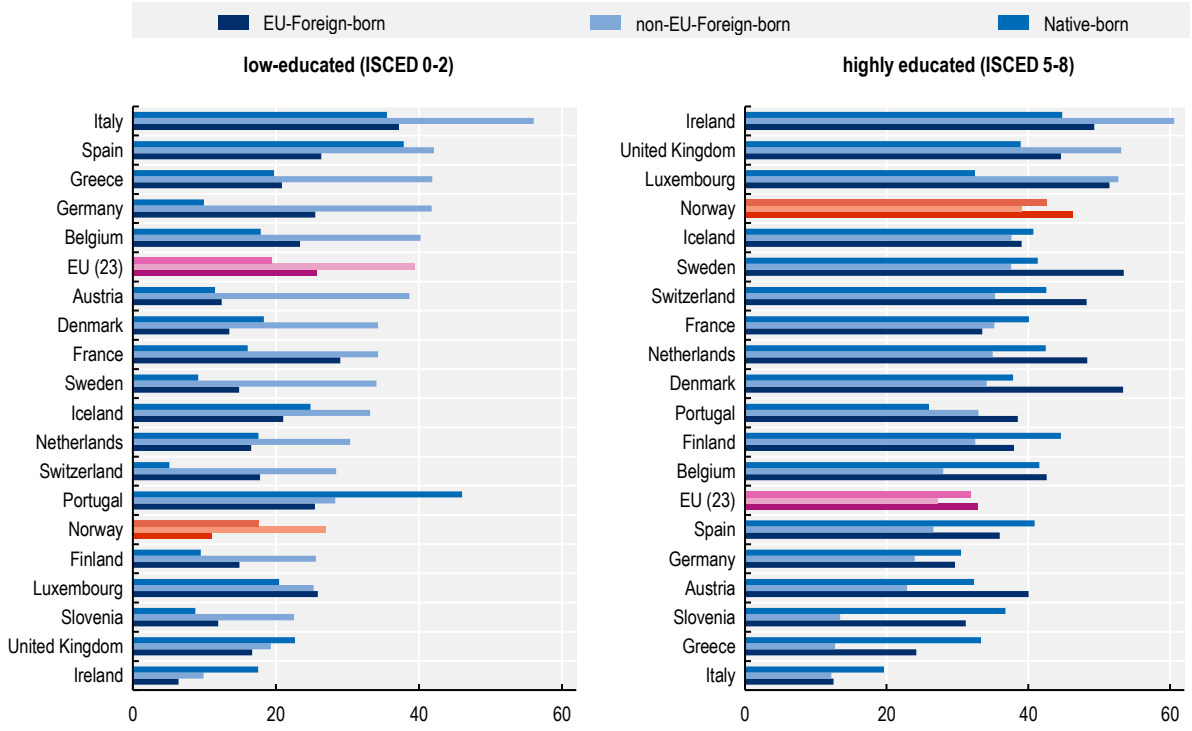
In the Integration Barometer of 2020, participants were asked if Norway should take in more immigrants. The opinions diverged; 30% want Norway to take in more while 40% want Norway to accept fewer. One in two respondents thinks that the integration of immigrants works poorly, and only one in five thinks it works well. The Barometer further showed that language proficiency and employment are the most important factors for a migrant to be regarded as well integrated. Few agree that immigrants should give up their culture and values, but around half of the respondents answered that the values within Islam are incompatible with basic values in Norwegian society.

Education and labour market integration of immigrants

Norway's immigrants have thus come from a diverse range of countries and categories, with different employment and education backgrounds, consequently bringing a wide range of different integration needs. For example, 56% of the refugees from Africa do not have any education beyond lower-secondary education (ISCED 0-2), compared with 12% of European labour immigrants. The distribution by level of education shows that immigrants have, on average, lower formal education levels than the native-born if they come from a non-EU country but higher average levels than the native-born if they come from the EU 27 (Figure 2.9). However, this is true for many European countries. In fact, the difference between natives and non-EU immigrants is less pronounced in Norway than in many other countries, and the actual shares of low- and high-educated immigrants are well below and above the EU average, respectively. In terms of education levels, the composition of the Norwegian immigrant population is thus not unfavourable in international comparison.

Figure 2.9. Non-EU immigrants are lower educated and EU immigrants are higher educated than the native-born

Percentages of low- and high-educated by place of birth, 15-64, excluding those still in education, 2020



Note: Countries are ordered by the share of non-EU foreign-born.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from Eurostat, 2021.

Many refugees and their family have at most completed lower-secondary education. This is the case for about one in two humanitarian migrants in Norway. However, also one in five within this group is tertiary educated. Immigrants arriving as family to a non-refugee partner and those coming for work have overall higher education levels, which are overall similar to the native-born population. Migrants coming for education purposes are an outlier because over 80% are tertiary educated (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Refugees and their families have low education levels

Education level (ISCED) based on place of birth and migration category, percentages, aged 15-66, 2019

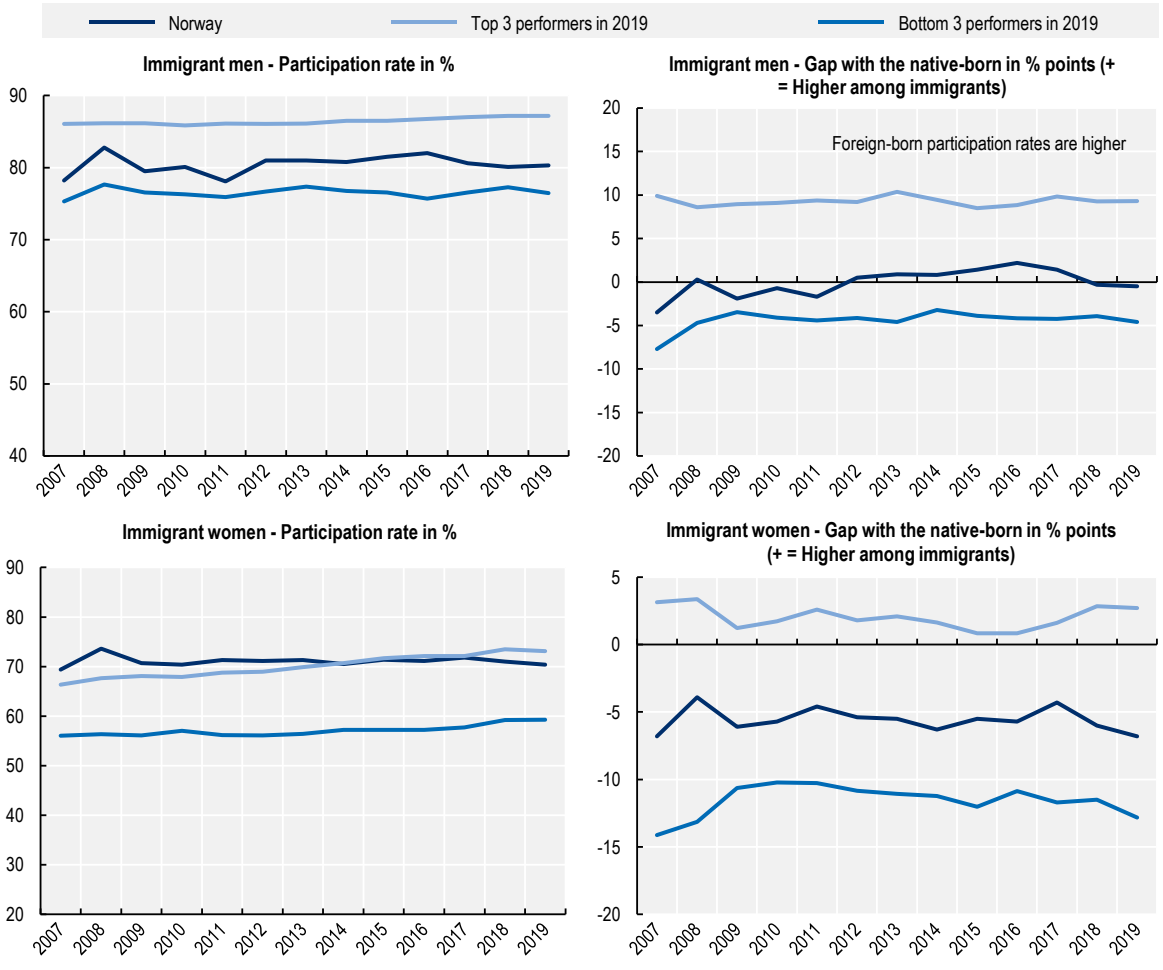
	Foreign-born					Native-born
ISCED	Work	Family not Refugee	Refugee	Family of Refugee	Education	
Low (0-2)	18%	34%	53%	51%	10%	21%
Medium (3/4)	36%	26%	23%	27%	9%	37%
High (5-8)	47%	40%	24%	22%	81%	42%

Note: For about 19% of the immigrant population, the education level is unspecified. The largest share is found among labour migrants (30%). Data excludes those coded as currently in full-time education.
Source: Calculated based on data from SSB (2021[24]).

Compared with other OECD countries with large and longstanding migrant populations, the labour force participation rate of migrant men in Norway has been somewhere in the middle of the group over the past decade (Figure 2.10). The participation rate of women, on the other hand, has been consistently one of the highest although it has declined slightly in recent years. In contrast, while there is little difference in participation of foreign and native-born men, one observes a clear gap – widening in recent years – between foreign- and native-born women. A similar pattern emerges when looking at employment rates in Norway.

Figure 2.10. Gap in participation rate between foreign-born and native-born women is high

Percentages and gap in percentage points with the native-born, aged 15-64, 2007-19

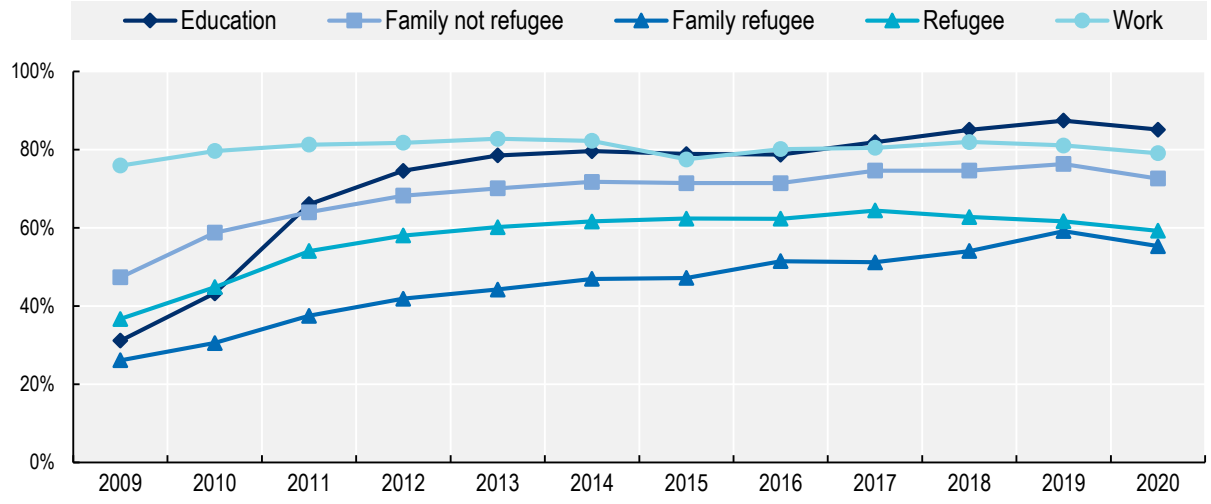


Note: Top and bottom 3 performers among the following 14 countries: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on national and European labour force surveys, 2021.

Unsurprisingly, labour migrants have a high employment rate. In fact, at 78% in 2019, their employment rate has been higher than that of the native-born population, which was 75%. At 52% and 48% in 2019, refugees and family migrants to refugees who arrived as adults have the lowest employment rates across immigrant groups. Among refugees and their families, women have particular poor labour market outcomes. Refugee women have an employment rate of 42%, 15 percentage points lower than refugee men. The largest gender gap, however, exists among migrants who arrived as family to refugees. In this group, women have an employment rate of 44%, a full 20 percentage points below men.

Figure 2.11. Employment rates increase with time in Norway but differ by admission class

Employment rate of 18-66 year-olds, adult arrivals who came to Norway in 2008



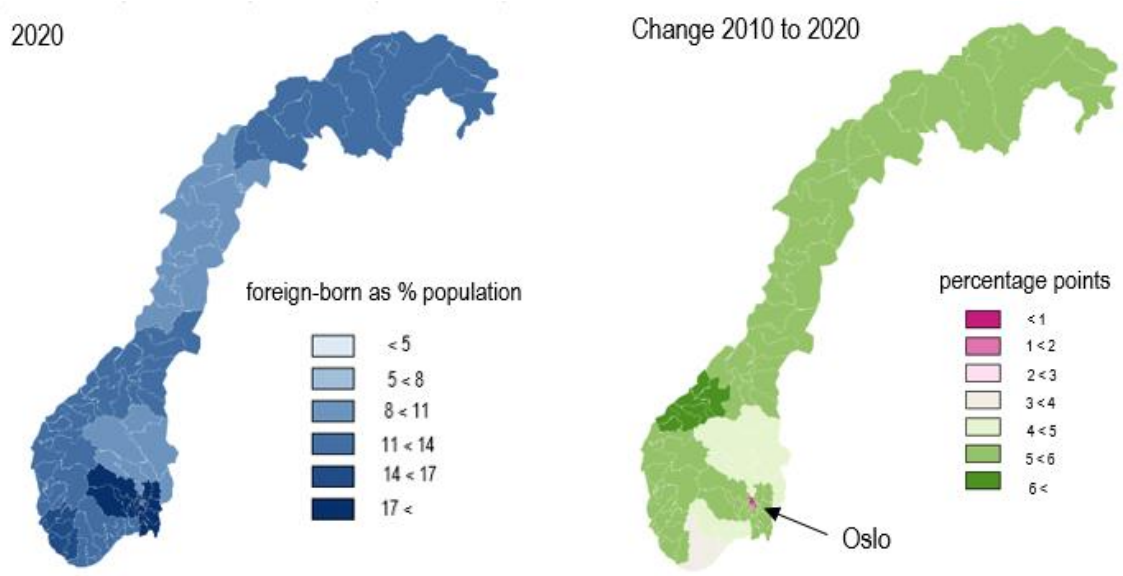
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

After three to four years in Norway, most immigrants are and stay in employment (Figure 2.11). At the same time, especially refugees and their family members have not caught up to the other admission classes even after ten years in Norway. While their employment outcomes improve with time in Norway, the progress is slow. Among refugees who have been in the country longer than 10 years, only 55% are employed. Family migrants to refugees have even lower employment rates as refugees themselves, related to the fact that most of them are women. Again, the proportion of those in employment increases with time in Norway, and among those with 10 years or more in the country, around 57% are employed. Low employment levels among refugees and their family are partly explained by lower educational attainment. In fact, higher education narrows the employment gap between immigrant groups, suggesting that refugees in particular benefit from higher education levels.

Research indicates that the labour market attachment of some immigrant groups is high and increasing at the beginning, but decreases strongly after only about seven years in the country. Bratsberg and colleagues find that employment rates of immigrants from low-income countries drop after 5 to 10 years in Norway, and social insurance dependency rates relative to native-born increase, regardless of gender and admission categories (Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed, 2017[38]). Notably, most immigrants in Norway arrived within the last decade, and their long-term labour market integration is a key policy priority in this respect.

Figure 2.12. Immigrants are settled more evenly in 2020 than a decade ago

Foreign-born as a percentage of registered population, aged 15 and over, by county, 2010 and 2020



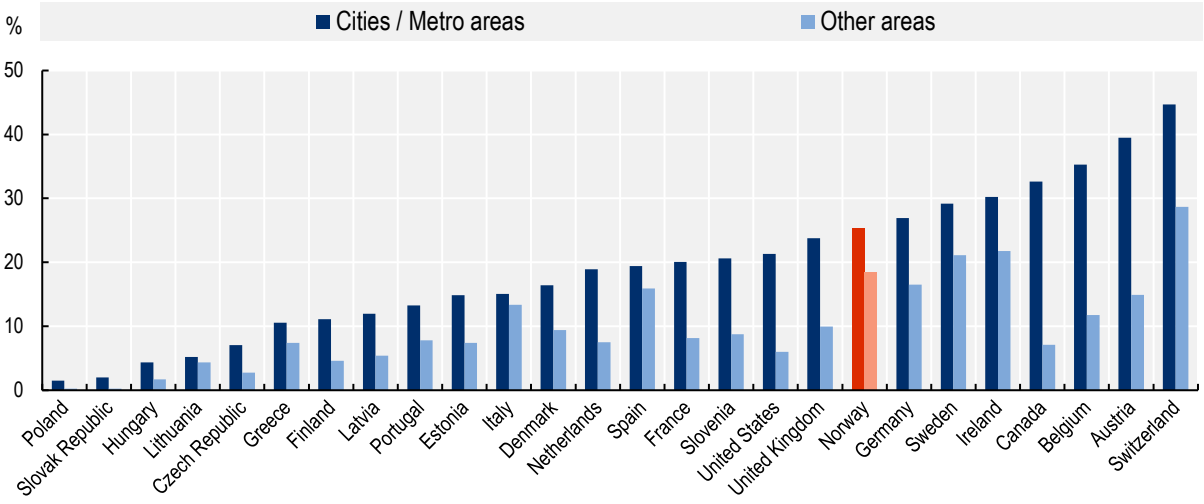
Note: Shares are calculated by county, based on the county structure of January 2020.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

As depicted in Figure 2.12, immigrants reside all over Norway, but most are concentrated in Oslo, where almost one in four is foreign-born (24%). As mentioned, Norway has seen a sharp increase in its foreign-born population. In just one decade, the foreign-born share increased by 5 percentage points, up from 10.5% in 2010. This increase has been relatively homogenous across the country. In seven of the 11 counties, the share increased by about 5 percentage points. Likewise, a recent SSB report compared data from 2012 to 2020 on a municipality-level and shows about the same numbers of municipalities above and below the national average of foreign-born in both years (Gulbrandsen et al., 2021[39]).

As in other OECD countries, immigrants are more likely to settle in urban centres than rural areas, but the concentration is less pronounced in Norway than elsewhere (Figure 2.13). Using Norway's national centrality index as classification, in 2020, 57% of immigrants lived in most and second most central municipalities (Sentralitetsklasser 1 and 2, interval 870-1000), against 43% of the native-born population. In turn, only one in ten foreign-born lived in the second-least and least central municipalities (Sentralitetsklasser 5 and 6, interval 295-669) against 15% of the native-born. The rest live in central areas (Sentralitetsklasser 3 and 4).

Figure 2.13. Immigrants in Norway are comparatively equally settled across the country

Share of foreign-born in the working-age population (15-64) according to the degree of urbanisation, 2019



Note: The share is with respect to the degree of urbanisation; 25% of 15-64 year-olds in Norwegian cities are foreign-born, and 18% outside of cities are foreign-born. For European countries, the share of foreign-born is shown according to categories of degree of urbanisation: cities and other areas (towns and suburbs and rural areas) based on a joint European Commission / OECD classification. Local Administrative Units (LAU) are classified as cities, towns and suburbs or rural areas based on a combination of criteria of geographical contiguity and minimum population threshold applied to 1 km2 population grid cells. Cities are LAUs where at least 50% of the population lives in urban centres. For Canada, the share of foreign-born is shown for Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs) and for the rest of the country. Data for Canada refer to 2016. For the United States, the share of foreign-born is shown for Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and for the rest of the country.
Source: OECD (2021[34]), *OECD International Migration Outlook 2021*, https://doi.org/10.1787/29f23e9d-en.

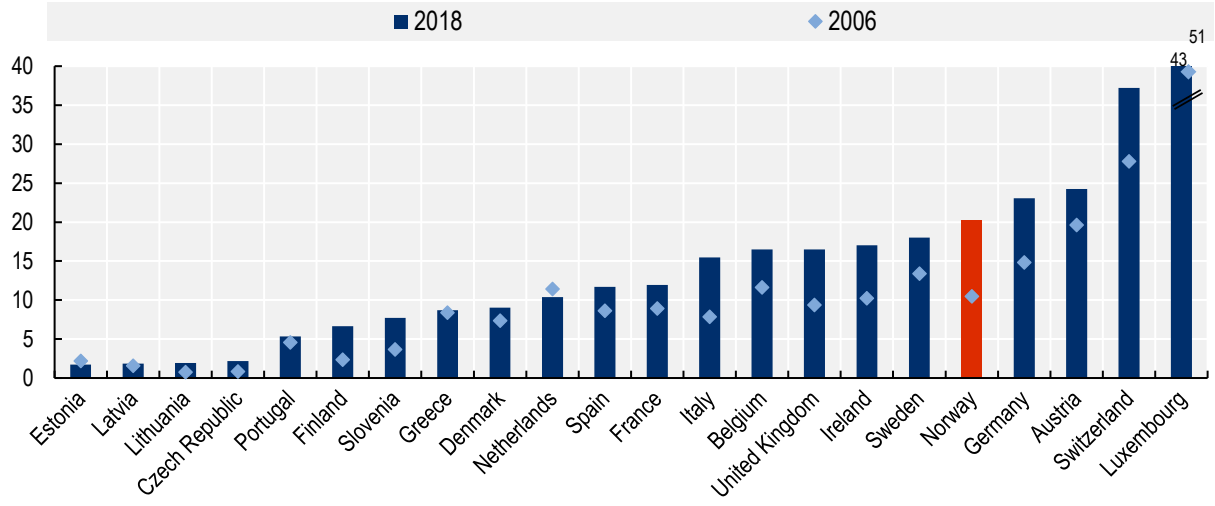
Descendants of immigrants in Norway

In OECD-comparison, Norway has one of the highest shares of children either foreign-born or native-born to two immigrant parents (Figure 2.14). Their share doubled from 2006 to 2018. A comparable strong increase is only observed in Italy and countries with overall much smaller numbers of children of immigrants like Finland and Slovenia.

In 2021, over one in three children in Norway (34%) under 15 had at least one parent born abroad. The increase of youth with migrant parents has been strongest among children of two foreign-born parents. While the group compose 3.4% of the entire population, they make up 14% of all under 15 years old and 20% of all 0-4 year-olds. Against this backdrop, Statistics Norway estimates that by 2060 the share of native-born to immigrants is expected to account for 8% of the entire population (SSB, 2018[40]).

Figure 2.14 The share of young people with two migrant parents doubled in just 12 years

Percentage of children under the age of 15, foreign-born themselves or native-born to two immigrant parents, 2006 & 2018



Note: Selected OECD countries.
Source: Secretariat estimations based on EU-LFS, Eurostat, Census and Admin data.

Immigration drives the growth in the youth population in Norway. In 2021, one in two Norwegian-born to immigrant parents was under the age of 10, and almost 70% of Norwegian-born to immigrant parents are under 15 years of age (Statistics Norway, 2021[41]). The age composition of this group is therefore very different from the rest of the Norwegian population. A third of the descendants of immigrants have parents born in Asia – mainly from Pakistan. After Pakistan, the second largest group are native-born to parents from Somalia and Poland, followed by Iraq and Viet Nam. Due to their young age vis-à-vis the overall population, the majority of the Norwegian-born children of immigrants are still in the education system or have just recently entered the Norwegian labour market.

The evolution of integration policy

From the "principle of choice" to a focus on labour market integration

Considering the relatively small numbers of migrants coming to Norway until the mid-1980s, integration policy developed early. Already in 1970, 150 hours of training in Norwegian were introduced as a municipal responsibility with voluntary participation.

A White Paper from 1980 (On immigrants in Norway) presented integration as a short-term but two-way process with equal opportunities and freedom of choice as guiding principles. Immigrants were given a choice to which degree they wanted to become integrated into the Norwegian society and were encouraged to maintain their language, religion and culture. The government at the time considered that integration would be easier if immigrants were able to maintain their mother tongue. Immigrant children were therefore offered mother tongue training at school, and in 1980, 46% of immigrant children enrolled in compulsory schooling received such training. At the same time, labour immigrants, refugees and their family members were offered 240 hours of free Norwegian language training (Kulbrandstad Iversen, 2017[42]).

In the 1980s, the principle of mainstreaming was introduced, which meant that the needs of immigrants should be considered within the general social and employment policy. Foreign nationals with three years of residence received voting rights in local elections in 1983. Mother tongue training and Norwegian as a second language were introduced as regular school subjects, and municipalities had to offer training in mother tongue if teachers were available. Immigrant organisations could receive state funding (Kulbrandstad Iversen, 2017[42]; Bay A-H, Finseraas H and Hagelund A, 2010[43]). In 1988, a new White Paper on integration policy emphasised that immigrants have the same rights and obligations as the native-born population (Kulbrandstad Iversen, 2017[42]).

Until the 1980s, most migrants came from other Nordic countries, based on the common Nordic labour market, which was established in 1954. There was also some limited "guest worker" type of migration in which Norwegian companies recruited workers from for example Yugoslavia. Labour migrants also came from Pakistan, Morocco, Türkiye and India, individually i.e. through informal networks and found a job after arrival.

Starting in 1985, the number of asylum seekers increased, and a growing gap in employment rates between immigrants and native-born called for new policy measures. In a new "white paper on immigration policy and multicultural Norway" from 1997, the labour market is described as the most important arena for integration and focus laid on measures to facilitate long-term integration and increase immigrants' possibility to support themselves in the new country (Kommunal- og arbeidsdepartementet, 1997[44]). A national test in Norwegian was introduced, and the previous policy of promoting mother-tongue education was replaced by a new emphasis on measures to promote competence in Norwegian (Kulbrandstad Iversen, 2017[42]).

Since its inception, municipalities have always been a key player in providing integration policy in Norway. Yet, the scope and quality of their interventions and programmes varied across the country in the early years (Brochman G and Hagelund A, 2012[45]). The white paper from 1997 stressed differences in quality as difficulties in the co-ordination of integration efforts. In reaction, it suggested a more structured and informed integration process.

The establishment of a formal introduction programme

At the turn of the millennium, increased immigration and a rising employment gap between immigrants and natives put pressure to make further changes in the integration policy. To establish a uniform framework for refugees and other vulnerable groups, the Storting passed an Introduction Act in June 2003.

The 2003 Act marked a turning point because it established for the first time a full-time, mandatory integration programme to strengthen the integration of newly arrived refugees and their families to participate in the workforce, in social life and to gain economic independence. Following the examples of its Scandinavian neighbours of Sweden and Denmark, which had introduced similar measures earlier, the programme provides since its inception individually adapted support, including language training and social studies as well as labour market training programmes, for refugees and their families. At its introduction and until recent changes implemented in January 2021, it generally lasted for two years, with a possibility to extend by one additional year. Participants are entitled to a monthly introduction benefit that is not means-tested and above the social assistance level (see Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion); the Introduction Programme is seen as the "first job" of newly arriving refugees.

The Introduction Act imposed a duty on newly settled immigrants to participate in the programme in their assigned municipality while establishing participation as an individual right. The fact that the programme was made mandatory was partly driven by the differences in integration outcomes between immigrant men and women and the rationale that a mandatory programme would guarantee the participation of women (Djuve, 2011[46]).

Language training has been a key pillar of the Introduction Programme since its inception, through a duty and right to participate in a minimum of initially 250 hours of Norwegian language training and 50 hours of social studies. Immigrant groups not eligible for the Introduction Programme have to pay for their language training. In 2012, the mandatory language courses for those in the Introduction Programme were extended to 600 hours. To ensure the quality of the training, mandatory tests for those with a duty and right to Norwegian and social studies was also imposed in 2012. Starting 2005, all non-EU/EEA immigrants who wished to obtain a permanent residence permit had to complete 250 hours of Norwegian and 50 hours of social studies.

Increasing focus on mandatory measures

As an immediate response to the increase of asylum seekers in 2015/16, a bipartisan asylum agreement was concluded in November 2015 with proposals to tighten immigrant and integration policy (Arbeiderpartiet et al., 2015[47]). It included, among other measures, a tightening of the requirements for family reunification through the introduction of an age requirement for marriage migration (24 years old for both parties), an "attachment requirement" allowing authorities to reject reunification if the family can be reunited in another safe third country, and a shortened grace period for when refugees are exempted from the income requirement for family migration (Gustafsson Grønningsaeter and Brekke, 2017[48]). In parallel, since 2016, passing language and civic tests at a certain level has become a prerequisite to applying for permanent residence and naturalisation. In 2017, an income requirement for permanent residence was introduced. In 2020 new changes were made again to the residence permit requirement, this time for the first time creating different requirements for different immigrant groups. The change extended the required duration of residence from 3 to 5 years for humanitarian migrants and their family members. For all other immigrant groups, the requirement of 3 years of residence to obtain a permanent residence permit was unchanged.

There were also changes to the NIP participant's access to other welfare benefits. In 2016 single parents saw their benefit levels decline as the single parent benefit was merged with the introductory benefit, and in 2017, the right to cash support for parents with children who did not attend kindergarten was limited to parents who had lived in Norway for longer than five years (Djuve and Kavli, 2019[49]). A further limitation to social benefits of humanitarian migrants was proposed in July 2016, delaying their access to old-age pensions and other disability and social security benefits. With slight changes some of the provisions came into force on 1st of January 2021. This includes the removal of preferential treatment regarding pensions rules for refugees compared to other migrant groups. Convention refugees had, for example, been exempted from waiting periods and had been compensated for short residency times in their pension entitlements (Hagelund, 2020[50]). The required waiting time for immigrants to be eligible for social security benefits such disability pensions, old-age pensions and rehabilitation benefits was also raised from three to five years.

The 2020 Integration Act – a renewed focus on formal education and targeted training

The 2003 Introduction Programme had several shortcomings. Already in 2009, a first OECD review of Norway's integration system (Liebig, 2009[51]) recommended, among other measures, a more "outcome-focused language training according to migrants' abilities and needs" and to "incite municipalities to make more effective use of the possibility to allow faster tracks for new arrivals who are closer to the labour-market". Indeed, while formally the introduction framework was already tailor-made and flexible, in practice there was little differentiation in its implementation to account for different starting points and needs of new arrivals.

Since 1 January 2021, a new Integration Act has been in force, providing for the most significant changes in Norway's integration policy in nearly two decades. It reforms responsibilities for integration, early qualification measures, career guidance, skills mapping and Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies, alongside further changes of the Introduction Programme. An important change is the introduction of an individualised integration plan that is agreed upon by the participant and the settling municipality. The overall objective is to provide more refugees with formal education for sustainable – rather than immediate – labour market integration.

The new framework enhances flexibility in the measures proposed and in programme duration, to account for diversity in participants' background, age and ambitions. The focus is no longer the number of hours or years of participation but rather the formal competencies achieved. For those with upper secondary education the programme may last between three to six months, with a six-month extensions. For participants who have the goal of completing upper secondary education, the NIP can be extended up to four years to complete schooling. The programme ends when the final goal or duration is reached. Approved leave is now added to the duration of the programme.

With the new framework, the previous requirement of having completed at least 600 hours of language training was replaced by a requirement to achieve a minimum level in Norwegian, referred to as participants' "Norwegian Goal". The indicative minimum level depends on the individuals' formal education level. This "Norwegian Goal" can vary between A2 and B2 in the four language skills (oral, listening, writing and reading) under the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Table 2.2. Target groups and measures of the 2020 Integration Act

Groups	Upskilling in reception centres	Introduction Programme	Skills Mapping	Career guidance	Training in Norwegian and Social Studies
Asylum seekers over 18 in reception centres	not applicable	no	no	no	yes, mandatory, (175+25 hours)
Resettled refugees	not applicable	yes, mandatory	yes, unless it was implemented by IMDi	yes	yes, mandatory until the minimum goal is reached (maximum 18 months / 3 years)
Other humanitarian grounds	(will have completed)	yes, mandatory	yes, unless it was carried out in reception	yes	
Family member of any of the above with residence permit	not applicable	yes, mandatory	yes	yes	
Family reunification with a Norwegian and Nordic citizen or to a person with a permanent residence permit (in practice)	not applicable	no (but the municipalities can offer)	no	no	
Labour immigrants from outside the EU	not applicable	no	no	no	yes, duty up to 300 hours (must pay themselves)
Self-employed from outside the EU	not applicable	no	no	no	
Family members of labour /self-employed migrants	not applicable	no	no	no	

Source: Adjusted from (Hernes, Staver and Tønnessen, 2020[52]).

What is more, municipalities are expected, together with other actors, to enable participants who do not achieve their educational goals in due time to participate in other upskilling programmes. Participants in the Introduction Programme below the age of 25 who do not have upper secondary education have the main goal of completing this educational qualification.

To support this goal, counties (the responsible governance level for upper secondary education in Norway) are now additional stakeholders in the Introduction Programme. Under the new regulation, the county is responsible for providing Norwegian language training and social studies for those in full-time upper secondary education. The county is also responsible for organising career guidance, a new mandatory element at the beginning of the Introduction Programme, to better guide the individualised plans.

Another important objective of the new Act is to reduce disparities in integration offers and outcomes across Norway. To this end, the new integration entails a number of standardised elements and provides for digital resources for the Introduction Programme.

The policy changes to the Introduction Act have to be seen in the context of several other major recent reforms (Box 2.3). These include a large regional reform and the subsequent transfer of important integration competencies to counties. In addition, Norway is implementing a major reform of primary and secondary education, which includes changes to Norwegian for foreign-language speakers.

Box 2.3. Recent reforms related to integration policy

Over the past few years, Norway has been undergoing several parallel reforms which are closely interconnected and relevant for integration policy.

Through the **Regional Reform**, in force since 2020, counties play a greater role in the integration process. The purpose of the Regional Reform was to create larger and more functional counties with greater capacity and competence to strengthen local democracy and development. The reform merged 19 counties into 11 and reduced the number of municipalities from 428 to 356. Counties are now in charge for allocating of newly settled refugees across municipalities and matching refugees' skills to local needs. They are also responsible for organising the skill mapping and career guidance of immigrants. Counties now have greater responsibility and more resources for providing support to immigrants with weak school results from primary and lower secondary education to better prepare them for upper secondary school.

Since January 2020, the Norwegian **Nationality Act** has allowed for dual citizenship.

For those married or living with a Norwegian citizen, the minimum number of years of residence required to obtain permanent residence permit have been raised from three to five years. The same extension applies to persons with a residence permit based on strong human consideration and their family members. Changes have also been made to the required level of oral skills in Norwegian to obtain citizenship, from level A2 to B1.There will be exceptions from the requirement, for example for immigrants who, due to personal circumstances over which the person in question has no control or health reasons, are not able to reach level B1 in oral Norwegian. These amendments have not yet taken effect.

An ongoing **Skills Reform** aims to raise overall skills levels in Norway and ensure regular training for upskilling. The reform includes measures for adults with poor basic skills and little formal education. The reform also facilitates hiring people outside the labour market and makes formal education and vocational training more accessible to immigrants. Long-term unemployed and immigrants lacking upper secondary education will be given priority in employment training.

In August 2020, the core curriculum for primary and secondary education was modified. The **new curriculum** aims to provide more time for in-depth learning. New subjects have also been introduced in the core curriculum on health and life skills, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development.

A proposed **Reform of Upper Secondary Education**, which is currently under discussion, aims to reduce early drop-outs and create a more specialised and flexible education system. One proposal is to remove the time limit to finish upper secondary school. This would improve the chances for students with weaker academic results, especially recent arrivals, to complete their upper secondary education. The government also seek to introduce a right to an apprenticeship with measures to ensure that all students enrolled in vocational education receive a certificate after completion. The shortage of apprenticeships is one of the greatest impediments for students getting their trade certificate and students with migrant parents are further less likely to obtain apprenticeships than other students.

Source: (Kommunal- og moderniseringsdepartementet, 2018[53]; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020[54]; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021[55]).

Key actors in integration policy

Multiple ministries and agencies shape integration policy

Integration is mainstreamed in Norwegian policy making. Hence, all authorities have a responsibility to support the goals of the integration policy and to adapt their services to the population, including the needs of immigrants and their children. Over the past decades, the responsibility for the national integration policy has changed frequently (Figure 2.15). Since October 2021, the overreaching responsibility for migrants' integration lies with the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. The ministry also has the responsibility for labour market, welfare and social policies. For matters relating to policies and laws regulating entry and residency of foreigners, the responsibility lies with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the Directorate of Immigration (UDI).

Figure 2.15. The responsibility for integration policy has changed several times

Source: Forvaltningsdatabasen (n.d.[56]), https://www.nsd.no/polsys/data/forvaltning/enhet/9080/endringshistorie.

In 2020/21, the budget line for integration policy (at the time in the Ministry of Education and Research), amounted to NOK 9.1 billion, i.e. about 900 million Euros. The bulk of this sum are grants to the municipalities, to compensate for expenditure related to the settlement of migrants and for Norwegian language training and social studies. There is also a small budget line for the Directorate for Integration and Diversity (IMDi) (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2020[57]) which has an important role in implementing integration policy. The Directorate has always been under the auspices of the ministry in charge of integration policy and is therefore currently under the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion. IMDi was established as a separate administrative entity on 1 January 2006, in part to signal the growing attention paid to the issue of integration. One of the Directorate's key responsibilities is the organisation of the placement of refugees in municipalities. The Directorate also serves as a national advisory body and centre for knowledge, research and expertise on integration to the municipalities, authorities and the general public (Box 2.4). With the Regional Reform that went into force on 1 January 2020, several of IMDi's integration tasks, notably regarding supervision of the municipalities' integration work, have been transferred to counties (see below).

Through its Directorate of Labour and Welfare, the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion also oversees the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). NAV is the Norwegian public employment and welfare agency, responsible for implementing labour market and social policies. Since 2006, it has operated as a one-stop service for employment and welfare administration. NAV runs a local office in each municipality that administers social services while the respective municipality remains responsible for assessing individuals' needs regarding social benefits. NAV serves 2.8 million users annually and administers approximately one-third of the state budget through its administration of unemployment benefits, work assessment allowance, sickness benefit, pensions, child benefits and cash-for-care benefits (NAV, 2021[58]). NAV offers integration support as part of its mainstream services for ordinary job seekers but may also provide additional targeted assistance to immigrants in co-ordination with the municipalities. Immigrants from non-EU/EFTA member countries are given priority for access to active labour market programmes, similar to those given to members of other potentially disadvantaged groups such as long-term unemployed and youth (Norwegian Ministries, 2020[59]). Non-humanitarian immigrants and immigrants who completed or stopped their Introduction Programme turn to NAV in case they need support

to re-enter the labour market or apply for social benefits. This includes settled immigrants and recently arrived non-refugees, such as labour or family migrants. NAV is also responsible for humanitarian migrants who decline the Introduction Programme and those who finished or dropped out of their NIP and have been in the municipality for more than five years. NAV had specialised offices for immigrants (NAV Intro) in areas of high immigrant concentration. These were unique in international comparison (Liebig, 2009[51]). However, with a view of mainstreaming immigrant labour market integration and other services, these were abolished in 2015.

The second key national stakeholder is the M*inistry of Education and Research*, especially the recently-established Directorate for Higher Education and Skills and the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT). The latter is, among other tasks, responsible for recognising foreign educational qualifications at all levels – apart from regulated professions. The Directorate for Higher Education and Skills was established in July 2021 due to a merger of six state bodies. The new Directorate includes the former Directorate for Lifelong Learning, previously known as Skills Norway (Kompetanse Norge). Skills Norway was in charge of developing and overseeing of Norwegian language training and social studies. It also supports county authorities in the provision of career guidance.

The M*inistry of Justice and Public Security* is responsible for the government's refugee and immigration policy. It oversees the Immigration Act and the operation of asylum centres and deportations, as well as the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the Immigration Appeals Board (UNE). UDI's main task is to process applications under the Immigration Act and the operation of reception centres while UNE deals with the complaints against decisions taken by the UDI. UDI was established in 1987 with the overall responsibility for the settlement of refugees, this responsibility was later transferred to the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) in 2006. UDI is further responsible for the first reception of adults and unaccompanied minors above 15 years. Unaccompanied minors below 15 are placed in special care centres run by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs.

Anti-discrimination and equality policies are under the remit of the Ministry of Culture and Equality. In 2018 the government established an Anti-Discrimination Tribunal, a complaints body that enforces the anti-discrimination legislation. Other actors working against discrimination is the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud. The Ombud represents the interest of those discriminated against and gives guidance to employers on their duties set out in the law.

As in other OECD countries, the many stakeholders involved in integration work at the national, regional and local levels have made the Norwegian integration system complex (Figure 2.16).

Box 2.4. Research and data sources on integration in Norway

There is an impressive and longstanding array of data and research on integration in the country. What is more, systematic research and regular policy evaluations have long been key components in developing integration policy. Both IMDi and Statistics Norway (SSB) produce research results in the field of integration on a regular basis, in addition to an impressive number of research institutions.

One of the reasons for the high quality of data and research on integration in Norway is its system of linked administrative registers, which allows following the integration process of immigrants and their children over time. Every resident in Norway has a Personal Identification Number (PIN), through which the person's education, employment and participation in the labour market are registered in the Central Population Register (CPR) database. Most variables on immigrants have been available since 1990.

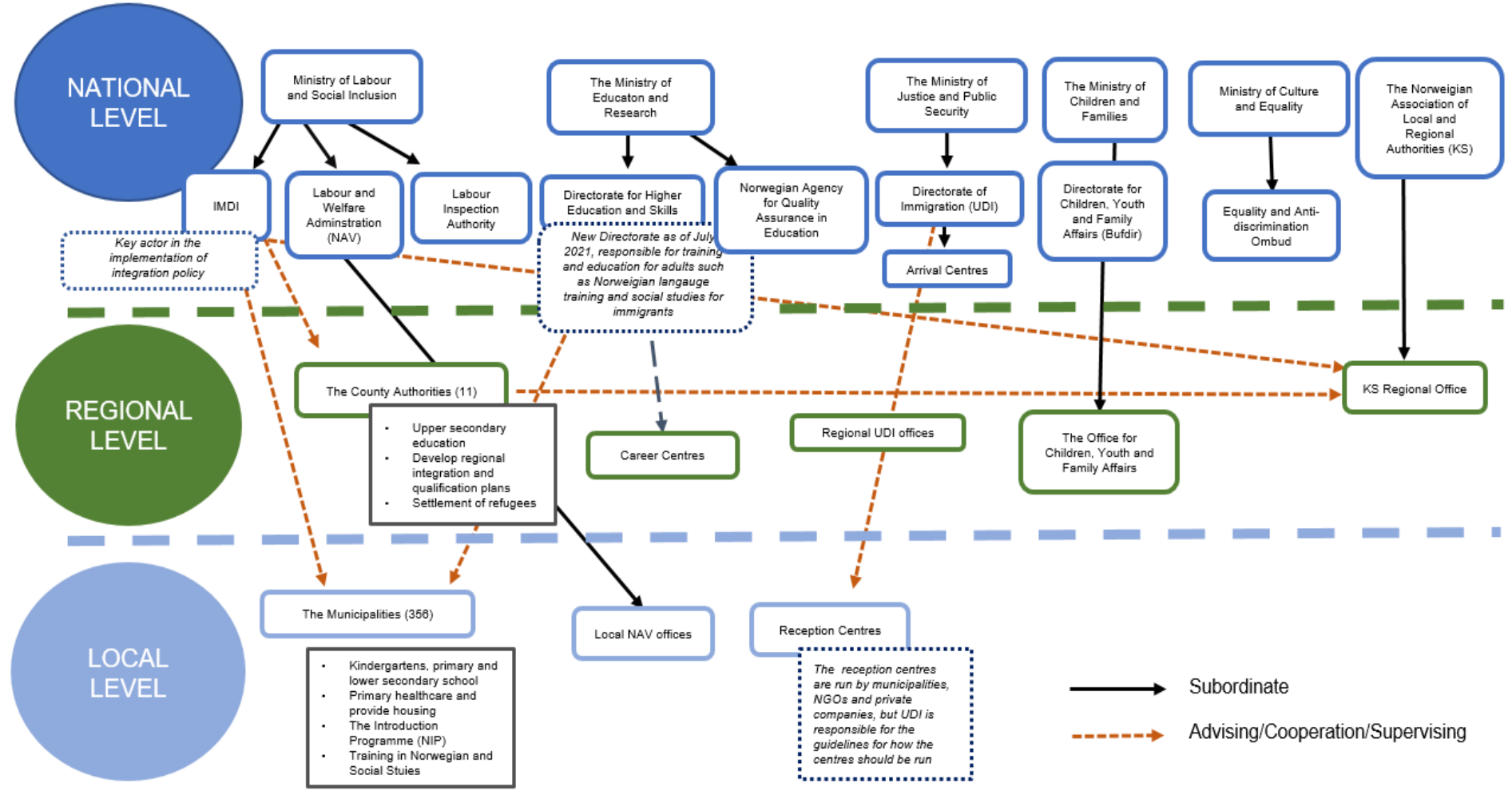
The CPR allows to follow arrival cohorts over time and identify changes in their education and labour market affiliation. Notably, for immigrants who arrived as refugees and participated in the Introduction Programme, a specific dataset exists; the National Introduction Programme (NIR) database. At the same time, for other groups such as migrants coming due to free mobility rights, the available data is less well developed, as many do not register their education level, for example.

SSB also conducted four special surveys on the living conditions of immigrants in 1983, 1996, 2005/2006 and 2016, filling information gaps on social integration such as housing, attitudes and membership in associations. The most recent survey covered 4 500 immigrants who have been living in Norway for more than two years and who have come from the following countries: Türkiye, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Viet Nam, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Eritrea. These groups account for about a third of the total foreign-born population.

An important gap in the current data system is language programme data. (Former) Skills Norway collects basic data on tests taken in language training and social studies such as the number of registrations and passed tests by municipality, time and test level/type. However, it does not include individual identifiers or participant metadata such as age, origin and education.

While these data allow for country-specific analyses, they are not necessarily international comparative due to different underlying definitions and (lack of) comparably well-developed data in other countries. Examples are definitions of family reunification or lack of data in many countries on detailed admission categories. For international comparisons, the European labour force and household surveys (i.e. EU-LFS and EU-SILC) have been used accordingly.

Figure 2.16. Many actors are involved in the integration process at all levels



Source: OECD Secretariat.

The integration of new arrivals is largely decentralised

Municipalities organise and provide the Introduction Programme, including courses in Norwegian and Social Studies, and housing for newly arrived immigrants. Municipalities are also responsible for training in Norwegian and Social Studies for asylum seekers as well as for mapping their skills before settlement, for those receiving international protection. Municipalities are also responsible for primary and lower secondary education, while counties are responsible for upper secondary education. Since the content of the Introduction Programme aims to be tailor-made to each participant, the 356 municipalities have considerable autonomy regarding its implementation and content (Hernes et al., 2019[60]).

The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS) represents the interest of the municipalities, the counties and the local public enterprises on the national level. Together with the IMDi and the counties, KS assesses how many refugees each municipality can be asked to accept. Refugees are expected to be settled in areas where they can find work and be offered the necessary education and skills training. The inclusion of counties in the settlement process is new and was introduced with the Regional Reform that went into force on 1 January 2020.

Counties' new responsibilities for migrants' integration have to be seen in the context of a larger regional reform (Box 2.3). With the Regional Reform, the 11 counties have received a greater responsibility for the regional integration and skills policy, and counties' new responsibilities were further clarified with the 2020 Integration Act. These reforms provided counties with co-ordination and advisory responsibility in integration and skills policy. As a result, counties took over supervising the municipalities' integration efforts that were previously carried out by IMDi, subsequently leading to the closing of IMDi's regional activities.

Since 2021, counties are expected to monitor municipalities' integration activities and develop regional plans for the qualification of immigrants. This includes responsibility for allocating and following up on grant schemes aimed at getting immigrants into jobs or education as well as providing career guidance and training in Norwegian and social studies for immigrants in upper secondary education.

There is a strong role of social partners in Norway, but immigrants are not always well covered

The Norwegian labour market model is characterised by social dialogue and tripartite co-operation. Social partners, therefore, play a crucial role in its functioning. Norway has no nation-wide statutory minimum wage, but instead wages are negotiated by social partners. Working conditions are regulated partly through collective agreements and partly by statutory law. Over the last decade, trade union affiliation in Norway remained both relatively stable and comparatively high, at around 50% in 2019. The country consistently ranks in the upper quintile of OECD countries when it comes to union membership. Nevertheless, in 2020 the rate remains somewhat below that in other Nordic countries (60% in Finland, 66% in Sweden and 68% in Denmark).

While overall about 51% of employees in Norway were union members, this share was only 41% among immigrant workers, according to the 2016 Survey on Living Conditions of Immigrants (Vrålstad and Stabell Wiggen, 2017[61]). The degree of organisation varies by nationality, education and duration of stay. Non-EU immigrants are more likely to be organised than immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe, whereas the degree of organisation among immigrants with more than 15 years of residence is almost equal to that of natives. Looking at different occupation levels, one finds that there is a gap among union coverage for the high-skilled but not for the low-skilled. What is more, research has put forward additional explanations for the lower organisational rate among immigrants such as type of employment, varying trade union traditions, and lack of information (Nergaard, Barth and Dale-Olsen, 2015[62]; Hagen and Jensen, 2016[63]; Cools, Finseraas and Rasmussen, 2020[64]; Kjellberg, 2021[65]). Over the last decade, collective agreements have been introduced in industries where many labour migrants work, such as the cleaning

sector. The measures have been closely developed and implemented with the social partners (Alsos, Nergaard and Trygstad, 2019[66]).

Social partners are obliged to promote equality and prevent discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and belief. The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) and the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) have, since 2008, incorporated a supplementary agreement on diversity and integration into their main agreement (Bergsli, 2020[67]).

Civil society plays an increasingly important role in integration, but its role still lags behind other OECD countries

In Norway, the overwhelming part of integration measures and support have traditionally been funded and provided by the state. This sets Norway – like its Scandinavian neighbours – apart in international comparison where provision (though not necessarily funding) of integration services is often made by non-governmental organisations (OECD, forthcoming[68]). While the state (at all levels of government) continues to be the most important actor for providing integration services, civil society actors are increasingly becoming an integral part of the integration system. In 2020, 48 organisations, mainly national, received grants for their integration work from IMDi (IMDi, 2021[69]). In addition, a total of 586 local projects received government grants through the municipalities in 2020.

The activities mainly include broader social integration. The new Integration Act does not regulate these activities, though IMDi has an online resource with advice and links to different services provided by the NGO sector, e.g. language cafes and other language training arenas, refugee guides, inclusion in local sports activities and more. Options for participation of the volunteer sector in the integration process are complex, as all integration projects driven by civil society organisations need to come about through bidding and a strict procurement process (Karlsdóttir et al., 2016[70]). In June 2021, the former Government launched a new strategy to strengthen the role of civil society in developing and implementing the integration policy for the period of 2021-24. The strategy was accompanied by an increased economic support to NGOs working to improve integration. The strategy has 26 defined measures with three main goals: 1. More persons with immigrant parents participating in civil society, 2. Raise and support civil society's effort on integration and 3. Better co-operation and regulatory conditions. The strategy is in the process of being implemented by the current government.

Norway historically had an active approach to consult with immigrant organisations in policy development, but recently this has been less the case

Immigrant associations do not have a formal role in the political process at the national level, though immigrant organisations may be represented at the municipal and county administrative levels through immigrant councils. However, there is no data on how many municipalities and counties have such councils and their functioning varies widely (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021[71]). The councils use different names; some operate informally and are not part of the administrative structure, while others have a more formal function at the municipal and county offices. A few of the organisations are represented nationally by the Immigrants' National Organisation (Innvandrernes landsorganisasjon).

Until 2014, a special independent advisory body called "The Contact Committee for Immigrant and the Authorities (KIM)" facilitated and promoted co-operation and dialogue between non-governmental immigrant organisations and the authorities. Since 2014, this dialogue is arranged through an annual conference inviting local immigrant organisations to exchange experiences and ideas with the authorities.

Like in other OECD countries (OECD, 2020[72]), the pandemic has enhanced funding for the civil society and immigrant associations to provide information to relevant migrant groups on specific issues and concerns. In 2020, 2021 and 2022, a total of NOK 86.6 million was provided as grants to NGO's for their COVID-19 information efforts to immigrants.

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Note

[1] Immigrants in Norway have also been over-represented among COVID-19 cases. Relative to their share in the population, almost five times as many immigrants recorded an infection as Norwegians with native-born parents. This held even after controlling for socio-economic conditions such as education, income, housing conditions, and occupation. Weaker Norwegian language and social segregation may have contributed to increasing the vulnerability of some immigrant groups but not others. Many immigrants are employed in jobs where physical distancing is difficult (Indseth et al., 2021[73]).

3. Assessing and building skills of immigrants in Norway

This chapter focuses on building and assessing skills of immigrants in Norway. In a first part, it analyses the integration of refugees and their family members, in particular with regard to the recent changes to Norway's Introduction Programme. A discussion of Norwegian language training follows, focusing on recent changes of target levels in international comparison and access to free language training for different immigrant groups. It concludes with a section on credential recognition and validation of skills.

This report was largely completed before the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Norway swiftly adapted its integration framework to accommodate for the specific challenges arising from the inflow of refugees from Ukraine. These measures are discussed in a separate chapter (Chapter 6).

The Introduction Programme

Newly arrived refugees, their families and others in need of protection face particular challenges to build a new life – in Norway as elsewhere. To ease integration of this group into society and boost its economic independence, Norway established the Norwegian Introduction Programme (NIP) in 2004. The NIP is designed as an individually adapted full-time and typically multi-annual programme for refugees and their family members as well as for persons granted residence on other humanitarian grounds and their families.

In recent years, about 22% of adult immigrant arrivals to Norway participated in the Introduction Programme. The large majority of those eligible also take part in the programme. In 2019, 97% of refugees still present in Norwegian data, aged 18-55 at arrival between 2014 and 2018, had been or still were in the programme. That figure was 67.5% for adult family migrants joining a refugee partner.[1]

The last decade has put Norway's Introduction Programme for newly arrived refugees to the test

Humanitarian migrants between the age of 18 and 55 who are settled by an agreement between IMDi and a municipality and have lived in a municipality for less than two years have the right and obligation to participate in the NIP. This only applies to persons residing in the municipality in accordance with this agreement. All municipalities that settle refugees are obliged to offer the NIP, but if a refugee settles or moves to a municipality without an agreement, they may lose their right to participate in the NIP and their introduction benefit (see below). Thus, while in principle, a foreigner who has been granted a residence permit as a refugee or with humanitarian status may choose to settle wherever they want and enjoys full freedom of movement in Norway, they must settle in the assigned municipality to receive housing and financial support. Individuals are supposed to start the programme as soon as possible and within three months after they settle in a municipality. Other immigrant groups, including labour migrants and immigrants covered by the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, have no right to participate in the NIP.

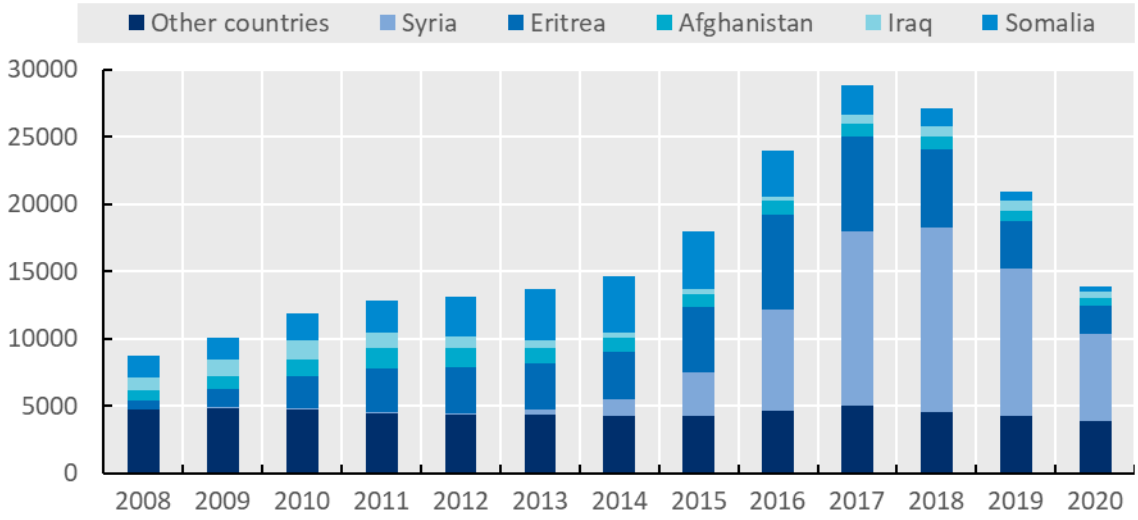
Participants in the NIP are a diverse group of immigrants in terms of origin, educational background, work experience and skills. Against this background, the goal of the NIP is to provide every participant with fundamental skills to succeed on the labour market in Norway. By programme design, all participants are working age, and most still quite young: in 2020, 63% of participants were under 35 years old and one in four aged 25 or younger.

Over the last decade, the yearly number of participants in the NIP has grown steadily until 2017 when it peaked at close to 29 000 participants. Thereafter it declined strongly. The fluctuation was largely driven first by an increase and later decline in participants originating from Syria and Eritrea (Figure 3.1). While until 2015 an equal share of women and men participated, in 2016 and 2017 more than 60% of participants were male, and in 2020 a majority of about 56% were female.

The programme includes language training (Norwegian or Sami) and introduction into Norwegian society, access to formal education, as well as preparation and training for employment. Each participant develops an individual integration plan in collaboration with their contact person in the municipality, consisting of a programme goal (typically a type of job or education outcome) and a path via training and courses to achieve this goal. The determination as to what exact form of training and support an individual receives is, in theory, adapted to individual needs, but in practise often depends on what a municipality can offer (Djuve et al., 2017[1]; Hernes et al., 2019[2]; Tronstad, 2019[3]).

Figure 3.1. NIP participation numbers declined strongly after a rapid increase in previous years

Participants in the NIP by main countries of origin, 2008 to 2020



Note: As individuals stay in the programme for several years indicated numbers are not individuals nor new arrivals, but the sum of participants in a given year across Norway. Countries shown are based on the top-5 of all participations summed over the period 2008-20.
Source: SSB Table 08427: Participants of introduction programme, by contents, sex, country and year, 2021.

In some respects, the NIP can be seen as the first "job" refugee arrivals and their family have in Norway, and each participant is entitled to an individual introduction benefit. The benefit amounts to twice the basic amount of the National Insurance Scheme. In 2020, this was approximately EUR 1 530 per month (taxable). Participants under 25 years of age receive two-thirds of the benefit if they live by themselves and one-third of the benefit if they are living with one or both parents (Norwegian Ministries, 2020[4]). The municipalities decide how and when payment is to take place based on registered attendance. In case of undocumented absences, the benefit can be deducted hour-by-hour. Approved leaves of absence, due to health or parental leave, can prolong the participation and benefit time.

Overall, Norway's Introduction Programme (NIP) is most comparable to the introduction offers in Denmark and Sweden, two countries that run similar programmes and have readjusted them in recent years, corresponding to varying political priorities and outcomes of participants. In all three countries, goals of employment and self-sufficiency permeate the integration acts' "raison d'être". While the Danish introduction programme focuses on getting the participants any kind of job as rapidly as possible, the Swedish initiatives – at least for participants with relevant prior qualifications – are more focused on getting the participants a job as soon as possible that corresponds to their qualification level. Norway's programmes as discussed in the following is set between these two schemes (Box 3.1).

The strong increase and the subsequent decrease of participants in the programme have put the Norway implemented several integration policy changes over the past years, among them a new Integration Act in force since January 2021. The following sections shortly discuss the outcomes of the NIP under the previous provisions, outlining how the main changes in 2021 address some of the identified challenges with the Integration Act and discussing outstanding issues that require attention going forward.

Box 3.1. The integration programmes' raison d'être: rapid employment or investment in qualification to ensure long-term employment attachment?

The introduction offers in Denmark, Sweden and Norway differ in their balance between getting participants (any kind of) employment as fast as possible versus investing in qualifications during the initial years to ensure a more stable and long-term labour market integration.

Denmark focuses on rapid employment

In Denmark, the goal of rapid employment and self-sufficiency is explicitly highlighted in the New Act of 2016 so that newly arrived immigrants are to become self-sufficient through employment "as soon as possible". Furthermore, although the Act opens up the possibility of employing qualification and different education measures, it is often explicitly stated that these measures should only be used if it is assessed that (rapid) employment is not deemed plausible for the participant in question. The new legislation explicitly prioritises job training – through work practice or subsidised employment – with the aim to get participants into employment more quickly. The law also emphasises that lacking language skills or educational qualifications – or that the person may only uphold unskilled jobs – is not sufficient reason to deprioritise employment measures aimed at rapid employment.

An exception is made for young participants (18-25) who do not have higher education. Those participants are obliged to pursue education if it is deemed plausible that they will be able to complete such an education on normal terms. The law still opened up possibilities for qualification and educational measures as part of the programme if the measures would increase the participant chances for labour-market integration. However, it is explicitly stated that a condition for providing long-term offers of guidance and upskilling is that there be no reasonable prospect for the participant to obtain ordinary employment during the regular programme period. Consequently, measures other than job-related activities should only be considered if it is deemed that the participant could not get (any kind of) job within one year.

Sweden focuses on relevant employment

The goal of the Swedish introduction programme is to "facilitate and accelerate the establishment of some newly arrived immigrants in working life and society". Although some of the new Swedish initiatives focus on rapid employment, a common denominator of the Swedish initiatives is the focus on getting the participants to "relevant" jobs (that is, in accordance with the level of skills), particularly if they have prior qualifications that could be exploited in the Swedish labour market. A recent compulsory education initiative aimed at strengthening and improving immigrants' chances to meet the demands at the labour market, as most jobs in Sweden require education and/or experience.

Norway is somewhat situated in between

With the new Introduction Act, and the resulting strengthened focus on ensuring formal qualifications and a stable labour-market attachment, Norway is more aligned in objective with the Swedish introduction programme. This is particularly the case for those with low education at start, who are encouraged and enabled with the changes to invest in their education first. Here Norway's approach increasingly differs from the Danish. At the same time, changes in Norway with respect to the short programme time and limited educational offers for those with upper secondary education suggest that those with medium skill level, may have a shorter time to invest in further upskilling or tertiary education, despite the needs of the highly skilled labour market in the future.

Immediate labour market outcomes are favourable but long-term outcomes less clear

The share of former NIP participants in education or employment one year after ending the programme has remained largely constant at around 60% over the last decade. This falls 10 percentage points short of the self-identified labour market integration goal in 2010 (having 70% of former participants in paid employment or education one year after completing the NIP). However, this is a favourable outcome in international comparison. Only one year after the programme ends, 30-40% are in employment and an additional share of 15% are combining education and work – this seems to be a much higher share than across the EU, where in the past, only 27% of refugees with less than five years of residence are employed (Dumont et al., 2016[5]).

With additional time in Norway, the labour market outcomes improve and among those who stopped the NIP five years earlier the share in employment or education ranges between 66% to 74% among men, and 53% and 58% among women in the years 2012-20 (Statistics Norway, 2021[6]).

Overall, at the end of 2019, working-aged refugees who arrived as adults and attended the NIP were more likely employed than those who did not attend at 58% versus 53%, but gender and residence time in Norway play an important role (Table 3.1). These numbers have to be interpreted with caution however, as isolating and assessing the impact of NIP-participation is a key challenge (Box 3.2).

Register data suggests that refugee men who took part in the NIP integrated well in the short-term. 5-9 years after their arrival, 70% are employed compared to a share of just 58% employed for refugee men who have been in Norway for the same amount of years but have not attended the NIP. However, for those with at least 10 years of residence, the differences are rather small. Notably, men who participated in the NIP and have been in Norway for 10 years or longer have a relatively low employment rate of only 59% – and, in fact, outperform their peers who never participated in the NIP only slightly by 4 percentage points. Refugee women who attended the NIP have higher employment rates in the years following their arrival in Norway. At 43% their employment rate is 7 percentage points higher than among those who did not participate (36%). Among women, the difference to those with at least 10 years residence in Norway remains at a similar 6 percentage points and their employment overall increases to 55% and 49% respectively. However, it should be noted that among the women refugees who arrived in the last 5-9 years, only a small number of 270 individuals did not attend the NIP, which might drive these results.

Table 3.1. Immigrant refugees who participated in the NIP have higher employment rates

Employment rates of working aged (15-66) refugees, who arrived as adults (18+) until 2018, at the end of 2019

	Refugee men		Refugee women	
NIP attendance?	Yes	No	Yes	No
Arrived 5-9 years earlier	70%	58%	43%	36%
Arrived 10 years or longer ago	59%	55%	55%	49%

Note: Shares only include people still present in the data at the end of 2019.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from Statistics Norway, (2021[6]).

Box 3.2. Assessing the impact of NIP-participation is difficult

Due to several limitations the impact of NIP participation is difficult to isolate. First, as a nation-wide programme with mandatory participation for all refugees from 2004 onwards, participants' outcomes cannot be assessed against a randomly assigned control group. The about 3% of refugees who are present in register data and did not take part in the NIP are not a representative sample of the population, as they have specific though varying and in part unknown reasons for non-participation. While some might never have been able to start the NIP due to health limitations, very little is known about the group of refugees who are offered a municipality for settlement but decline this offer and thereby NIP participation. Indeed, the lack of data on this group suggests that many have left Norway, but this is not known. Second, a comparison over time, using the introduction of the NIP as a natural experiment has been done (see below) but broad conclusions are limited as different refugee cohorts and different labour market context at varying time intervals limit generalisability. What is more, refugees who arrived over 15 years ago in Norway also encountered a different Introduction Programme than the ones arriving today.

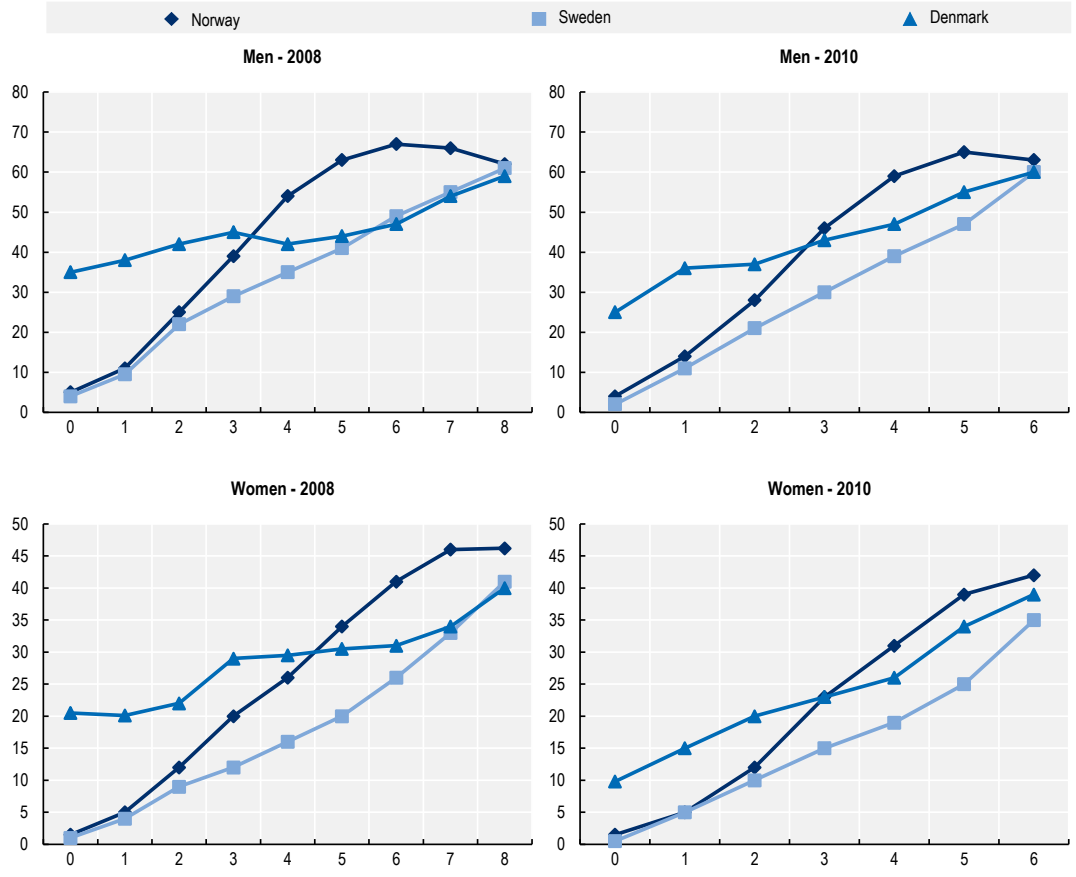
Finally, a group of interest to allow for an impact assessment of the NIP are family migrants who join a refugee partner in Norway. Participation is mandatory for those who join a refugee partner with less than five years of residence but optional for those who join a refugee with more than five years of residence (a particularity of the system which is further discussed below). For the latter group the municipality is free to decide to offer an NIP programme to these arrivals but not obliged to do so. At present, since its municipalities themselves who decide who can access the NIP after the five-year limit Statistics Norway has no data on how many of those who come to a refugee with more than five years of residence are actually taking part in the Introduction Programme. There can be a great deal of variation between different municipalities limiting any outcome analysis.

Previous national assessments of the NIP, while offering key insights into the programme including important policy recommendations, come to similarly mixed conclusions about its effectiveness (Djuve et al., 2017[1]; Djuve and Kavli, 2018[7]; Tronstad, 2019[3]). An evaluation focusing on medium and long-term outcomes of the introduction of the NIP, shows that treated refugees and family-reunited immigrants have a significantly higher probability of both short-term and long-term employment compared to non-treated refugees and family-reunited immigrants. In contrast, the study did not find such an effect on refugees' and family-reunited immigrants' earnings prospects (Ugreninov and Turner, 2021[8]).

Compared to Denmark and Sweden, two countries with similar extensive introduction programmes, outcomes in Norway five years after settlement – or about three years after the two-year programme ends – are slightly ahead in Norway. For the 2008-13 cohort, about 70% of men are in employment or education in Norway, well above the respective number for participants of the introduction programmes in Sweden (58%) and Denmark (55%). For women, the difference is also large. In Norway, 49% were in employment or work, while in Sweden this share was 41% and in Denmark, it was only 29% (Hernes et al., 2019[2]). In general, for both one observes relatively favourable progress in terms of employment rates in the early years after arrival for the target groups which nevertheless seems to come to a halt after about 5-6 years for men and 7 years for women (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. The labour market integration comes to a halt after several years in Norway

Employment rates of refugees and family immigrants reunified with third-country nationals, by cohort (2008 and 2010) and years since signing of integration agreement



Source: Adjusted from Hernes et al. (2019[2]), Nordic integration and settlement policies for refugees: A comparative analysis of labour market integration outcomes.

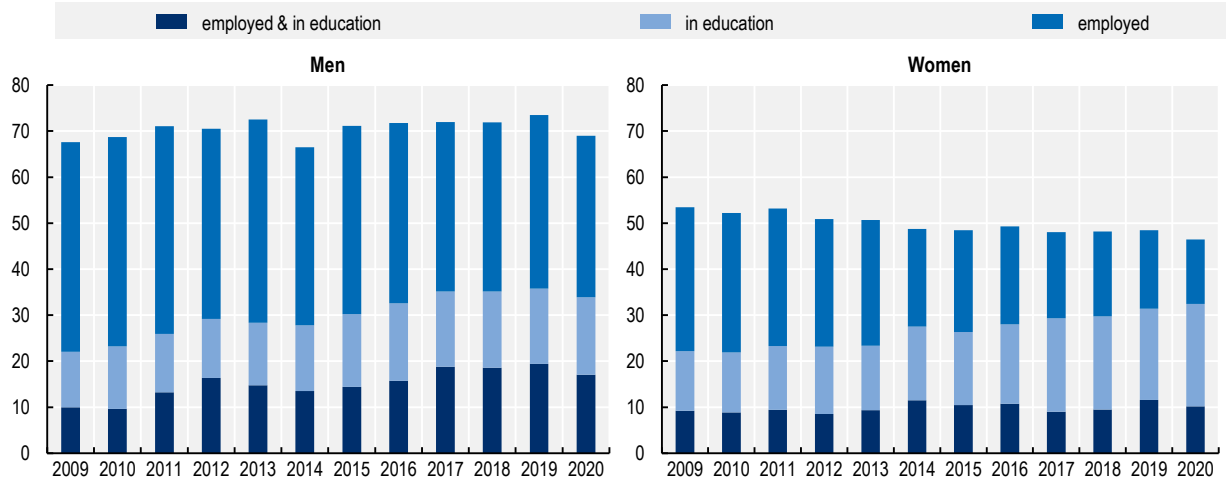
This finding has also been confirmed in econometric studies. After an initial post-admission period for refugees and family immigrants from low-income source countries, labour market integration weakens or even goes into reverse with widening immigrant-native employment differentials and increasing rates of immigrant social insurance dependency evident after just 5-10 years (Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed, 2017[9]). A similar development has not been detected in other Scandinavian countries.

Likewise, in Canada, labour market outcomes of different groups of refugees (privately sponsored and refugee claimants who eventually became permanent residents) converge over time but do not decline like in Norway. However, in Switzerland, a recent study on labour market outcomes of refugees finds similarly that after an initial period of successful labour market integration, refugees have declining outcomes (Müller, Pannatier and Viarengo, 2022[10]). Recent research suggests that part of the reason could be associated with differing investments into human capital (Lu, Gure and Frenette, 2020[11]). Indeed, in a labour market with few low-skilled employment options and the risk of unemployment/inactivity traps such as in Norway, upskilling rather than rapid employment seems to be a promising strategy. Norway has been going along this route in recent years, with a focus on upskilling formal education levels of refugees to at least upper secondary level.

As a result, in recent years, an increasing number of immigrants attend education or combine education and employment upon ending the NIP. In fact, among the cohort that finished the NIP in 2020, more than one-third was in at least part-time education a year later, while among the cohort that finished in 2009 only about 22% did the same (Figure 3.3). The increase in attending full-time education one year after completion is especially visible among women, where in 2020 more than one in five (22%) was in education up from just 13% in 2019. By contrast, men were more likely to combine education and work than they are to pursue pure education.

Figure 3.3. One year after completion, 70% of men but only 50% of women are in education or work

Labour market status (%) one year after completion of former participants in the NIP, November 2009-20



Note: Attending full-time primary education does not count towards the success rate after the introduction programme and might explain the weak decrease in the success rate among women.
Source: Data from 2009 to 2017 are based on a special request to SSB to distinguish education and origin. The graph is complemented with SSB data for the years 2018-20 based on SSB table 10824.

Not surprisingly, differences in outcomes vary by individual background characteristics. As expected, immigrants with at most at lower-secondary education level have the lowest success rate. This group includes the large and growing share of migrants that do not have any qualification registered (Box 3.3). For instance, 28% of the 2017-finishing-cohort have an unspecified formal education level and among them, only 48% are in employment or education one year after completing the NIP. This is a much lower outcome than for those how have registered at least basic qualification. Interestingly, for those for whom education is specified, the success rate increases with levels of formal education but not strongly. 73% of former participants with at most lower secondary education are in education or employment one year after ending the programme; this share is 76% for those with upper secondary and equally 76% for those with higher education. This suggests that potential gains from ensuring that all new arrivals get at least lower secondary education are large.

Box 3.3. The education level of NIP participants is increasingly specified as "unknown"

In the context of new NIP programme goals that are established according to previous education, a record of the educational level of current and former NIP participants is important. Despite the generally excellent administrative data structure of Norway, the education level for about 20% of participants who finished the NIP is recorded as "unspecified" one year after finishing the programme. This share is higher in recent years than previously, reaching 29% in 2018 for the cohort that finished in 2017.

There are several reasons for this lack of data. Some relate to the process of data entry, others to data coding. For data entry, municipalities might specify the educational level of (former) NIP participants as "unknown" when they are still in the process of credential recognition. Where this is the case, the share coded as "unspecified" should diminish 5 years after completing the NIP, and indeed looking at the cohort from 2013 as an example, this share of unspecified is somewhat lower 5 years after completion (decreasing from 11% to 7%). In addition, caseworkers in the municipalities might not know how an individual's education level corresponds to the Norwegian equivalent, in which case clearer guidance is needed. For data coding, participants who are currently attending education or are in the process of getting their education recognised are sometimes coded with "unknown" education status. SSB notes that where an individual migrant has several education entries, the education at the highest level is selected for the statistics, but it is not clear which share of immigrants still attending education are coded with their latest education entry and which share is coded as "unspecified". Finally, some NIP participants might not want to communicate their education level with their caseworker.

The difference between men and women is larger among the lower educated, with 74% of men against 55% of women in employment or education one year after finishing in 2017 with an education level of ISCED 0-2. Among the higher educated, gender differences remain nevertheless non-negligible: the success rate among the 2017-finishing-cohort who had an education of at least upper secondary schooling (ISCED 3+) was 79% among men and 66% among women. In terms of variation among the main origin countries, among those finishing in 2017, Eritreans (72%) and Ethiopians (69%) had a significantly higher success rate than Somalis (48%) or Afghans (51%). Syrians were at the average (64%) and Iranians slightly above (66%). Among the three largest finishing groups in that year, Syrians, Eritreans and Somalis, gender differences were smallest among Eritreans (77% among men vs 62% among women) and largest among Somalis (65% among men vs 33% among women), while Syria was again close (2 percentage points below for each) to the overall average at 70% for men and 46% for women. Part of the reason for the differences in outcomes by origin are fertility patterns, as will be explored in more detail below.

Completing secondary education for those without this qualification is a challenge

Given the large increase in employment with at least secondary education, it is worrisome that a large part of new refugee arrivals fall below this threshold. For the cohort of 2017 for example, over three-quarters had no more than lower secondary education (77%).

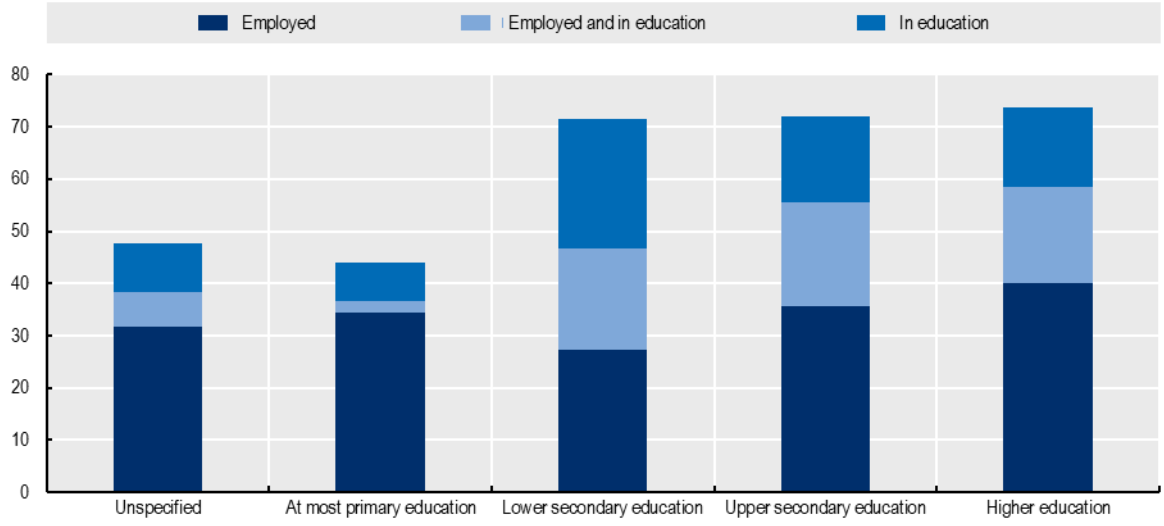
Even before the major legislative changes of 2021, over the period 2009 to 2017, a larger share of former programme participants continued with education after completing the NIP. This development was likely supported by previous policy changes, such as the formal possibility to participate in secondary education full-time while still being enrolled in the NIP that was instituted from 2016 onwards (Djuve and Kavli, 2018[7]). Among the cohort who finished the NIP in 2009, only about one in five (22%) participated in education (or education and work) one year later. Among the cohort of 2017, one in three (33%) did so. Men are now more likely to combine education and work: 19% did so one year after ending the NIP among the cohort from 2017, up from 9% among the cohort of 2009. Among women, this share has remained at about 9% over the same period. Looking ahead – three years after completing the NIP – women are more

likely to remain in full-time education than men, who are much more likely to combine work and education than to pursue a pure education option.

Overall, one would expect that those with lower levels of education are more likely to continue their educational path upon finishing the NIP. However, investing in education seems to be more common among those who were already secondary educated (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4. Few NIP participants with low or unspecified education level continued their education

Labour market status (%) of former participants in the NIP, one year after completion by level of education, 2015-17



Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

That share was particularly large for migrants with at most primary education. By contrast, those with lower secondary education were the group most likely to be in education, with most being only in education.

Data from earlier cohorts also suggest that few immigrants who do not possess upper secondary education one year after the NIP acquire this formal qualification in the following years. Among the finishing cohort of 2011, 2012 and 2013, between 25-30% were educated to at most upper secondary level one year after completing the NIP. Five years after completion of the NIP, this share had increased by about 10 percentage points and by 2018, 41% of the participants that had finished the NIP in 2009, 2010 or 2011 had upper secondary education (Statistics Norway, 2021[6]).

Municipalities have large discretion in the design and delivery of integration policy

In Norway, municipalities design, deliver and monitor the NIP in large autonomy. Municipalities also have responsibility for co-ordinating activities provided by other involved actors, including the county, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), private and non-profit organisations, and other public organisations. Municipalities also decide where the responsibility for the Introduction Programme resides and how it is organised in practice. It is normally either located in the local NAV office, the Adult Education office, or a specialised refugee office. These varying organisational forms require different forms of co-operation depending on which office has the main responsibility.

The autonomy municipalities have in designing their NIP has led to major disparities in its organisation and content. While this diversity in municipalities' offers and methods makes it difficult to quantify and identify success factors, earlier evaluations have pointed out that municipalities have achieved successful results

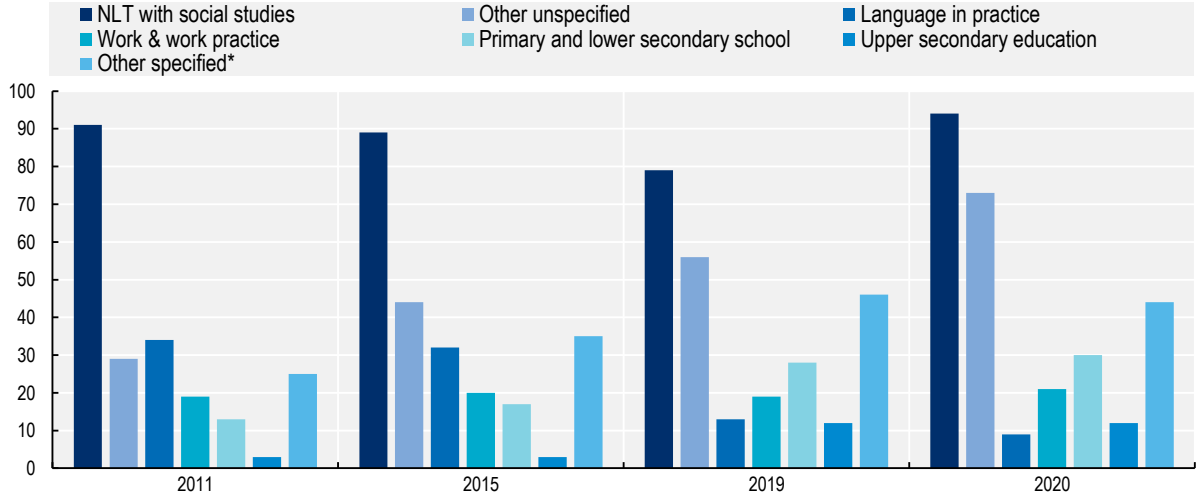
with different strategies, with both a strong focus on language and a focus on on-the-job training producing relatively promising outcomes (Djuve et al., 2017[1]). Given the different characteristics of NIP participants, different local labour market situations and different implementation strategies, it is no surprise that outcomes such as employment rates one year after completion vary greatly between municipalities. For instance, over 80% of those completing the NIP in 2017 were in work or education in the municipality of Steinkjer and Sogndal in November 2018, while the share in Porsgrunn and Vadsø was below 40% (Lunde and Lysen, 2020[12]).

Past reports highlighted the challenges some municipalities faced with the NIP implementation in practice. For instance, they point to the challenge that despite over a decade of experience some municipalities are not able to meet a number of the core programme requirements. In a recent survey from 33 municipalities, about one out of ten refugees in the NIP did not have an individual integration plan as required by the law (Tronstad, 2019[3]). Similarly, in a 2017 study, over 20% of municipalities did not meet the requirement to offer a full-time programme to participants, and over 15% did not meet the requirement for a year-round programme (Djuve et al., 2017[1]).

Beyond the mandatory training in Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies (NLTSS), which all municipalities must offer including to other target groups (see Chapter 2 and the next section of this chapter) municipalities can decide independently what other courses and training they offer their participants. These offers must be recorded in individually adapted integration plans, but as visible below are often not further registered in detail in the national statistics. Over the last decade an increasing share of measures offered by the municipalities in the NIP is coded as unspecified (Figure 3.5), adding an additional layer of challenge to understanding the capabilities of municipalities to meet the needs of migrants.

Figure 3.5. Beyond language training, available measures in the Introduction Programme vary

Share of participants per measure in the NIP, 2011, 2015, 2019 & 2020



Note: Shares are calculated based on the number of participants per year. Other specified includes occupational approval, approval of education, a course organised by municipality/state, labour market courses; occupational courses organised by others; measures that promote health / physical activities; measures that promote social networking; measures not registered.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on SSB data table 08437, 2021.

The Norwegian set-up stands out in that fact, among countries with a national integration policy or strategy, little oversight exists. In Denmark, municipalities also had considerable autonomy with respect to the actual

content of the introduction programme. In response to large numbers of refugee arrivals, the government revised the scope, length and content of the existing integration programme in July 2016. This included easing administrative obstacles for municipalities and strengthening the central subsidies to the municipalities. Sweden issued a set of changes to their integration system in 2010. The state, via the Swedish Employment Service, overtook the responsibility for the co-ordination of introduction measures from the municipalities. The purpose was to speed up the introduction to working and social life, clarify the responsibilities between agencies and make the process more transparent (Joona Andersson, Wennemo Lanninger and Sundström, 2015[13]). Further changes were made in 2018 to make the introduction process more similar to that of other job seekers. Regulations were also introduced to make the process more efficient by reducing detailed legal controls and relieving some of the workload from the Employment Service. The responsibility for the introduction benefit was transferred from the Employment Service to the Social Insurance Agency (Riksrevisionen, 2020[14]). In Norway, employment and social insurance is already under the same public welfare agency: the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), which however does not steer integration work during the NIP, but only upon its end and for those without access to the programme (see Chapter 4).

Other OECD countries with a strong focus on municipal responsibility in integration efforts are the Netherlands, Spain and Switzerland. In the Netherlands, while the national government is responsible for the initial reception procedures of immigrants, municipalities play an important role in the long-term integration of migrants through their responsibility for housing, asylum shelters, social assistance, employment services and education. It is only the organisation of the compulsory integration exam and the language courses that lie at the national level and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. However, unlike in Norway, there is no national integration strategy and the national government does not have any fiscal and legislative means to monitor and regulate the local authorities work in the integration field. In Spain, the national level is active only in state-owned facilities and involved via state funding. Determining the integration offers lies with NGOs or regional governments. In Switzerland, cantons are the main implementers and key actors in integration policy. The federal government's competence is largely limited to legislation and co-ordinating the cantons integration efforts. While the cantons discretionary power allows them to adapt policies to the local context it has also led to a great variety of integration practices and outcome differences between the cantons (D'Amato and Kurt, 2021[15]). This has particularly been the case concerning immigrants' access to language courses, welfare services and decisions on naturalisation (Mexi, Moreno Russi and Guzman, 2021[16]). Several revisions have been introduced to increase the harmonisation of integration measures between cantons and from 2020 the language requirements for a residence permit are the same across all cantons.

In contrast, in other countries, the trend has been rather one of increased central monitoring and organisation of integration measures. In Germany, for example, a comprehensive integration policy, co-ordinated by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, exists at the federal level. The orientation course is standardised and is implemented by certified course providers that receive per-head payments from the state. Grants are also provided to third parties who provide approved integration counselling. Germany adopted this approach after observing that the pragmatic but fragmented approach of local provision was not enough to tackle its integration goals. Canada has taken a similar approach, with a national strategy and standards implemented through contracts with approved service providers. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada enters into agreements with provinces or organisations and provides funding to over 500 organisations across Canada to deliver the Settlement Program. Built into the system is a strategy of performance measurement. Service providers are expected to deliver appropriate results to maintain the contracts.

Recent changes including a new Integration Act address a number of challenges

Participants in the NIP who have been granted a residence permit and arrived in Norway before 1.1.2021 are covered by the old Introduction Act, while those who received a residence permit or arrived in Norway on or after 1.1.2021 are covered by the provisions of the new Integration Act. As a result of the duration of the NIP of up to several years, the different provisions will run in parallel for some time. The following sections discuss some of the main changes due to the new Integration Act.

In addition to the legislative changes via the new Act, the COVID-19 pandemic introduced a new context for integration policy. Much of the early results of the new Integration Act thus have to be considered in light of the emergency measures implemented during the pandemic (Box 3.4).

Box 3.4. Norway's integration relief packages: A response to the pandemic

Special support measures to counteract the negative consequences

In March 2020, as elsewhere, much of Norwegian society went into lockdown as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, creating an immediate need for both legal and financial measures related to the Introduction Act. The Norwegian Government introduced temporary legislation with adaptations to the Introduction Act and several financial integration relief packages. These measures aimed to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on the integration process and to tackle practical challenges to implementation of existing integration measures during the pandemic (e.g. providing language courses, educational and employment measures etc.).

The first response from the Norwegian Government was a directive that tackled acute challenges in meeting existing rights and obligations for both municipalities and programme participants under the Introduction Act. The directive ensured that Introduction Programme participants still received the introduction benefit even when they were unable to participate in programme activities and provided the municipalities with exceptions to the requirement to offer full-time programmes. Further, during spring 2020, the government released a financial integration relief package (called the "integration package I") of approximately 45 million Euros (456 MNOK), which included targeted measures to "mitigate the negative consequences of the pandemic". As the pandemic continued, most of the measures introduced in integration package I were prolonged with "integration package II" in March 2021 (approximately 32 million Euros), and "integration package III" in June 2021 (approximately 9 million Euros).

The main measures included the possibility for NIP participants to access extended programme time, a reinforced programme with programme objectives and career counselling, and extended Norwegian language training for certain groups of immigrants. The packages also included extra funding for other measures, such as digital resources, COVID-19 information campaigns directed at the immigrant population, and extra funding to "Jobbsjansen" – an existing employment programme targeting immigrant women.

Evaluation of integration packages

At the request of the Ministry of Education and Research, the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) evaluated integration package I (Hernes, Staver and Tronstad, 2021[17]). The report investigates whether there was a change during the pandemic regarding what Introduction Programme measures the participants received and the any change in main post-programme activity for participants who completed the Introduction Programme. It finds that fewer Introduction Programme participants participated in employment measures, thus entailing that the participants are placed in ordinary workplaces, including work practice, language practice and ordinary employment.

Norwegian language training and education measures remained stable compared to the previous year. In many places, teaching was brought (partly) online, and this constituted a particular challenge for participants with low digital competence. The evaluation also includes an analysis of how the participants that ended the programme during 2020 fared after programme termination. It finds that fewer participants transitioned to employment, but that more transitioned to education, and thus that there was only a minimal increase in participants who transitioned to social benefits and social security.

The integration package I allowed Introduction Programme participants who were in the final stage of the programme to have their programme time extended. This measure was need-tested and allowed for an extension of the programme of up to six months. The programme period for participants increased by an average of 2.4 months compared to previous years, and the municipalities emphasised that this was a welcomed measure that allowed them to grant extensions they would not normally have provided.

Unlike extended programme time, extended Norwegian language training was not needs-tested, but an entitlement. However, not all municipalities fulfilled this entitlement because they had not grasped the distinction between extended programme times as a needs-tested right and extended Norwegian language training as an entitlement.

In the continuing work with integration packages II and III, IMDi has actively informed the municipalities of this distinction. The report emphasises the importance of ensuring that the target group of extended language training sees their rights fulfilled. Given the requirement to a pass a Norwegian language test to seek permanent residency, poor learning outcomes from Norwegian language training during the pandemic – and possibly missed opportunities to complete the Norwegian test – may have consequences for impacted individuals.

In contrast to extended programme time and Norwegian language training, which were an extension of existing measures, career counselling and the possibility of introducing programme objectives (sluttmål) meant that the municipalities and county authorities had to implement new elements with which most had no previous experience. The evaluation concludes that relevant actors had challenges with rapidly introducing new measures during the pandemic, and these measures have been used to a lesser extent than extended programme time and Norwegian language training. Further, the evaluation finds that several subordinated actors (municipalities, counties, county governors, career guidance centres) stated that there was either lacking or inadequate information from the responsible national actors. More guidance from national actors was requested, as well as concrete examples and tools for implementation.

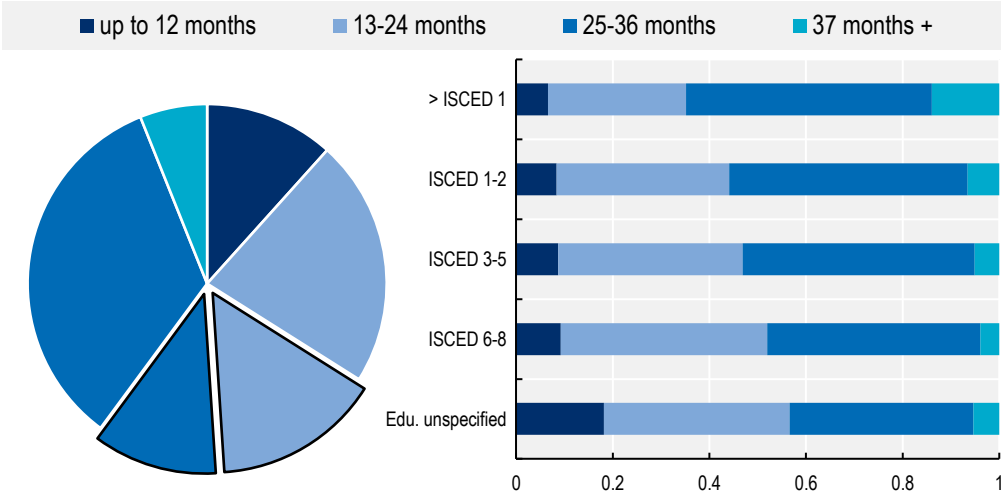
Source: Vilde Hernes and Hernes, Staver and Tronstad (2021[17]), NIBR-rapport 2021:14. Evaluering av integreringspakke I og midlertidig lov.

The new Integration Act reinforces the objective of an individual tailor-made programme

A key goal – but also challenge – of the NIP is to adjust its scope and content to individual skills and needs. While an individual-level differentiation has always been the goal of the programme, the number of months individuals receive the introduction benefits (as a proxy for how long they participated in the programme) shows little variation of programme duration by education level for the analysed period (2013-18). Most participants received introduction benefits for exactly 24 or 25 months. While in principle the programme can end in case of an earlier successful labour market placement or transition to full-time education, the data suggests that this was rarely the case in the past, not even for tertiary-educated immigrants.

Figure 3.6. Participants' formal education level had association with NIP duration

Duration of receiving introduction benefit in months (left) and by formal education (right), 2013-18



Note: Framed areas in the left graph refer to 24 and 25 months. Education unspecified refers to individuals where this information is not known, or not approved in Norway. It also includes individuals who are currently in education so in the process of changing their education level. For example, if a participant starts secondary education in the Introduction Programme but doesn't complete it before the end of receiving introduction benefits, the person will be unspecified because the education is not completed. 33% of observations in the data have unspecified education.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

It is against this backdrop that the new Integration Act aims to reinforce the adaptation of an individual integration plan and the adjustment of the programme's content and duration to prior formal education levels. Under the new provisions, the NIP may last from three months to four years. The duration will vary depending on the participants' educational background and competencies, and the participants' individual participation goal as outlined in Table 3.2. For example, participants who have the programme goal of completing upper secondary education can extend the NIP to last for up to four years. Participants with minimum upper secondary education shall have a shorter programme period. For this category, the programme may last between three and six months and may be extended to up to one year. As a general rule, the NIP ends when the final goal or duration is reached. Approved leave is added to the duration, but the NIP can only be extended if there is reason to expect that the participant will achieve their final goal with an extension.

Table 3.2. From 2021 onwards, the NIP tailors the programme durations by participation goal

Groups of participants	Participation Goal	Programme duration	Responsible actor for the NIP
Participants with at least upper secondary education	Qualify for higher education or work	3 months – 6 months + 6 months	municipality
Participants with the goal of completing upper secondary education (includes as a general rule all individuals under the age of 25 without upper secondary education)	Complete upper secondary education	3 months – 3 years + 1 year	municipality (+ county for training in Norwegian and social studies for participants who attend full-time upper secondary education)
All other participants	Work or complete parts of or the complete primary school or parts of upper secondary education	3 months – 2 years + 1 year (same as under Introduction Act)	municipality

Source: Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, 2021.

The extent to which other countries regulate different integration paths or measures based on the participant's education levels at arrival varies. The Danish Integration Act does not directly do so, but regulations in Sweden address participants' educational background. In Sweden, persons who do not have education at upper secondary level or higher are subjected to 'compulsory education'. The compulsory education applies to those who participate in the introduction programme, have lower or no education, and who are considered by the Employment Agency to not be able to get a job within the timeframe of the introduction programme due to insufficient prior qualifications. In 2021, a new initiative in the integration programme, the intensive year, was introduced to further facilitate a rapid entry into the labour market. It is voluntary for participants to take part in this initiative, which targets participants that are motivated for an intensified integration programme, have prerequisites for fulltime participation, and who are considered to be able to complete the full duration of the initiative. The end-goal of this intensive year is for the participant to achieve a job based on their previous education and work experience. The new Civic Integration Act to be implemented in 2022 in the Netherlands will introduce learning pathways, including an Education Pathway for migrants who have demonstrated a high aptitude for learning and will likely pursue additional vocational or university education. A Self-Reliance Pathway has been created to allow those expected to struggle learning Dutch (principally those with little or no education in their countries of origin) to reach a minimum level to function independently in Dutch society (the lower target of Level A1).

The new adjustment in Norway should provide more incentives to create flexible and tailor-made integration plans and encourage individuals who already have some form of higher education to enter the Norwegian labour market – or higher education system – without delay. It should be noted however that over 2013-18, even among those with tertiary education (ISCED 6-8), only 3% finished the NIP in 6 months or less and only 9% within one year. In the new regulations, the speed-up for the group with at least upper secondary education is envisioned without additional resources to municipalities or major changes to the measures, classes and training schemes offered to individuals. That notwithstanding, other key modifications might support the individual level adaptation, notably the changes in focusing on a Norwegian language goal instead of hours of attended language training as well as the larger involvement of county governments in providing upper secondary education, both discussed subsequently.

Recent changes support the goal of accessing and completing upper secondary education

The new Integration Act renewed the focus on access to formal, in particular upper secondary, education for those without this qualification. To do so, it addresses several shortcomings from previous regulations. While in theory NIP participants have had a right to attend full-time secondary education since 2016, in practice this has been difficult due to both individual and organisational challenges. First, many NIP participants lacked primary education or had insufficient Norwegian skills to follow a non-adjusted upper-secondary course programme. Further, programme advisors were reluctant to enrol participants in a programme that was longer than their designated time in the NIP, as this would risk that their income support (the introduction benefit) would run out before finishing school (Andersson Joona, 2019[18]; Djuve and Kavli, 2018[7]). This has been addressed with the latest changes, as now the NIP and the tied support are available for the period needed to complete upper secondary education of up to four years.

Another key obstacle for providing tailored secondary education to newly arrived refugees was the division of responsibility between local and regional levels of governance. In Norway, county governments are the responsible governance level for upper secondary education, but under the previous Act, they had no formal role in the NIP, which was managed by municipalities. This set-up depended on successful co-operation between the municipality and the county for each migrant who wanted to attend or complete upper secondary education. To address this, the new Integration Act regulates different responsibilities for the municipality and the county. The county is now responsible (among other tasks) for providing Norwegian language training for participants who attend upper secondary education in accordance with the Education Act on a full-time basis. This formal involvement is likely to address co-ordination problems

especially for those under the age of 25 without upper secondary education, who under the new regulations as a general goal will have to complete upper secondary education during their NIP. However, how the counties and municipalities should co-ordinate their efforts is not regulated further in detail.

Due to changes implemented with the new Integration Act, individuals can no longer grow into or out of the target group of the NIP by turning 18 or 56 years old as was previously the case. For the youth cohort, this change ensures that an obligation to start the NIP does not interrupt their potentially ongoing participation in full-time regular education. At the same time, as compulsory education ends with age 16 in Norway, it is unclear whether and which systematic support offers are available for those who get settled at age 17.

The age limitation for the cohort of new arrivals over 55 restricts their participation in the NIP. Arrivals beyond that age limit must still participate in Norwegian language and social studies (discussed in the next section), but have no right to participate in the NIP. The age at which eligibility for Norway's integration programme ends places it at the young end of the spectrum in international comparison. In most OECD countries, if a cut-off age exists at all, this tends to be in the mid-60s. For example, Belgium (Flanders) requires participation until the age of 64, after which participation becomes voluntary. Other countries with upper threshold ages include Czech Republic (61); Finland (63); Italy (65); and Sweden (64). It should be noted however that a municipality in Norway has the possibility to offer the NIP to older residents and receive integration grants for those over 55 years of age. While this concerns only a small group, about 3% of eligible admissions between 2017 and 2019 were aged 56 to 65, it should be investigated whether a right but no obligation to participate in the NIP could be implemented. This would be similar to what was the case for refugees aged 55 to 67 regarding the Norwegian language training and social studies scheme until 2016.

Career guidance is a promising tool, which can allow for better targeting and follow-up

Under Norway's new Integration Act, the county is responsible, among other things, for providing career guidance to all NIP participants, preparing plans for the qualification of immigrants and overviewing the regional integration work. In Norway, public career centres organised at the county level offer free career guidance services to everyone regardless of age or place of birth, to provide high-quality support for various transitions a person faces throughout their work life. Career guidance is thus a service, which allows for regional demand and supply considerations as well as co-ordination with other regional plans, offers and programmes for individuals. Extending this service to participants in the NIP thus mostly requires co-ordination with the municipality as well as translation services. In a context where the ultimate goal of the NIP should be filling gaps between what competences participants already have, what they want to do, and what is required in the local Norwegian labour market, provision of career guidance is a promising tool.

Under the new regulations, each NIP participant has a mandatory career guidance session, which includes enhanced skills mapping, within the first three months of their settlement. This allows for a stronger participant involvement and might also positively respond to participants' satisfaction issues. In a recent study evaluating survey data from approximately 1 100 refugees in 33 different municipalities across the country, one-third of participants reported that they have limited opportunity to influence the aim and content in the NIP – a major (and, notably, one of the only) sources of dissatisfaction among participants (Tronstad, 2019[3]). Another in-depth study of participants' and teachers' experiences in the NIP shows that what is offered to participants often depends on the skills, resources and involvement of their assigned programme advisor (Lillevik and Tyldum, 2018[19]) indicating that mainstreaming career guidance into the NIP could reduce gaps and disparities in service provision.

Career guidance should contribute to the individual being able to make informed choices about work and education and to play a role in adapting the NIP to their needs. It is thus evident why the new regulations stress that the career guidance should take place at an early stage to allow for use of this assessment in

the adjustment of the Introduction Programme. However, municipalities and career centres themselves note the fact that, especially for groups that arrived in Norway after long waits and traumatizing experiences, reflecting on their future, skills and interests to best contribute in Norway during career guidance may be occurring too early in the process. Many newcomers are just settling into a new environment and may find it difficult to open up to a new and unknown career advisor without sufficient time to reflect and to build sufficient trust in the government institutions of their new host country.

In this context, one solution could be to offer career guidance at the beginning, to adjust the NIP, and to reach those who can benefit from it, but then to repeat career guidance more regularly and not only during the settling-in phase. The municipality is encouraged but not obliged to consider offering career guidance later in the programme as well. In this context career guidance, which maps skills and competencies, can also serve as a tool to monitor and follow-up on the quality of municipalities' training outcomes. A more regular engagement at the county-level throughout the NIP, for example, twice a year, could better allow programme administrators to target and re-adjust goals and programmes. What is more, an independent evaluation of the work of career centres and their offers will aid in identifying the factors which best support refugees and other newcomers.

In requiring career guidance as part of the NIP, Norway is ahead of most other OECD countries in ensuring that humanitarian migrants have access to personalised information and planning regarding their career goals and opportunities. While many countries provide migrants access to public employment services, the majority only do so for registered job seekers. The initiation of measures targeted at migrants can prevent certain groups of migrants, who may have difficulty accessing information or be more isolated, from falling through the cracks when it comes to understanding their career potential. A similar approach has been taken in Latvia, where refugees and their families are evaluated to determine whether social mentorship and other case management from a social worker is needed. The assigned social worker then helps the family liaise with the public employment service to obtain employment measures, including skills assessments and career counselling, as needed.

All inhabitants can receive career guidance free of charge. However, it is unclear if this service reaches all immigrants, as it is only mandatory to participants in the NIP. There are no figures on the uptake of the measure among other groups. If career guidance is effective, this targeted tool should be extended to other migrant groups. Mandatory guidance could include both new arrivals currently not part of the NIP and longstanding migrants who lack understanding of their career options.

Standardised elements and new online resources support municipalities

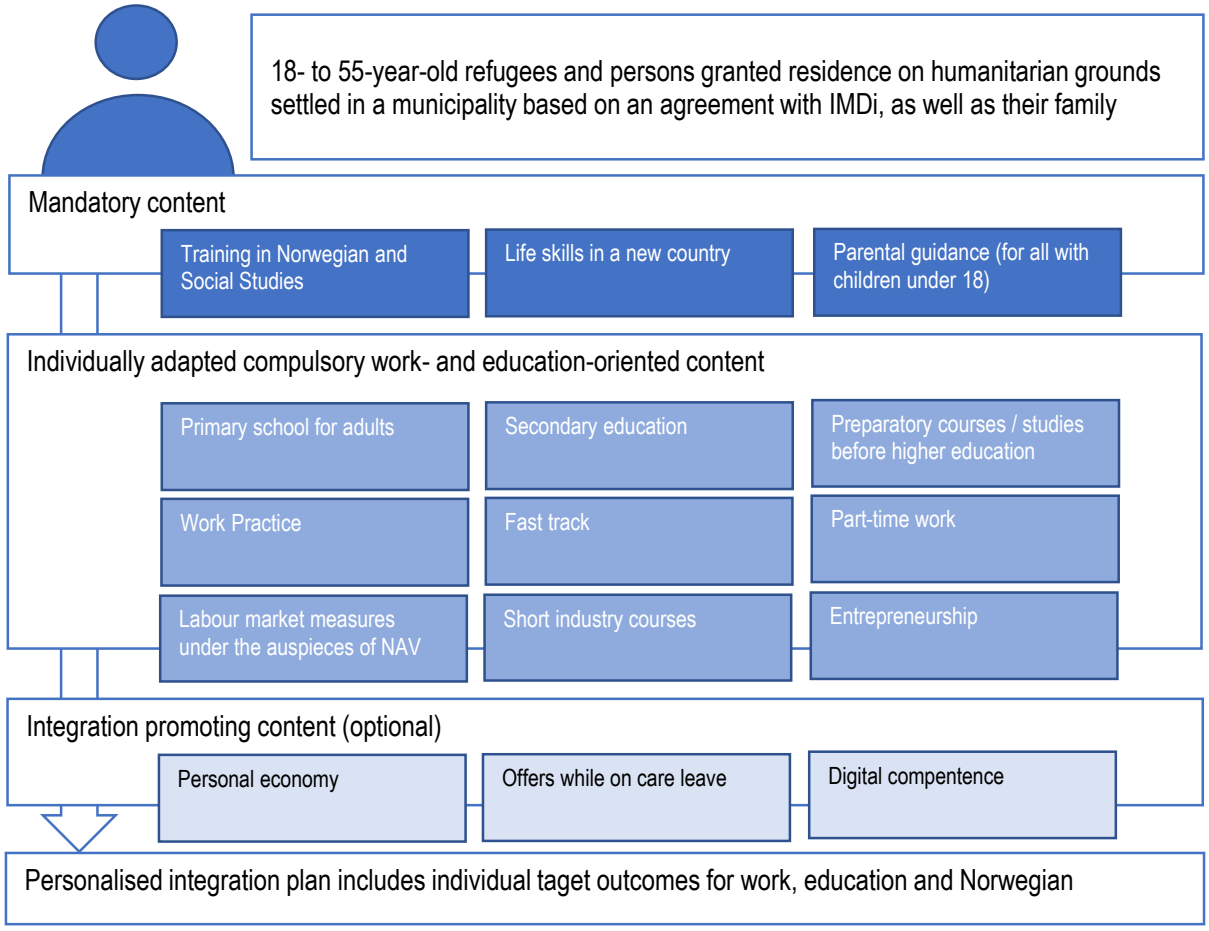
In addition to the previously discussed changes with the introduction of the new integration law, a number of other initiatives aim to respond to identified challenges. While the core elements in the NIP to achieve economic independence (Norwegian Language Training and Social Studies as well as work- or education-oriented measures) remain, new mandatory and optional course elements have been developed to support local implementation.

First, the Integration Act made two new course elements mandatory: a life skills course and a parental guidance course. Since 2021, every participant is obliged to participate in a group and dialogue-based life skills course that covers two main themes. Ten hours on "migration, health and diversity" provide knowledge about physical and mental health, the day-to-day life in Norway, and the right to live a free and independent life. Fifteen hours on "career competencies" offer knowledge on opportunities and limitations in Norwegian education, work and society and should contribute to building individuals' competence, values and interests. As a second mandatory element, parents are obliged to participate in a parental guidance course. This course informs about the parental role in a Norwegian context in about eight to 12 group or five to eight individual guidance sessions. It covers topics such as adaptation of care to the child's needs, positive development of emotional relationships, the interaction between the caregiver and the child, boundary-setting, negative social control, honour-related violence, violence in close relationships,

forced marriage and female genital mutilation, as well as the health risk of having children with closely related persons. Even before the parental guidance course became a mandatory element of the NIP in 2021, almost 60% of municipalities offered parental guidance during their introductory programmes. Most commonly, the courses used the International Child Development Program based on culture-oriented development psychology as a method for parental guidance with a specific version developed for minority migrant parents (IMDI, 2020[20]). Earlier evaluations stressed that participants found these offers helpful and supportive. Incorporating a mandatory programme element now ensures everyone is offered this course. At the same time, it seems important to communicate the mandatory elements predominantly as an offering obligation rather than a participation obligation. In practice, the result is the same for NIP participants as they are expected to follow the NIP offered to them in its entirety. However, framing it as a participation obligation sends the signal that immigrants otherwise would not participate, which does not seem to be the case.

Figure 3.7. The Introduction Programme combines mandatory and optional courses

Overview of mandatory courses and standardised elements offered in the NIP, 2021



Note: Training in Norwegian Language and Social Studies, ordinary education and labour market measures are not standardised elements.
Source: OECD Secretariat based on the digital resource catalogue from IMDi, 2021.

As part of the new integration reform, Norway has developed new online resources for the municipalities, including a guide to qualification paths for adult immigrants and a knowledge portal for the Introduction Programme. These online resources provide information and concrete tips on how to plan and implement different mandatory and optional elements in the NIP. For most activities, there is a specific topic called "organisation and co-ordination", which briefly states which actors may, or should, be involved in the planning and implementation of the activity.

IMDi and (former) Skills Norway have developed and are in the process of expanding a digital course catalogue with so-called standardised voluntary course elements. Standardised elements are professional recommendations for content in the NIP to help municipalities put together high-quality and individually-tailored Introduction Programmes. The standardised elements shall supplement other compulsory and individual content not as a "ready-made course", but as a resource catalogue that allows municipalities to select those elements, they find most useful when they design the individual integration plan. Examples of standardised elements are internships, training in digital competence or personal finance as well as industry-specific courses. *Hurtigsporet*, Norway's fast track programme for primarily those with minimum upper secondary education from abroad, can also be a standardised element. Part-time work and entrepreneurship are other examples.

The current programme supports but also demands the inclusion of mothers

Women tend to have longer programme durations in the NIP. Between 2013 and 2018, women were twice as likely to stay in the NIP for longer than 37 months than men. Those women with lowest education levels were more likely to stay longest. While this was also the case among the men, the pattern was less extreme. It is not possible to identify mothers in this duration data but earlier research has shown that refugee women in Norway show a peak in fertility one year after arrival (Østby, 2002[21]), suggesting that part of this longer duration of women in the programme can be explained by childbirth.

In Norway, participants in the NIP are entitled to 10 months of parental leave during the child's first year. Before the 2021 changes, mothers participating in the NIP faced the challenge that the overall duration of the right to free language training and social studies was not automatically extended for those on parental leave. This led to cases where the obligation of the municipality to provide free training ended before participants could reach their class goal, disproportionally affecting women, who are more likely to go on parental leave. The Ombudsman ruled the absolute time limit for municipalities to provide free training as discriminatory under the Equality Act (The Ombudsman, 2014[22]). Under the current Act, approved leave such as parental leave is now added to the programme duration.

Mothers are further entitled to 20 days off from the NIP after childbirth while keeping their introduction benefit. To ensure that mothers' progress in the programme is not disrupted due to childbirth, the municipalities are obliged under the new Integration Act to offer Norwegian language training and social studies after four months of parental leave. The offer shall be adapted to and decided in consultation with the individual participant and is not included in the calculation of completed hours, but rather offered as a supplement. The offer may contain different measures such as part-time training in adult education or attending Norwegian practise in an open kindergarten, but there are no conditions on the scope of these offers. Given the novelty of the new Act, results remain to be seen, but certainly both support offered and expectations on newly arrived parents will likely be higher than for those who arrived under the old regulations.

The introduction benefit is designed as an individual benefit, independent of the household's overall income, which is intended to incentivise to women to participate in the programme. This is also the case in Sweden. In contrast, Danish participants receive means-tested integration benefits if the family is not self-supporting. This mean-tested integration benefit (or self-sufficiency and repatriation benefit) is lower than the social benefits available to the majority population. Additionally, while participation in the introduction programme is obligatory in Denmark, participation in employment measures is obligatory only

for persons who receive financial assistance. These policies imply that if the husband is able to provide for the family, the wife is not obliged to participate in employment measures, nor is she financially incentivised to do so (Hernes and Tronstad, 2014[23]).

Future policy should focus on fine-tuning and follow-up

In light of the many recent and ongoing integration policy changes in Norway, including temporary COVID-19 provisions, it is too early to assess the outcomes of the new policies. However, there are some issues that are likely to create challenges due to the new actors and responsibilities. The following section discusses such points, which require attention going forward.

The increased number of actors requires effective communication and co-ordination

Municipalities have the overall responsibility for the NIP and the responsibility to co-ordinate measures provided by other actors, including the county, Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), private and non-profit organisations, and other public organisations.

As discussed, under the new Integration Act, the county is now responsible for providing career guidance (within three months after settlement) and Norwegian training for participants who will be enrolled full-time in secondary education as part of the NIP. While the clear delineation of tasks and shared responsibility is expected to improve co-ordination between municipalities and counties, methods for co-ordination of efforts have not yet been regulated in detail.

Since 2003, the government has provided guidance to the municipalities and responsible actors on how to ensure co-operation in the integration process (*rundskriv*), specifically on issues regarding the Introduction Programme. Still, exchanges with actors suggest that co-ordination has been difficult, risking duplications of efforts. New guidance from April 2021, developed jointly by IMDi and NAV, provides advice for the municipality and NAV on how to ensure better co-operation for NIP participants (IMDi and NAV, 2021[24]). The guide specifies ways for co-operation between the municipality and NAV and suggests written co-operation agreements and/or routines, yearly interdepartmental meetings for top-level managers, and collaboration in interdisciplinary teams with a view of ensuring a clear division of responsibilities, avoiding double work and contributing to an effective and tailored introductory programme. It provides concrete examples on specific tasks where NAV should contribute with their knowledge and network, for example by supplementing the municipal competence mapping (see below), in the development of the individual integration plan, and with providing programme measures such as the “fast track” (*Hurtigsporet*) and “life skills” (*livsmestring*). Throughout, the guide emphasises an early involvement of NAV in the planning process, and continuous involvement to ensure a smooth transition for participants who will need extra assistance after the Introduction Programme ends. Indeed, such transition will be crucial to ensure that labour market integration continues. The guide also specifies the responsibilities of NAVs regional offices, including providing support for the local NAV office in the preparation of co-operation agreements or routines and facilitating knowledge sharing.

In addition to collaboration with public entities such as the county governments and NAV, the municipality can engage private or non-profit actors to carry out tasks in accordance with the Integration Act, for instance, to offer all or part of training in Norwegian and social studies or other elements of the introductory programme. If they do so, the municipality must ensure that participants receive their entitlements.

Despite challenges to successful co-operation between the many actors involved in the NIP, (see for example Espegren and colleagues (2019[25]) who identify the lack of co-ordination and meeting places, transfer of information, and concerns related to trust given frequent changes of responsible contact persons) the Integration Act and its regulations have not yet provided clear guidelines to municipalities on how to handle the increased number of actors, beyond the guide on collaboration with the NAV. This could serve as an example for more support in co-operation and should be widely disseminated.

Technical solutions might improve co-ordination. For example, skills mapping is already supposed to take place in reception centres for asylum seekers or at IMDi in case of resettled refugees. Ideally, the skills mapping is then shared with municipalities who can then share it with counties. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that the results of previous competence and skills mapping are not always shared in a way that municipalities can access and use (Office of the Auditor General Norway, 2019[26]). As a result, municipalities often have to start competence mapping and skills assessment from the beginning once an individual arrives in their community. Notably the municipality is also doing the skills mapping for those settled directly in a municipality and for those who have not done the mapping before settling. With the introduction of career guidance at the county level (see above), counties re-do a form of skills mapping and assessment but with a different focus. This is not yet systematically integrated into what has been done by IMDi or the municipality. An integrated digital system that allows all parties involved, IMDI, NAV, asylum centres, municipalities, and counties to store and retrieve information on skills and career goals could therefore support effective co-ordination.

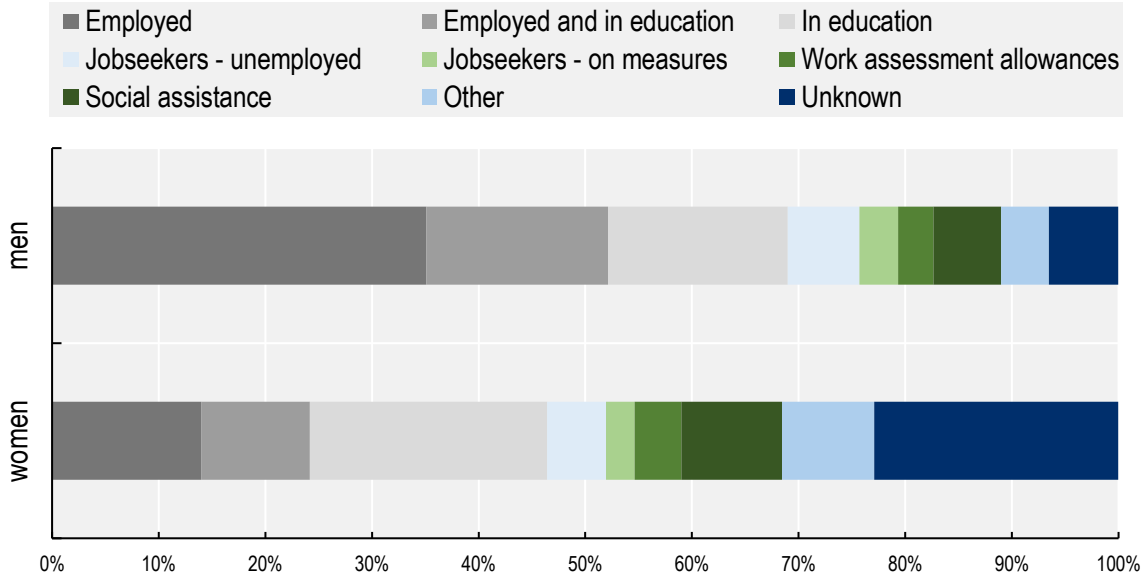
Another technical day-to-day challenge is the assignment of a register number for new arrivals. Every individual in Norway uses a unique personal register number to interact with public entities. Often this register number takes several months to be issued to new arrivals due to extensive background checks. It appears that this has often led to delays in access to services and thereby in the integration process. Some municipalities have been able to provide access to services by circumventing this bureaucratic challenge, for example by paying out the introduction benefit to other individuals or co-operating with local banks and doctors. However, with the involvement of county-level actors, a more lasting and structured solution is required. One possibility could be to adopt a co-ordination number as done for new arrivals in Sweden. The co-ordination number in Sweden is simply a temporary identification number for a person to facilitate the exchange of information between different authorities. The number as such does not give any rights or benefits. For opening a bank account, nationwide solutions such as a collaboration between UDI and banks could be investigated. Temporary solutions could have an automatic expiration after several months or when the register number is finalised.

Monitoring and follow-up of immigrant women after the NIP leaves much to be desired

As noted, one year after completing the NIP, the single most frequent outcome is employment, whereas for women this is education. However, for 23% of women, the labour market status is unknown (Figure 3.8). This stands in stark contrast to men, for whom only about 7% the status was unknown in 2020. An “unknown” status means that a person is not recorded in any of the available registers used to define labour market affiliation, notably also not registered as unemployed or receiving any labour market measures or benefits. The highest share of immigrant women with “unknown” status is found among women between the age of 25 and 29 (Lunde and Lysen, 2020[12]), suggesting that this may be related to childbirth.

Figure 3.8. One year after completing NIP, the labour market status of many women is unknown

Labour market status of former participants in the NIP, one year after completion, by sex, 2020



Note: Category other includes: reduced capacity to work, taking part in a measure; health-related allowances except work assessment allowance, cash for care and/or transition benefit. An increasing difference can be observed since 2011 and shares are thus unlikely to be impacted strongly by COVID-19.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on SSB data from online Table 10824: Former participants in the introduction programme for immigrants, by sex, completed or discontinued the introduction programme, year, contents, and labour market status.

Looking at a longer time horizon, the shares of women in employment or education increase only slowly from 46% one year post-completion to 53% after five years, and the share of registered unemployed or on labour market measures increases from 18% to 23%.

It is important to note for consideration of the data that attendance of primary education as an adult is not considered “in education” for adults (it also does not count towards the goal of 70% in education and employment) but is rather included as “unknown” in the register-based employment statistics (SFP). As more and more adults are enrolled in primary education as their main activity, as is both intended by the new policy and welcome from an integration perspective, the result gap in monitoring the outcomes is likely to become even more significant in the future. At the same time, the high share of women with an unknown labour market status suggests that the transition from the NIP to mainstream support measures works poorly and that some are lost in between. It is likely that this group is composed of stay-at-home women, potentially with children, without clear access to individually targeted support measures or social assistance, making them dependent on their partner. While the NIP has gone through changes to adapt to the needs of newly arrived mothers, there are few support measures for immigrant mothers with weak labour market attachment after the NIP and in the mainstream labour market services. Norway does have a second-chance programme, Jobbsjansen (see Chapter 4), but women need to have finished the NIP at least two years earlier to access this programme. A regular status follow-up after NIP completion could be an essential element in bridging this gap and making sure that labour market connection is not lost in the meantime.

There is little attention paid to the specific needs of higher educated immigrants

The new Integration Act has removed previous criteria requiring participants to be in need of basic skills training to receive a right for participation in the NIP. This implies that all refugee arrivals settled with an

agreement, including those with higher education from their origin country, have to participate in the programme until the obligatory elements are fulfilled.

At the same time, in the current programme set-up, higher education cannot be offered as an element of the NIP. However, for participants who wish to attend higher education and need help to meet the intake requirements, individual assessments on support measures can be made. The measures offered may include academic internships or sector specific language training.

Under the new Act, individuals with upper secondary education experience the largest reduction in their NIP programme time. Early evidence suggests that the few months these cohorts are given to qualify for employment or higher education may not be sufficient. During the pandemic, NIP participants with upper secondary education were the only group to have experienced an increase in the transition to social security benefits. This is partly due to the fact that municipalities faced difficulties providing sufficient Norwegian and English-language education, which has prevented this cohort from transitioning to higher education (Hernes, Staver and Tronstad, 2021[17]).

An alternative to restricting programme time would be to allow those deemed to benefit from a certain Introduction Programme module relevant to their skills and needs to attend this training also beyond their maximum one-year participation, possibly in part-time and without the entitlement to introduction benefits. This would be similar to what is practice in Canada, where migrants can access settlement support as needed until they become citizens.

Another option for this group is Hurtigsporet, a fast-track programme for refugees with upper secondary education and skills in demand, initiated in 2016. The fast track is a newly standardised element of NIP organised jointly by NAV, the municipality, the county, and employers. The goal is to facilitate a quick and direct integration of refugees who already have expertise in an in-demand profession on the labour market. The municipality needs to collaborate with NAV, the county and other actors to identify demand and needs in various professions, industries and disciplines locally and regionally.

The programme typically starts with a period of Norwegian language teaching incorporating frequently used words and expressions at the aspired position, followed by work-practice at an employer together with further training. The programme differs from the NIP in that NAV general labour market activation measures are used, such as wage subsidy and mentor schemes. Employers are also involved and active throughout the process.

Exact numbers of participants are unknown, but available information suggests a low take-up, well below what would be expected based on experiences with similar programmes in peer systems, such as in Sweden. The reasons for this low take-up are not entirely clear. Local NAV offices and several municipalities have reported difficulties in identifying potential candidates for the programme and anecdotal evidence suggests that few municipalities are aware of the scheme (Pettersen and Aure, 2019[27]) (Ramboll, 2019[28]). A recent assessment of the programme suggested, for example, that only about half of NAV employees knew about the measure. Vague guidelines and questions about the intent and purpose of the programme were also reported. (Fedreheim, 2021[29]). A main difference to the programme in Sweden is that the track in Norway is not adapted to prepare participants for specific professions. In Sweden, specific tracks are developed and designed together with professional bodies. Tracks are available for more than 11 professions such as controllers, painters, butchers, mechanism, teachers and doctors. National guidelines on how to identify the target group and more clearly defined implementation responsibilities could increase usage of the Norwegian programme. Outcomes of the participants in the programme have not yet been nationally assessed, but employers observe that many of the participants are not sufficiently prepared for the specific sector when entering work-training (Pettersen and Aure, 2019[27]). With the new Integration Act and its specific provisions for individuals with upper secondary education and individualised support, the necessity of this programme can be questioned. An alternative would be to tailor it to certain professions.

For NIP participants who have a specific degree from abroad and want to use it in Norway, municipalities may offer preparatory courses helping them qualify for specific bridging programmes. However, bridging programmes are currently only possible for participants with an education as a nurse, teacher, or with at least a three-year education in engineering, technology or sciences. Furthermore, to qualify for the courses, specific language requirements need to be meet upfront in both English and Norwegian (B1 in Norwegian for engineers and teachers and B2 for nurses). Given these high language barriers, take-up by the target group has been extremely low (for example, in 2017, no refugees participated in the bridging for nurses), and other non-EU foreign-born can be offered participation in case of vacant seats.

Unlike Norway's small-scale bridging programme basically covering only three professions, Sweden's bridging offers extend over 40 different standardised professional tracks. Among the professions there are specific tracks for painters, teachers, health staff, engineers, machine operators, lawyers, economist and social workers. The duration of the programme depends on the profession. Examples of elements in the track are recognition of foreign educations and assessment and authorisation of professional skills after sector requirements, Swedish-language education relevant for the profession, and bridging courses. While it may be difficult to design programmes for less in-demand jobs, these profession-specific tracks can be more efficient, as a new programme does not have to be designed to meet the need of each individual immigrant. Such tracks can be designed by experts in the field, rather than depending on the programmatic choices of individual NIP counsellors. Co-operation with employers in these sectors can help ensure that the profession-specific track contains components that meet the employers' needs for their workers. The rationale underpinning these tracks is similar to that of countries that have introduced vocation-specific language training, such as Austria, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Israel, Luxembourg, and Portugal.

Consider providing parts of the NIP to groups of immigrants currently excluded

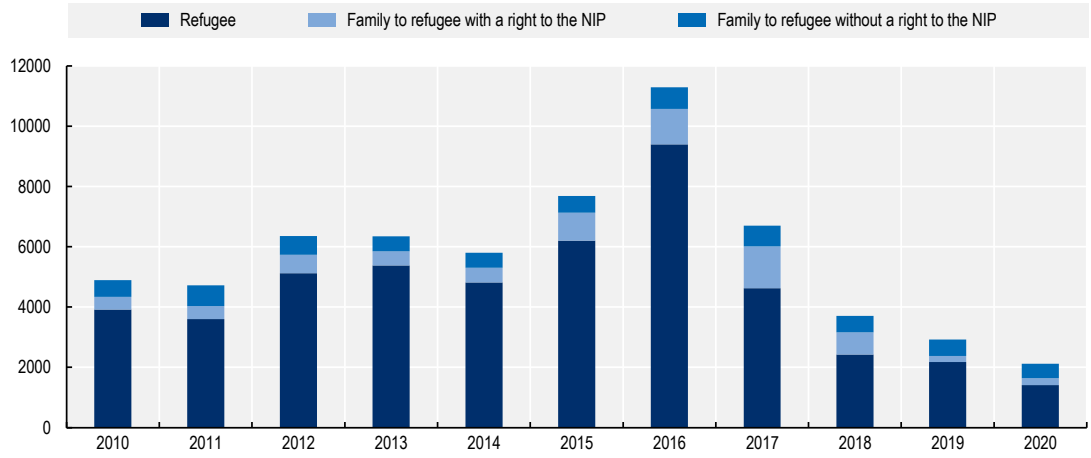
As outlined, the NIP is only available as a right and obligation to humanitarian immigrants and their families aged 18 to 55 at arrival. Norway makes a distinction between those who join a refugee partner with less than five years of residence in the country and those who join someone with five or more years of residence. In the latter case, the arrival of the refugee partner is not considered family reunification but family formation. Family formation migrants do not have a right nor obligation to participate in the NIP.

Since 2017, the number of family migrants joining a partner who arrived as a refugee has strongly decreased (Figure 3.9). At the same time, the share of new arrivals joining a refugee with more than five years of residence has grown and, in 2019 and 2020, the number of adult family members joining a refugee with more than five years of residence was twice as high as those joining someone with less than five years. As a result, among the recent arrivals in the respective age group (18-55), only about one in three family members joining a refugee is entitled to attend the NIP. Three in four of the adult family members joining a refugee are women.

This distinction excludes refugee family members from participation in the NIP, despite evidence of a positive employment effect for this group (Ugreninov and Turner, 2021[8]) and the fact that family migrants have one of the highest likelihoods to settle in Norway long-term (see Chapter 2). Integrating them should be a priority, not just for them but also for the benefit of their native-born children (see Chapter 5). Improving the data and reporting structure on this group would be an important first step (Box 3.2).

Figure 3.9. Refugee family members without a right to the NIP account for an increasing share of arrivals

Number of individual arrivals, aged 18-55, by reason for immigration and partners duration in Norway, 2010-20



Note: Family to other immigrant groups and to the native-born is excluded. The dataset contains information on the reference person in Norway for about 88% of observations.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

New income and residence requirements may interfere with the objective of long-term integration

In recent years, a number of new requirements for permanent residence have been introduced, including an income requirement in 2017. While the income requirement is applied to all immigrant categories, recent research shows that it has had different consequences on different groups (Eggebo and Staver, 2020[30]). According to figures from SSB, only labour migrants reach the required income after 3 to 5 years. Refugees often do not reach the required income even after 10 years. For family migrants, it takes 6 to 10 years to reach the limit. The income requirement seems to be the most difficult condition for permanent residence for refugees to fulfil (Omholdt and Strøm, 2014[31]). Certain groups (under 18, over 67, individuals with disabilities and students in upper secondary education) are exempted from these requirements (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2017[32]). In 2020, new changes required that those over 18 in education, who were previously exempted from these restrictions now must have been in education for the last 12 months to qualify for the exception. This is designed to ensure that the foreigner has completed training over a certain period of time before being granted permanent residence in Norway. Students at higher education institutions must document that they have been full-time students in the last 12 months. Similar requirements should also apply to foreigners who participate in primary or secondary education (Justis-Beredskapsdepartementet, 2020[33]).

Income requirements for permanent residency and for the right to apply for family reunification might interfere with the educational objective of the NIP, as the need to earn an extra income might become a priority that displaces other, more long-term objectives such as achieving a good level of Norwegian or upgrading educational qualifications. It appears that many participants in the NIP are eager to find a job quickly during the Introduction Programme in order to meet the income requirement for a permanent residence permit, which ensures predictability and security. However, to which degree the choices regarding education are influenced by these rules is not known.

The current income requirement for a permanent residence permit is 2.5 times the basic amount of the National Insurance Scheme on an annual basis, and the introduction benefit, which is an approved type of income for this purpose, amounts to twice this amount. Hence, some participants take an additional part-time job in the unskilled labour market (Lillevik and Tyldum, 2018[19]). Anecdotal evidence also suggests that some immigrants end vocational training before getting a trade certificate in fear of not fulfilling the income requirement (Leirvik and Staver, 2019[34]).

A proposed legislative change would exclude the introduction benefit from meeting the income requirement for family reunification of beneficiaries of international protection. Proposed changes also contemplate the postponement of family reunification for a period of time between one to three years to ensure a higher level of self-sufficiency among individuals who wish to bring their family members to Norway. It is not evident that delays in family reunification increase self-sufficiency among migrants in Norway. On the contrary, international evidence suggests that delays in family reunification may have adverse consequences for migrant integration in the long-term. After ten years or more in the host country, principal migrants whose spouses joined them after some delay earn significantly lower wages than otherwise comparable principal migrants. Spouses who arrive with delay are themselves less likely to be proficient in the host-country language after five or more years of residence (OECD, 2019[35]) (OECD, 2019[35]).

In 2020, additional changes also created different application requirements for different immigrant groups. People who received their first permit on the basis of asylum or family reunification must now meet a residence requirement of 5 years prior to permanent residency, up from 3 (Box 3.6).

Settlement can focus on long-term needs and include personal preferences

Settling refugees in Norwegian municipalities is the joint responsibility of central and local governments (see Chapter 2). There is a formal co-operation agreement between the central government and the Norwegian association of local and regional authorities (KS). Since 2021, the county government is included in the negotiation process and makes recommendations as to number of new refugees should be allocated to each municipality in the county. The municipality has the decision power on how many refugees they want to settle, but cannot make demands regarding refugees' nationality or family situation. The Ministry of Education and Research has developed settlement criteria based on previous results of newcomers in the introductory programme, the possibility of gaining work experience in the municipality, and access to attend upper secondary education in the region.

Every year, IMDi asks the municipalities via request letters to receive a certain number of refugees, both former asylum seekers and resettlement refugees. The request specifies if the municipality is asked to settle unaccompanied minors. How many refugees IMDi asks the individual municipality to receive is based on an assessment of the future need for settlement. The National Committee for Settlement decides this based on forecasts of asylum seekers, forecasts of the number of granted asylum applications and forecasts of the number of resettlement refugees. The final number for each municipality is then determined in dialogue with the Central Association of Local Authorities (KS), the county and the municipality, based on the settlement criteria. Municipalities that have decided to settle refugees receive a request from IMDi to receive specific persons. Family members that arrive through reunification usually come directly to the municipality and therefore do not go through the usual settlement process. Self-supporting refugees who have a place to live are basically free to settle on their own initiative, without an agreement with either IMDi or the municipality. Those who settle on their own initiative are not entitled to an introductory programme, although the municipality can choose to provide one. They may also lose rights to other benefits.

The settlement criteria give the greatest weight to opportunities for education and work, and the municipalities' results in the Introduction Programme. Then emphasis is put on settlement taking place across all parts of Norway, in both small and large municipalities. As not all municipalities are able to offer the same opportunities in higher education and work, striking a balance between the best integration offers for the newcomer and the practice of settling new arrivals across all parts of Norway – including rural areas – can be a challenge. Emphasis is also placed on the municipalities' capacity for adapting services to changing numbers and the possibility of receiving a large number of refugees. Generally, no receiving municipality should obtain fewer than 10 people. Consideration must also be given to whether the municipality can house refugees with major disabilities. Municipalities are encouraged to avoid settling refugees in areas where the proportion of immigrants is over 30% and where there are difficult living conditions (IMDi, 2021[36]). When assigning a settlement municipality, to the extent possible, IMDi considers information about the refugee's relatives who already live in a Norwegian municipality, special follow-up needs, education and career plans as well as other needs. Individual preferences regarding a rural or urban placement, or geographical location within Norway, are considered to a lesser degree.

Evidence from before the current Integration Act has shown that highly educated refugees and women were more often placed in central, populous municipalities with a high level of education and income and a high proportion of immigrants. By contrast, families with children and resettlement refugees to a greater extent settled in less central municipalities with lower populations and lower income and education levels (Tønnessen and Andersen, 2019[37]).

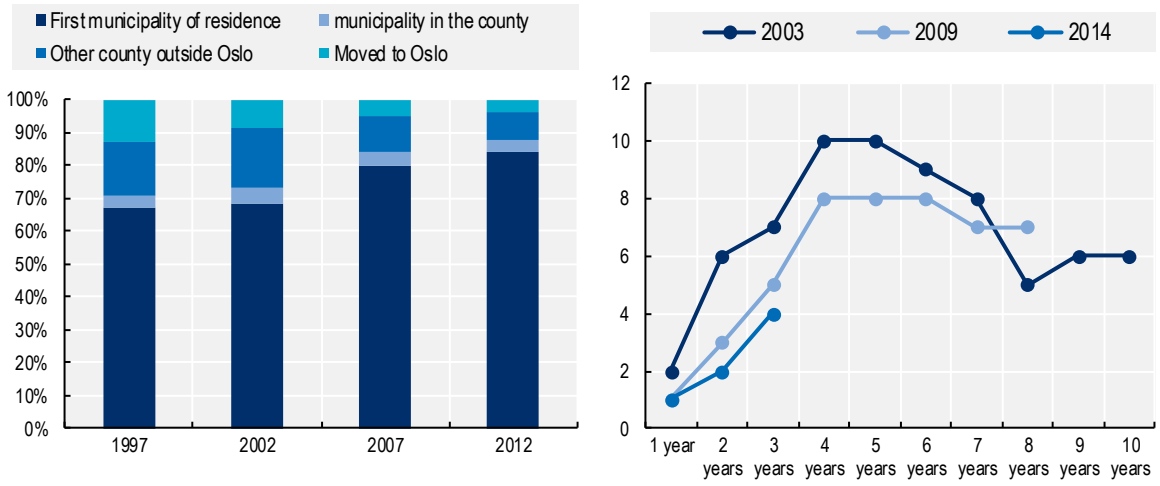
Municipalities can decline the assignment of a person if they think they are not a good match for their community. Though it is unclear how often this occurs, municipalities who feel unable to receive one or more of the refugees IMDi has requested them to settle can provide a justification for why this is the case. Refusals must be justified. Several refusals to settle assigned refugees, can result in the municipality no longer being asked to resettle refugees. Refugees, on the other hand, are offered only one settlement municipality. They may refuse the offer but then must settle on their own, losing the right to the introductory programme and benefit.

Whether refugees and their families stay in their initially assigned municipality or move after their integration programme has ended (typically two to three years after settlement) can serve as an indicator of success for municipal integration. Research from Statistics Norway suggests that those settled after the establishment of the NIP, tend to be more likely to stay in their initially assigned municipality. Five years after settlement among the arrival cohort of 2012, about 83% are still residing in their initially assigned municipality, while the share was much lower among those settled in 1997 at 67%. Most refugees who leave their initially assigned municipality depart about four to five years after settlement. The trend among all the cohorts with an Introduction Programme are similar, with little change over the last decade (Figure 3.10). Moving to Oslo has become less and less popular over the past decade (Strøm and Epland, 2020[38]).

Age and gender appear to impact likelihood of moving after an initial period of residence in the assigned municipality and NIP participation. Not surprisingly, single male and younger persons are more likely to be mobile within Norway; families with children are more likely to stay in their assigned municipality. Because they comprise a larger geographic area and are responsible for regional integration needs, county involvement provides an opportunity to better align refugee settlement to long-term needs. At the same time, there are concerns of small municipalities experiencing declining populations and in some cases labour shortages that they may not obtain refugees although they would generally like to. Including the experience of refugees in the monitoring of the NIP and taking into account their individual preferences could allow for better expectation management.

Figure 3.10. Secondary movement of refugees from their first municipality is less prevalent

Share of refugees (left) residing in first municipality five years after settlement and annual share by cohort (right) relocating



Note: The left-hand scale is calculated based on the share resident in Norway still present in their first municipality five years after settlement.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculation based on Strøm and Epland (2020[38]), Monitor for sekundaerflytting. Sekundærflytting blant personer med flyktningbakgrunn bosatt i Norge 2007-2016.

One possibility to allow newcomers to experience rural Norway while at the same time remaining the option for educational offers could be to pilot the mandatory completion of a training element of the NIP, such as a work practise or internship in a neighbouring municipality. This could link participants directly to employment experiences through work practise and available offers in more rural parts of Norway.

The current funding structure is adaptive but does not incentivise individual plans

The funding structure incentivises municipalities, in particular, those with fewer inhabitants to settle refugees. This is because in addition to the integration specific grants, municipalities in Norway receive most of their funding from central government based on the number of municipal inhabitants. As a result, settling refugees and other newcomers provides not only new people to the community but also brings additional yearly funding. As a result, municipalities are motivated and in some cases even competing to settle refugees. Municipalities have flexibility in terms of what they offer in the NIP, so they can collaborate with other municipalities and are encouraged to test their own initiatives. Outside the larger cities, the number of individuals participating in the NIP per municipality is small and has fluctuated strongly in recent years as in 2017 the median number of individuals settled increased from 25 to 37 before it lowered to 25 in 2019 again.

Municipalities, counties, and other stakeholders receive various grants from IMDi to cover the costs of settlement and integration. Most grants are paid per headcount (per person) and are not designated for a particular purpose (IMDi, 2021[39]). Table 3.3 depicts the main components and differences between two grant schemes for integration: 1) the integration grant, comprising grants for integration, old-age and kindergarten and 2) the grant for training in Norwegian language and Social Studies for adult immigrants (NLTSS). These are both paid based on the number of participants in need of the corresponding programmes. Notably, everyone who is a beneficiary of the Introduction Programme receives language training, which is a mandatory component of the former. However, the same is not true vice versa, as some immigrants receive NLTSS but have no right (or obligation) to the NIP.

Table 3.3. The grant for language training is adjusted to participants and municipality size while the integration grant is not

Overview of two large automatically paid grants for integration

	Integration grants	Training in Norwegian and social studies for adult immigrants
Receivers	Municipalities	Municipalities and counties
Payment	Running	Quarterly
Consists of:	Integration grant Old-age grant Kindergarten grant	Personal allowances Basic allowance
Adaptation	No. The integration subsidy is paid regardless of the individual's needs for follow-up, measures and facilitation in the municipality.	Yes. The personal allowance is adapted to the origin of the participant. The basic allowance is adjusted to the size of the municipality. Basic grants will be paid to municipalities that have between 1-150 people.
Amount	Integration grants (depends -see table below) Kindergarten grants (2021): 27 100 (one-off grant) Elderly allowance (2021): 176 000 (one-off grant)	

Source: OECD Secretariat based on IMDi (2021[39]).

Funds for overall integration are based on type of residence permit and the year since settlement. Overall, the largest amounts of the integration grants come in the first years after settlement and overall municipalities can receive monetary support for five years each first time they settle a refugee. Table 3.4 provides an overview of the integration grant per year. In year 1, the integration grant is paid in full as soon as the person is registered as a resident. In years 2-5, the grant is paid four times a year.

Table 3.4. Integration grants differ by year since settlement and residence permit

Amount of integration grant per person, by year of settlement, 2016-21

Year of settlement	Amount in Norwegian Krone
Year 1 (2021)	241 000 (single adults)
	194 300 (adults)
	187 000 (unaccompanied minors)
	194 300 (children) *
Year 2 (2020)	249000
Year 3 (2019)	177300
Year 4 (2017)	88000
Year 5 (2016)	72000

Note: There are different rates for grants, depending on the type of category a person resides in year 1. Different rates apply depending on which year the person was resident for the first time, and what kind of residence permit they have. The municipality must apply for the grant as soon as possible after the person became a resident.
Source: OECD Secretariat based on IMDi (2021[40]).

The current funding structure for the NIP incentivises a quick transition to employment over the declared goal of obtaining an education, as the faster refugees become self-sufficient, the greater the share of the integration grants, which are not earmarked, go directly to the municipality. As shown, funds for language training are adjusted to individuals' national origin, via a personal allowance anticipating that individuals from certain countries need more training. In addition, they also consist of a so-called basic allowance,

which accounts for the fact that small municipalities might have a harder time providing and keeping up the infrastructure to offer NLTSS courses. This introduces some support for small municipalities to allow for longer term planning regarding programme offerings and hiring of needed staff.

A key question for the successful implementation of the new Act will be if the funding structure can incentivise individual plans. It is not clear how a municipality under the new Act will be able and encouraged to provide more individual-tailored services in the NIP than before the reform, without additional funding. One option could be to tie resources – similar to what is done for language learning – to different levels of skills and education. This could also support the goal of adapted measures and course content for each individuals' prior experience and skill level.

New indicators for measuring the NIP's outcomes can strengthen oversight, focus on long-term outcomes and support policy learning

The indicator for the success of the Introduction Programme, the labour market integration goal of 70% in education or training one year after programme completion, is quite narrow and has clear shortcomings. First, one year after completion of the NIP is very early in the integration process to serve as a benchmark for success, especially for the integration of vulnerable migrants such as refugees. Indeed, the labour market integration path of refugees is generally a long-term project and it is not uncommon at refugees need more than 10 years to catch up to the employment level of native-born, if ever (OECD, 2019[41]). Second, this indicator assigns equal importance to three very different outcomes: working, being in education, and combining education and work. Third, it does not allow for any insights on reasons for success or lack of success for particular groups in particular contexts, limiting options for policy learning. A recent evaluation by the Norwegian Auditor General highlights similar shortcomings, noting the proportion who are in work or education one year after the NIP says little about the long-term connection to work-life in Norway or whether individuals are self-sufficient (Office of the Auditor General Norway, 2019[26]).

In the context of the many recent reforms, the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR) has suggested a set of new indicators so that the efforts, results and implementation of the reforms can be evaluated (Hernes, Staver and Tønnessen, 2020[42]). The proposal lists different indicators for three identified stages of the integration process. The first stage is input: the work of the municipality and county authorities in terms of use of education and work-oriented measures in the NIP, hours of Norwegian language training, the duration of the programme and expenditures, as well as ambition for the envisioned results of participants. It also includes the users' experience and the municipality's ability to offer a full-time programme. The second stage focuses on the output at the end of the integration programme, such as the participants' Norwegian skills, knowledge of Norwegian society, achievement of individual programme targets and the share of migrants with formal qualifications. The third and final stage addresses long-term integration outcomes such as formal educational attainment, economic self-sufficiency levels and degree of labour market attachment.

While it is difficult to compare municipalities to one another, the proposed set of indicators would enable an overview of their goals and outcomes, for example whether municipalities settle for the recommended minimum level in language training or set a higher internal goal. It could also shed light on how the content of the NIP goal varies across municipalities and their available resources. Examining variations in duration of the programme offerings can help provide insight as to whether the new set-up leads to additional costs for the municipalities and whether shorter programmes have long-term integration consequences for participants.

One of the new indicators is whether the participants reach economic independence. The authors propose that the income level should amount to two times the National Insurance Scheme, which is also the same amount received as a benefit in the Introduction Programme. As the amount is adjusted annually it would allow the following of changes over time. However, as the measurement is individual it will not automatically

detect low-income households. Given the higher share of children of immigrants living in persistent low-income households and that are at risk of child poverty, it would be useful to include an indicator taking into account the composition and income of the whole household. In addition, the proposed follow-up periods of 1, 3 and 5 years after completion could be extended, as for men, detachment from the labour market starts about 7 years after settlement. In 2020, IMDi carried out a test survey with the objective of carrying out an annual survey of participants' experience.

Norwegian language training

Migrant groups have different rights to free Norwegian language training

All individuals with the right and duty to participate in the Introduction Programme also have a right and obligation to participate in Norwegian language training and social studies (NLTSS), but the scheme is also offered to other groups of immigrants (Table 3.5). Apart from language training, it includes 75 hours of mandatory training in social studies for adult immigrants. The latter covers important information about Norway and individual rights, opportunities and obligations in Norwegian society.

Table 3.5. Norwegian language training and social studies for different migrant groups

	Refugees, humanitarian migrants and their families (aged 18 to 67)	Family members reunited with persons who have permanent residency from countries outside the EEA/EFTA area (aged 18 to 67)	Labour immigrants from countries outside the EEA/EFTA area + their family (aged 18 to 67)	Persons who are resident pursuant to the EFTA/EEA rules
Is access to the training an obligation or a right?	Right and obligation	Right and obligation	Obligation but no right	No obligation and no right
Duration and scope / Limit of provision	The right applies until the participant has reached their pre-defined goal (or under old regulations used their 600 (550 + 50) hours of training)		Until goal in Norwegian is reached **or** 300 (225+75) completed hours of training.	
Responsibility of	Municipality. County if the person attends full-time upper secondary education during the NIP	Municipality	Migrants themselves	Migrants themselves
Provided by	Primarily state-funded schools		Various public and private approved providers	
Costs of tuition	Free for participants	Free for participants	Participants pay	Participants pay
Needed for permanent residency or citizenship?	Yes, but potentially at higher level than offered in this scheme	Yes	Yes, need completed Norwegian language training with final exams before application	No. EU/EEA-citizens acquire the right to permanent residence after five years of registered legal residence

Note: Persons who can document sufficient knowledge of Norwegian or Sami and knowledge about Norwegian society can be exempted from these requirements. Until 2016, refugees between 55 and 67 have had the right, but not a duty to participate. See also table 1 in Chapter 2. According to the new curriculum in adult training the hours of social studies increased from 50 to 75.
Source: Integration Act, Chapter 6 on Training in Norwegian and social studies, 2021, https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2020-11-06-127.

Third-country labour migrants, as well as their families, must participate. They need to complete 300 hours of training (thereof 75 in social studies) and pass the language tests to apply for a permanent residence permit. They have to pay for this training themselves. When the target level of Norwegian is reached or

the 300 hours of training completed, their duty of participation ceases. By contrast, family members reuniting with permanent residents, including those reuniting with a Norwegian or Nordic citizen, have a right and obligation to participate, meaning they can access free courses if they migrated from countries outside the EEA/EFTA area. Persons residing in Norway based on the EEA/EFTA agreements using their right to free mobility cannot be obliged to participate in such training and are not entitled to free tuition in Norwegian language and social studies. A municipality can choose to offer training in Norwegian and social studies to groups without a right to participation, for example to EEA citizens and their families. However, they can also demand self-payment for such training. Since 2018, asylum seekers in reception centres are offered 175 hours of Norwegian language training by the municipality, free of charge. In 2019, about half (49%) of the asylum seekers residing in reception centres received such training. According to the new Integration Act, the municipality must provide 175 hours of Norwegian language training and 25 hours of social studies to asylum seekers.

Norway stands in contrast to other Nordic countries in that the entitlement to language training are based on residence permits, and labour migrants have little access to free training. In Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, in principle all immigrants can receive free language training, though the scope and period vary. In Denmark, refugees and their families are entitled to free language training for up to five years. International students, labour migrants and their family members, as well as EU citizens, are entitled to training for up to 3.5 years. The latter however must pay a deposit of DKK 2000 (EUR 270) at the beginning of the training, refunded if the training is completed within this period. The language training for this group is organised around a voucher scheme provided by the municipality and valid for 5 years. In Sweden, all immigrants registered in a municipality and above 16 years of age who lack basic proficiency in Swedish are entitled to free and unlimited language training. The minimum language training is 15 hours a week, but each participant gets their training adapted depending on their prior level of education and individual needs. In Finland, language training is based on participants' needs and depends on whether or not individuals have an integration plan. Immigrants who receive language training as part of their integration plan, which includes unemployed immigrants and those who receive temporary income support, are eligible for free classes. All others who do not have an integration plan have to pay (Rambøll Management Consulting, 2021[43]).

While some countries, such as Australia and Canada, have made their language training available to all migrants free of charge, countries differ regarding cost coverage. Some countries, such as Germany, have taken the view that asking migrants to pay a small share when able helps them understand the value of the service provided. Charging fees for the categories of migrants seen as most likely to be able to afford them seems a reasonable approach, provided that the fees are not so high as to dissuade migrants from enrolling in classes.

As of 2021, a new voucher scheme *(Klippekort)* gives all immigrants, regardless of how long they have been in Norway, the opportunity to register for language training. Notably, via this new system, migrants who are otherwise not entitled to free language training, such as EEA citizens, will be able to receive language training worth up to NOK 10 000 (about EUR 1 000). The voucher allows for self-purchasing of around 80 hours of language training and can be used for both online classes and in-person training. The scheme aims to contribute for participants to gradually learn Norwegian at an A2/B1 level or higher (IMDI, 2021[44]). However, migrants who have attended previous training by the Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (formerly Skills Norway), for example via the Jobbsjansen programme, are not eligible for the scheme.

The new Integration Act shifts the focus from hours taught to levels achieved

The NLTSS scheme aims to allow adult immigrants to sufficiently master Norwegian to be able to find employment and participate in society after their first years in Norway. Norwegian language training is organised in three tracks that differ in learning speeds and goals. The tracks initially corresponded to the

Norwegian language tests offered at three levels: A1/A2, A2/B1 or B1/B2 as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Following the implementation of the Integration Act, the curriculum in Norwegian and social studies for adult immigrants has been revised. The new curricula entered into force in August 2021. One key change is that level C1, referring to proficient users of a foreign language, is for the first time included in the curriculum. The most important criteria for track assignment are the immigrant's educational background and literacy skills (reading and writing) in their first language.

OECD-wide, countries are increasingly seeking to provide language tracks based on past education or assessed language ability. In Denmark, there are three tracks based on an initial assessment of a migrant's education. Each track is divided into six modules with tests at the end of each and a final exam at the end of the programme. Successful learners have the option to progress to the next track if they choose. The target level of Danish increases with the migrant's education level, with those migrants in Danish 3 aiming to achieve a C1, which is necessary to access higher education in Denmark. Finland offers different tracks based on an initial assessment of learning capacity, and Austria and Sweden also have modular systems. Germany offers an intensive course for highly educated learners. Many countries, like Norway, also offer a pre-literacy track.

The Integration Act introduced several changes to the Norwegian language training and social studies scheme (see also Chapter 2). Responding to earlier evidence that learners with teachers who had professional credentials in teaching Norwegian as a second language achieved better results (Djuve et al., 2017[1]), the Integration Act introduced an requirement that teachers of Norwegian to have academic and educational competence equivalent to 30 credits in the Norwegian as a second language. Further, in light of the challenges of those attending full-time education at school, the age limit for participation in NLTSS was raised from 16 to 18 years. Participants can no longer grow into or out of the target group by turning 18 or 68 years old. The new age limit of 18 years puts Norway in line with most other OECD countries. At the same time, options should be available for those who arrive at 17 who can no longer grow into this training to ensure that those youngsters have access to Norwegian language training outside of compulsory school. The responsibility for providing NLTSS rests with the municipality unless individuals attend full-time upper secondary education, in which case the county is responsible.

Importantly, the Integration Act changed the focus from the number of hours of teaching provided to the learning outcome (the level of Norwegian attained). The new provision replaces the previous right to a minimum of 600 and up to a maximum of 3 000 hours of free Norwegian language training for those in the NIP with a requirement to achieve a minimum level in mastering Norwegian. The envisioned level is referred to as the participant's "Norwegian goal", as determined by the individual's prior education level (Table 3.6). Training will be given until the immigrant reaches the Norwegian goal across four language skills (oral, listening, writing and reading) or for the maximum participant duration in the Introduction Programme. In case of faster progression than expected, the minimum level can be adjusted upwards. If the participant's progression indicates that they will not be able to reach the minimum level, the level can be adjusted downwards.

Similar to Norway a number of OECD countries, including Canada and Australia do not have limitations based on hours of language provision (anymore). By contrast, determining the target, based on education is rare. Other OECD countries including the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Latvia, do this based on prior knowledge of the language.

Table 3.6. The Norwegian language goal differs by education level

Indicative minimum levels of Norwegian language by each competence and education level

	Oral communication (speaking)	Listening	Reading	Writing
not completed primary school before	B1	A2	A2	A2
completed compulsory school before	B1	B1	B1	B1
completed upper secondary education before	B2	B1	B1	B1
completed upper secondary education before and a need to document level B2 in all sub-skills	B2	B2	B2	B2

Note: Participants who receive their Norwegian language instruction in upper secondary education should achieve a grade of 2 or higher in Norwegian language courses. Participants who receive their Norwegian language instruction in primary school should either achieve a grade of 2 or higher in Norwegian or achieve a minimum level A2 in the subtests in listening comprehension, reading comprehension and written presentation and level B1 in the subtest in oral communication.
Source: Adjusted from § 28 Regulations to the Integration Act (the Integration Regulations).

This focus on prior education levels is in line with research findings across the OECD that prior education is a good predictor of how fast and well a foreign language can be learned (OECD/EU, 2014[45]). In Norway, learners' number of years of prior schooling stands out as a key predictor of test score in the Norwegian language test, together with origin country region (Randen et al., 2018[46]). However, given the highly decentralised system, it is not clear how individual municipalities will handle track assignments or whether they will include other factors such as age or previous Norwegian learning in their assessment. It is further unclear whether education considered for the Norwegian goal refers only to officially assessed and recognised education levels and if not, how this is considered in different municipalities across the country. Some guidance would be useful in this respect.

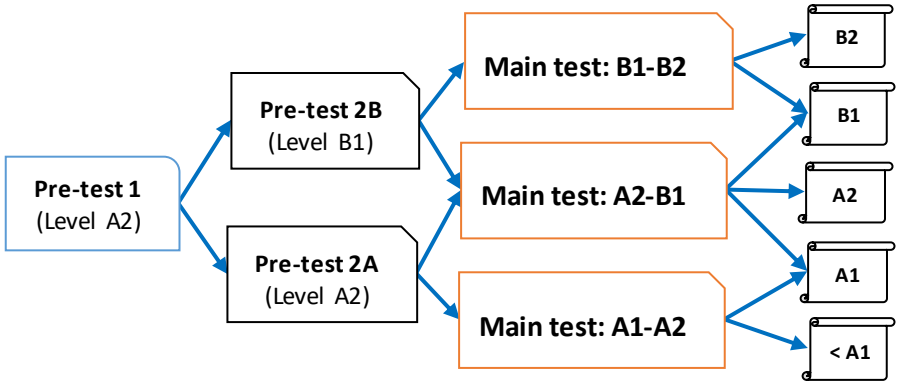
National language and social studies tests assess participants' outcomes

Those with a right to participate in Norwegian language training and social studies are expected to enrol as soon as possible after settling in a municipality. The obligation for municipalities to provide participants with a right to NLTSS with training applies until the participant has reached their Norwegian goal, but never longer than three years (with the addition of approved leave). A participant who has an upper secondary education or above does not have the right or duty to training for longer than 18 months with the addition of approved leave. Labour migrants are also expected to define and reach an individual Norwegian goal or complete the mandatory 300 hours of training within three years. Immigrants take a language test at different levels upon completion.

The Norwegian language test measures language skills at levels CEFR A1, A2, B1 and B2. From fall 2020, individuals can also sign up for a C1 test, but few people have done so to date. A person can register for the Norwegian language test up to four times each year (winter, spring, summer and fall) and can choose to register for all four parts of the test at the same time, or one or more individual parts (reading, listening, oral and writing). Individuals are free to take some or all of the four tests multiple times. Since 2014, test takers who do not pass the test receive the result "no basis for assessing the level" or result "below A1". For example, individuals who take the A1-A2 test can only get the following results: below A1/no basis for assessing; A1 or A2. It should also be noted the chosen test will not assess a candidate's level above that which they registered for.

The Directorate for Higher Education and Competence (formerly Skills Norway) provides sample tests so prospective learners can pre-test their level prior to registering for a test. Tests in listening and reading comprehension are adaptive (see Figure 3.11). These tests include 3 sections, with two pre-tests to assign the appropriate level, and one main test for assessment. For the oral test, the test taker must register for the level they want to pass, A1/A2 or B1/B2. If the examiner determines that the candidate has been registered to too low a level, the candidate should be given an extra assignment from the level above.

Figure 3.11. The reading and listening test adjusts to the individual's skills



Note: Individuals who sit the test take two pre-tests designed to establish their appropriate level of the third and decisive test.
Source: Skills Norway (2021[47]).

The municipality decides the price of the tests. It varies between NOK 300 and NOK 2200. Individuals who have a right and duty to participate in Norwegian language training can take all parts of the test free one time. Individuals who are not entitled to free Norwegian language training must pay for the test. In any case, individuals who retake the test will be charged.

For their training in social studies, immigrants are expected to complete the social studies test after 75 hours of training in a language they understand. The course aims to give the participant some insights into Norwegian society early in the integration process. This is why the Integration Act requires the municipality to provide and the migrants to complete the training (and take the test) in social studies within one year. Research has shown that in the past, three out of five teachers believed that this training should be offered later at a time when participants are more proficient in Norwegian (Djuve et al., 2017[1]). At the same time other research stressed the need to inform participants early on about their rights and obligations in Norway. Indeed the input seems to be especially relevant and useful for participants with poor Norwegian language skills who would have trouble identifying this information by themselves – and accordingly the information and test are in immigrants' native language (Lillevik and Tyldum, 2018[19]). Some countries with similar courses provide interpretation (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden but not Denmark). In Norway, the social studies test is available in approximately 30 languages, multiple-choice and takes about one hour to complete. In 2019, about 16 000 candidates took the Social Studies test, compared to close to 175 00 in 2018. In both years, 84% passed the test, which is close to the policy target of 90%.

OECD-wide, exams of this kind remain the exception to the rule, but most countries that do have a social test, including Austria, Denmark, Germany, Korea, and the Netherlands, require that it be taken in the host-country language. Belgium (Flanders), like Norway, allows migrants to take the tests in other languages.

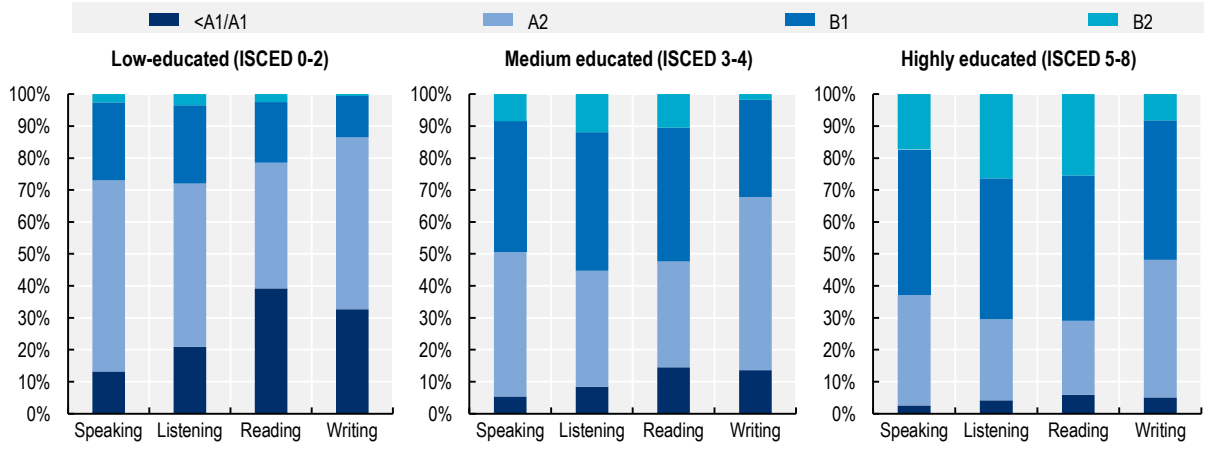
The new envisioned language levels are high

It is too early to assess the impacts of the 2021 change from hours to levels. However, data on past tests combined with data on test-takers allows for some insights (see Box 3.5 for a discussion of data limitations). Looking at the outcomes of tests takers in Norwegian over the period 2014-20 by the level of education suggests, not surprisingly, that those with higher formal education levels perform better (Figure 3.12). Additionally, substantial variation for the different language competencies (speaking, writing, listening, and reading) exists. Those with at-most low levels of formal education (ISCED 0/1/2) have the

largest difficulties reading Norwegian, while this is the language competence where those with higher education perform best (with about 70% of test-takers having achieved a level B1 or B2 between 2014-20). Difficulties in reading and writing are correlated to the country of origin and presumably related to the ability to read and write in the Latin alphabet. For instance, between 2014 and 2020, among tests takers from Eritrea and Syria with low levels of education (ISCED 0/1/2) but between 3 to 6 years of residence, only one in two reached a reading level at A2 or higher.

Figure 3.12. Results from previous tests takers show large variations by competence and education

Language test results from tests-takers by level of formal education, 2014-20 pooled



Note: Shown data is based on individual test-takers not tests. Since fall 2020 has it has been possible to take a test at the C1 level, but few people have done so yet.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

Comparing previous achieved levels of language competence to the newly required levels by education (Table 3.6) highlights the high ambition of the new regulations. In Figure 3.12 one can identify the share of test-takers who would need to upskill given the new regulations. While improving the speaking level of those with low education levels to B1 will be a challenge (only 27% of test-takers in between 2014-20 achieved this level), achieving a B2 for those with medium or higher education might be even more difficult. In the period considered here, only 8% of test-takers with medium and 17% of test-takers with high formal education levels achieved this high level of spoken Norwegian.

Notably, for the other competencies (reading, writing, and listening), the Norwegian goal of every migrant is set at least at A2 if they had not completed primary school before, and B1 otherwise. These are ambitious goals as well, especially for those with low to medium education levels. From 2014-20 among migrants with at most low levels of formal education (ISCED 0-2), 67% achieved an A2 or higher in writing, 79% in listening, and 61% in reading. However, only a minority in this education group achieved a B1 or higher in these competencies (listening 28%, reading 21%, writing 14%). Outcomes from previous test-takers who had upper secondary but no higher education show that only about one in two or fewer (listening 55%; reading 52%; writing 32%) achieved B1 (Figure 3.12). Among highly educated, a majority of test-takers between 2014-20 achieved a B1 or higher in reading, writing and listening. For this group, the main challenge might not necessarily be the level B1/B2 as such, but rather the shortened programme time.

Box 3.5. Data limitations on Norwegian language learning

There are two sets of data available regarding language testing in Norway.

First, the Directorate for Higher Education and Competence (former Skills Norway) collects data based on tests taken, as the main unit of observation. In practice, this means that a person can appear with 16 test results each year – four times per subtest. However, Skills Norway noted that most people (>50%) only take the test one time, and only a few people take one of the individual tests more than twice in a given year. Importantly, this data covers all tests taken, irrespective of why the test-taker took the test and their right to language training. This data does not include any background characteristics of test-takers, such as age, gender, level of education, region of origin or native languages. It does also not allow for a linkage with any labour market outcome statistics.

Second, Statistics Norway collects and publishes data on individual language test-takers. SSB publishes data ("Norwegian for adult immigrants") once a year, removes duplicates and only keeps the highest test level result of an individual. Because these individuals can be linked to the NIR database, it is possible to link their language test results with individual background characteristics including education level and labour market situation. However, these statistics only include individuals governed by the Introduction Act, not all individuals who took the test.

In international comparison, few OECD countries oblige migrants to reach a B1 level or above, and even fewer ask migrants to reach that level in the first few years after arrival. Countries with an obligation to reach a certain language level as part of integration programmes are: Austria (A1 within 2 years), Estonia (A1 in first year, A2 within 2-5 years), France (A1 within one year), Lithuania (A1-A2), Luxembourg (A1 within 2 years), the Netherlands (A2 within 3 years), and some cantons of Switzerland. In July 2021, the target level in the Netherlands changed from A2 to B1, with an exception for those who are "unlikely" to be able to meet it. In this respect, the new goals as outlined above make Norway's target levels among the highest in the OECD.

How long it takes an individual to achieve an intermediate level in a foreign language is highly dependent on context and individual factors. Available estimations (notably often based on English language acquisition) suggest that it will take the fastest adult learners (similar first language, high motivation, young age, experience with foreign language learning, highly educated, etc.) about 380 hours of language training to achieve B1, and double that time, about 760 hours, of language learning to reach a B2 (Benigno, De Jong and Van Moere, 2017[48]). Taking these estimations as a baseline, this suggests that the fastest learners would need to study about 32 hours (for B1) per week to accomplish this in 3 months. As language training is just one part of migrants training in the NIP, it seems unlikely that this is achievable in such a short timeframe. Indeed, even within a 6-month duration, the best learners would need to study about 16 hours (for B1) or 29 hours (for B2) per week.

Importantly, the right to free Norwegian language training can be longer than the duration of the NIP, and training in Norwegian and Social Studies is not only offered to individuals in the NIP, but also to other groups as outlined in Table 3.5. Individuals with upper secondary education or above who have a right (and duty) to Norwegian training can participate for at least 18 months. During this time, immigrants are expected to achieve their language goal (at least B2 in oral skills and B1 in other competences).

Indeed, when setting the Norwegian language goal of participants, striking the balance of finding a high enough, but not too high, envisioned language level is difficult but key. If an individual's Norwegian language goal is set too low, migrants might risk losing support for language learning once their Norwegian goal is achieved. The regulations to the Integration Act acknowledge this tension, by requiring municipalities to adjust the minimum level upwards or downwards one step at a time in case of faster / slower progression. Overall, the new regulations encourage to set a high Norwegian goal instead of a low

one and ensure that, in the case of faster progression than expected, the municipality adjusts this goal. Setting a goal too high, however, might result in disengagement by migrants when the language gaol is not seen to be attainable.

If migrants do not achieve the envisioned language level, no sanctions or penalties apply, neither for the migrants nor for the municipality. This is similar to the practice in other OECD countries. Very few countries have identified sanctions for failure to attain a language target level for migrants. In Estonia and the Netherlands, migrants may be asked to pay a fine or they may not receive an extension of their permit should they fail to reach the target level. However, it is unclear how frequently this is implemented in practice. In most cases, for example in Austria and Italy, the period within which to complete the language training is merely extended.

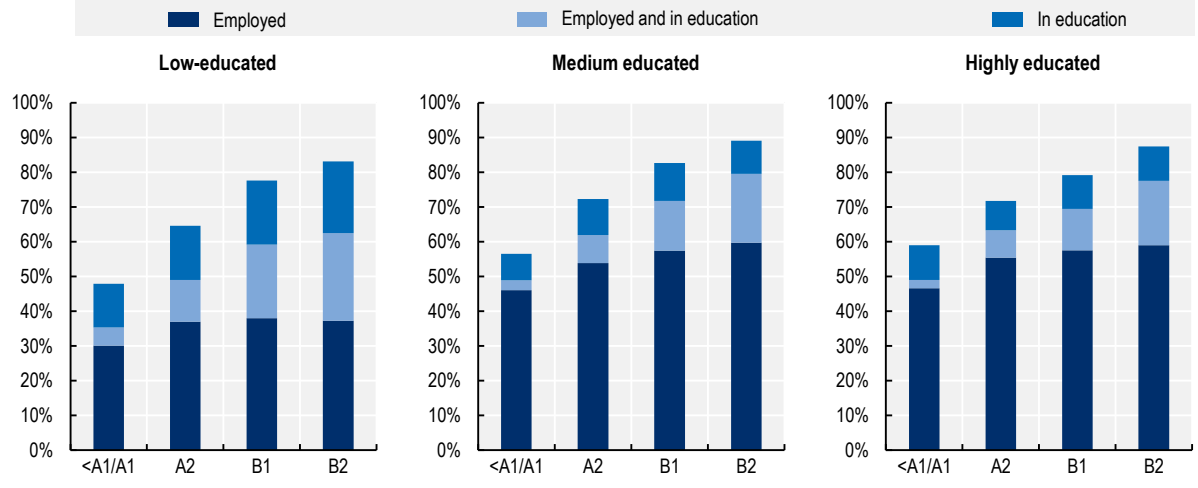
Spoken Norwegian skills correlate with labour market inclusion

Speaking Norwegian is often identified as key to labour market inclusion in Norway. Available data on individuals who took the Norwegian test show that a higher level of oral Norwegian proficiency correlates strongly with being employed or in education at the reference point, in November 2020 (Figure 3.13). The largest increase – given the same formal education level – is visible for those who attain an A2 instead of an A1 speaking level. However, higher skills of Norwegian increase this rate by over 5 percentage points.

The share of former test takers in employment is almost identical for those who are medium and highly educated with at least A2 spoken Norwegian skills. This suggests that language, like education, improves employment prospects. At the same time, an increase in speaking skills does not correlate with a strong increase in the employment rate but rather with the share of migrants who are combining education and employment. A very low level of Norwegian (A1) does not seem to allow immigrants to combine the two. While the chain of causality is not clear from the data, it might be that those who are able to combine work with education are able to upskill their Norwegian in the workplace as earlier evaluations of the NIP suggest that a core level of Norwegian is needed to build language skills at the job (Djuve et al., 2017[1]).

Figure 3.13. Migrants who speak some Norwegian often combine employment and education

Labour market situation in Nov 2020 by speaking level in latest test and education, all test takers, 2014-20 pooled



Note: All persons who have taken at least one of the four tests in the period 2014-20, and who were residents in Norway by 1.1.2021. The results remain when only the cohort who finished the NIP in 2015/16 is considered.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from Statistics Norway, 2021.

Data on tests taken (not individuals, see limitations as discussed in Box 3.5) between 2014-20 suggest that only 48% of tests taken by male labour migrants result in a spoken Norwegian of B1 or higher, against 69% among all tests taken by female labour migrants. For family migrants, the share is 41% for both genders. Also, only 30% of tests taken by refugee men and 24% of tests taken by refugee women were evaluated at a spoken Norwegian level of B1 or higher.

Language acquisition outside the classroom: The involvement of employers

The Norwegian Introduction Programme combines language training with activation and job training measures. Immigrants with no right to the Introduction Programme can join vocational or on-the-job language courses when they are offered. On-the-job language training courses are available in about a third of OECD countries and increasingly receive more attention. Some countries like the United States have historically preferred work-first incentives, leaving language training to local governments or the not-for-profit sector. Others, such as France (in 2007) and Germany (in 2005), have chosen to implement language courses alongside civics instruction (OECD, 2021[49]). Recent evidence from Denmark, estimating the labour market effects of a work-first policy for refugees suggests that this speeded up entry into jobs for men, but mostly into precarious jobs with few hours. It finds that the long-run effects remain uncertain as the policy crowds out language and educational investments upfront and found overall very small effects for women (Arendt, 2020[50]). A blended approach presents a third path in response to the question of what integration should focus on: education or a job.

Evidence from Norway suggests that immigrants enter the work placement component in the NIP either with the expectation to learn Norwegian or to demonstrate their skills to a potential employer, but few report the possibility to combine these two opportunities (Lillevik and Tyldum, 2018[19]). Indeed, it is not self-evident that immigrants learn Norwegian just by having a job or physically being at a workplace. Migrants with a low level of Norwegian skills often work in occupations with few opportunities to socialise in Norwegian, for example as cleaners or in industries with a lot of noise. Those with some prior language skills face difficulties learning intercultural and social skills. A recent evaluation of the language and work internship measures found little effect on the participants' transition to work or education (Djuve et al., 2017[1]). This has also been found in Sweden, where a study found that the interns did not have much opportunity to use Swedish at the workplace. The work did not require extensive language skills because the context made it sufficient to nod or point and other workers were concerned with getting the tasks done on time, rather than spending time teaching Swedish (Sandwall, 2013[51]).

One approach is to involve employers more directly by moving the workplace into the classroom and vice versa. This can be done via colleagues. An example is the Good Enough in Norwegian project (God nok i norsk) which paired immigrants working or training in the health sector with a Norwegian-born individual mentor in the workplace to guide them in their daily work. An evaluation found that participants became more proactive at work and gained better language skills to discuss professional issues (Enehaug and Widding, 2013[52]). In addition, employers can offer, or be obliged to offer, language classes free of charge during working hours; participation by the migrant can also be obliged. For instance, in 2010, to address the high share of employees in nursing homes in Oslo who do not speak Norwegian as their first language, the Oslo Municipality Nursing Administration instituted an obligation for foreign workers in the nursing care sector with poor Norwegian skills to attend language courses. The courses are free and are held during working hours and participants need to complete the course with a test (Ødegård and Andersen, 2020[53]). However, the language requirements have been criticised for being too stringent and were subsequently eased in 2019.

A survey among employers in the industrial sector, notably in construction, showed that the need for Norwegian language training is to some extent covered by the companies themselves. About 40% of surveyed employers stated that they offer language training to their migrant employees and under one in four companies who think it is necessary do not offer such support (Sønnesyn, 2015[54]). Germany reported

successes in employer partnerships for language learning in a 2017 pilot. However, like in Norway, convincing companies to take more responsibility in this arena has proven a challenge, as many employers believe this should be organised by the public sector.

Language acquisition outside the classroom: Considering new methods

Previous reports stress the need for more research on methods for second language acquisition in Norway (Randen et al., 2018[46]). The shift from hours to levels might contribute to innovation and changes in how training is offered in the municipality. An ongoing study on Adult Acquisition of Norwegian as a second language (ALAN) aims to provide new insights into how adults with different levels of educational and cognitive skills develop their language abilities in different educational contexts (University of Bergen, 2021[55]). To this end, and for linking language outcomes with broader labour market results, an improved data structure which allows studying the overall population who learns Norwegian would be highly beneficial (see Box 3.5).

Digital language learning is receiving renewed attention as the COVID-19 pandemic stresses the need for reliable distance learning and further investment in digital offerings. Digital tools for language are in place in most OECD countries, although the scope and scale differ widely. ICT tools may prove particularly effective in countries where migrants are settled in small numbers across wide geographical distances. This has been pursued in Finland, where migrants are sometimes brought together for an initial in-person orientation and complete the remainder of the programme through digital classrooms. Digital tools may also offer a good solution for differentiation in advanced or highly specialised courses (OECD, 2021[49]).

In Norway, the majority of language programmes before the COVID-19 confinement required some physical attendance. However, before the pandemic, almost 7 in 10 municipalities stated that they use digital meeting platforms and digital sources to share documents regularly. The transition to digital tools was easier for those following primary education than for those that had work-oriented training, as many also lost their job. By June 2020, 89% of municipalities were applying digital solutions for language training, but challenges with the transition to digital teaching and education are particularly a concern for participants with lower education levels. In addition, 86% of municipalities reported that they have used digital solutions to keep in touch with participants during the shutdown. Most municipalities acknowledge that digital solutions enable them to differentiate more and provide more flexibility in their offers. Yet, no municipality wants to digitalise the training completely.

Early lessons suggest that a combination of digital and non-digital offers appears to be most efficient. This necessitates a provision of digital competence courses earlier and use short messaging to remain in contact with the participants. A. For example, video classes for participants in social studies could gather participants of the same language group digitally rather than physically, providing faster access to training material (Kavli and Lillevik, 2020[56]).

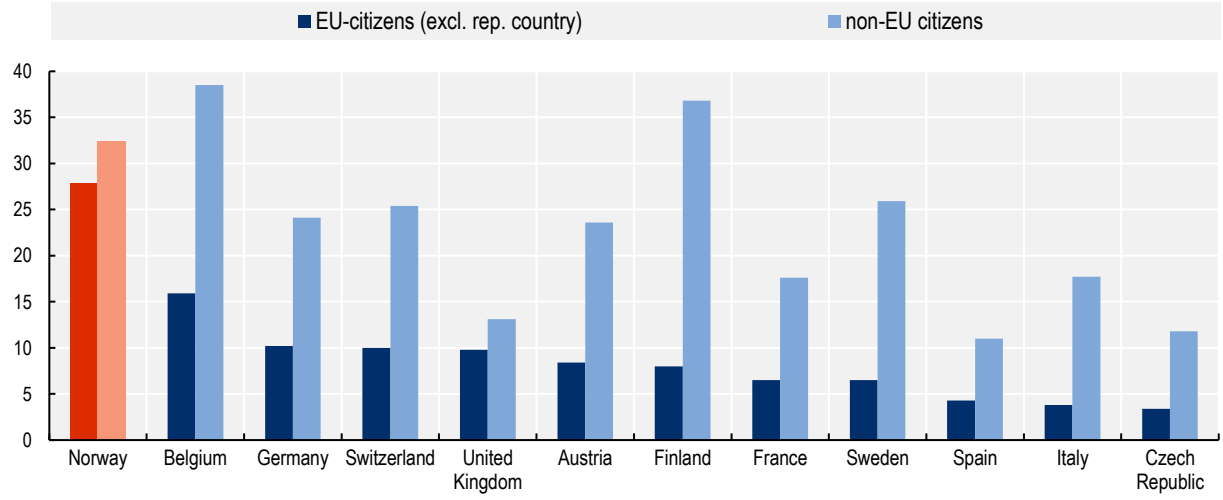
Language skills among EU immigrants have been low in international comparison

In the past, a high share of EU citizens in Norway self-assessed their Norwegian language skills at a basic level. About 28% of EU citizens in Norway felt that their level of Norwegian was basic in 2014, the latest available year for comparable international data. This share was more than three times as high as in comparable countries, notably the other Nordics and Switzerland (Figure 3 14). In most countries only a minority of EU-citizens feel that their language skills are at most basic while many non-EU-citizens feel this way, but in Norway, the difference between those with EU- and non-EU citizenship is small. Against this backdrop, it is key to recall that EU migrants do not have a right nor a duty to language training, while those in the NIP as well as family migrants to a Nordic citizen from outside the EEA have an obligation and right, and labour migrants from countries outside the EEA are obliged to participate. EU/EEA nationals are eligible for publicly supported training in Belgium (Flanders), Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Sweden,

and Switzerland. Indeed, the differentiation between access to language training for some groups but not others is particularly stark in Norway (OECD, forthcoming[57]).

Figure 3 14. Many EU migrants in Norway struggle with learning Norwegian

Share of foreign-born by citizenship who self-assess their host-country language at most at a basic level



Note: Non-responses are below 5% in each country and excluded from the graph. Data does not differentiate by duration in country nor by category of immigration.
Source: Eurostat ad-hoc module: Skills in host country language by migration status and citizenship [LFSO_14BLANG__custom_1 352 811], 2014.

In Norway the share of migrants self-identifying that language presents an obstacle to finding a suitable job has been highest among those with tertiary education 23% (ISCED 5-8), and slightly lower among those with medium education level (20%; ISCED3-4) or lower levels of formal education (14%; ISCED 0-2). EU-born highly educated migrants self-identify as experiencing difficulties in the labour market due to a lack of proficient Norwegian language skills. In 2014, 30% of EU migrants identified the lack of language skills as an obstacle for getting a suitable job in Norway – the highest rate among this group for all countries where this data was recorded. Here again, Norway has an outlier, as this level is equal to the share of highly educated immigrants from non-EU countries who declared the same difficulty (30%). This is in contrast to virtually all other countries in the data with the exception of the United Kingdom, which benefits from the worldwide prevalence of English. For instance, the share among highly educated immigrants who reported difficulties due to language skills has been 16 percentage points higher for non-EU immigrants in Sweden and 29 percentage points higher for non-EU immigrants in Finland. However, these figures are based on 2014 data, and it is not clear to which degree the situation has changed since.

That notwithstanding, a recent report (Ødegård and Andersen, 2020[53]) suggests that the picture has not changed substantially since. It finds similar results of language difficulties and investigates the case of Lithuanian and Polish migrants, who together with Swedish immigrants, account for the three largest groups of EU-born migrants in Norway. In the report, managers in construction, hotels, restaurants and manufacturing, surveyed over the period 2006-17, described extensive language problems in the workplace with little change since the 2004 EU enlargement. When labour immigrants from Poland and Lithuania who settled in Norway were themselves asked about their skills in Norwegian in 2020, as many as 30% believed that they spoke quite little Norwegian and 8% reported no Norwegian skills. What is more, only three out of ten Polish labour immigrants had attended language courses, while about seven out of ten Lithuanians had done so.

Taken together, the available evidence suggests that many EU-born immigrants in Norway struggle with Norwegian language acquisition. The new voucher scheme (*Klippekort*) introduced in 2021 might serve as the first step to incentive Norwegian language learning among this group and should be closely monitored. At present, the data quality on this group is very poor, limiting outcome analysis (Box 3.5).

New language requirements for citizenship

For obtaining permanent residency, immigrants must either document the completion of pre-assigned hours of Norwegian language training (250/550) or pass the Norwegian language test at a minimum A2 level in all four language competency areas. In any case, they must pass an oral Norwegian exam at A1. Another set of amendments to the Nationality Act will raise the requirement of necessary Norwegian oral skills from level A2 to B1 to be granted Norwegian citizenship. There will be exemptions from the requirement, for example for immigrants who, due to personal circumstances over which the person in question has no control, are not able to reach level B1 in oral Norwegian. These amendments have not yet taken effect (Box 3.6).

Many countries have some language obligation when immigrants want to obtain permanent residency. As stated in Norway, this requirement is at least A1 for oral skills if the pre-assigned hours were completed or A2 for all four skills (oral, listening, writing, and reading competencies) if the competence is proven with a language test. The corresponding levels in other countries are: Czech Republic (A2), Denmark (A2), Germany (B1), Greece (B1), Italy (A2), Korea (Level 5), Latvia (A2), Poland (B1), Portugal (A2), and the United Kingdom (B1). Denmark has instituted a bonus for reaching the B1 level and imposes an even more stringent requirement of C1 on migrants seeking to sponsor a spouse for family reunification. Some countries ask migrants to meet a higher threshold beyond their initial integration should they seek permanent residency: Austria (B1), Estonia (B1), France (A2), Lithuania (A2), and Slovenia (A2). Norway's new requirement of spoken language levels equivalent to B1 is thus not exceptional, but at the high end compared to other OECD countries. Notably, the Netherlands has also recently sought to raise targets – the target Dutch level should become B1 in 2022.

Box 3.6. Requirements for permanent residency and citizenship in Norway

For a permanent residence permit

Immigrants generally require three years of residence in Norway, must fulfil language requirements as well as pass the social studies test and meet an income requirement (2.5 times the basic amount in the National Insurance Scheme, currently amounts to 265 998 NOK before tax). Immigrants need to either document the completion of 550 (250 for EEA) hours of Norwegian language training or pass the Norwegian language test at a minimum A2 level in all four language competencies. All must pass the oral Norwegian exam at CEFR A1. For certain immigrants, notably refugees and their families, the residency requirement was increased from three to five years in December 2020.

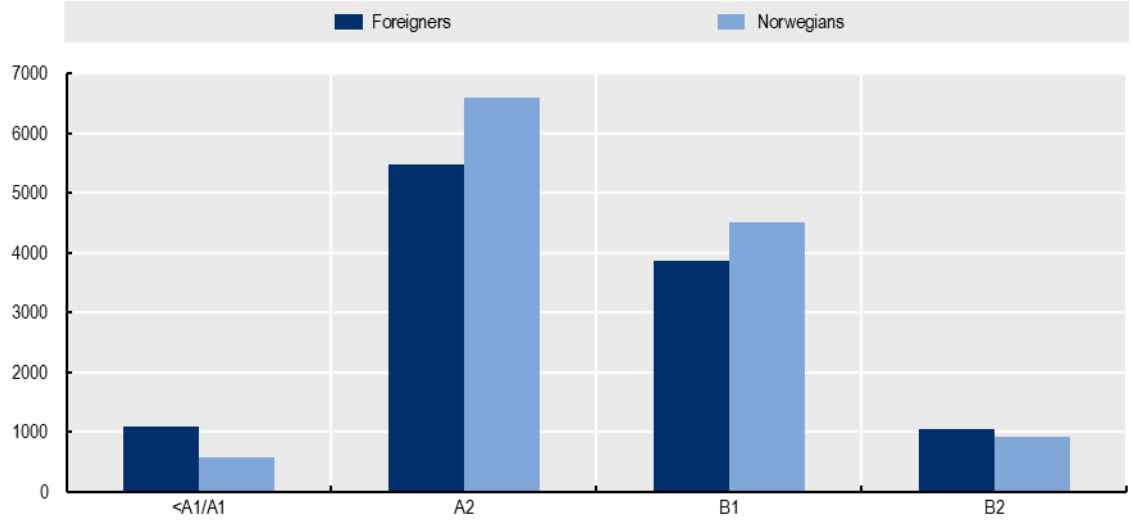
For Norwegian citizenship

New regulations apply since January 2022. The requirement of residence in Norway has been raised from seven of the last ten years to eight of the last 11 years. For refugees, however, the requirement remains seven out of the last ten years. For any applicant with sufficient income in the last year, documented with a fixed tax settlement, the period is reduced to six out of the last ten years. Norway plans to raise the requirement for knowledge of oral Norwegian from level A2 to level B1.

In 2019, about 59% of foreign-born in Norway over the age of 15 and with more than 10 years of residence in Norway had Norwegian citizenship. The proportion negatively correlates with the level of education: it is higher for low-educated and the lowest for highly educated immigrants, related to the category of migration (refugees, who are most keen to take up citizenship, are more likely to be low-educated). Among immigrants with ten or more years of residence in Norway in 2019, only 3.5% of immigrants from Lithuania and only 7.5% of those from Poland are Norwegian citizens. The share among immigrants from North America and Oceania is 15%, and among migrants originating from the EU or an EEA country, it is 20%. By contrast, 86% of immigrants with 10 years of residence in Norway who were born outside the EU/EEA, North America, or Oceania are Norwegian citizens. Immigrants coming as a family member to a refugee with at least ten years of residence in Norway have the highest rate: 91% are Norwegian. Among refugees, this share is similarly high at 88%. Shares among individuals who initially came for education (45%) or as family but not to a refugee (61%) are somewhat lower. Shares among those coming for work are still very low even after 10 years of residence in Norway – at only 10% overall. For individuals coming for work from Poland and Lithuania with more than ten years of residence, shares are below 3%. As language knowledge is not recorded in the register data, it is not clear to what extent limited proficiency in the Norwegian language prevents immigrants from passing tests and becoming Norwegian.

Figure 3.15. B1 oral Norwegian skills can be a barrier to citizenship for immigrants

Nationality of foreign-born in Norway with 7 or more years of residence, by highest oral level of Norwegian



Note: Data is based on foreign-borns' highest recorded outcome for an oral Norwegian test (calculated by person) and refers to those resident in Norway on 1 January 2021.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

Since January 2020, Norway allows for dual citizenship, the last Nordic country to do so. Statistics Norway reported that in 2020, naturalisations increased sharply, likely related to the change in the Nationality Act allowing multiple citizenships. Increases were particularly strong among immigrants from Europe, North America and Oceania (Molstad and Naz, 2021[58]) who have little to gain from Norwegian citizenship but previously were generally required to relinquish their original nationality. A similar development has been documented based on a dual citizenship reform in Sweden (Peters and Vink, 2021[59]).

An amendment to the Social Services Act entered into force at the beginning of 2021, which sets language training as a condition for receiving financial assistance. It remains to be seen if this works as an incentive for immigrants to achieve a higher level of Norwegian language skills.

Foreign credential recognition and skills validation

Finding the right pathway for official credential recognition is complex

The socio-economic gains from immigration depend largely on the extent to which immigrants can use their previously acquired skills in the new labour market. Having one's foreign degrees formally recognised is associated with better jobs for the tertiary-educated, irrespective of migrant category and field of study (OECD/EU, 2014[45]). In Norway, as elsewhere, immigrants need to navigate a complex system to find the right body responsible for assessing and recognising their qualifications (Table 3.7).

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) is a key actor (see Chapter 2). Among other responsibilities, NOKUT is the national agency responsible for assessing the level of foreign VET training, post-secondary vocational and higher education and training, and for providing information and advice related to the recognition of foreign education, training and vocational qualifications.

For higher education, NOKUT evaluates the status of the educational institution, the qualification in the country where the education was acquired, and the duration and level of the education programme. If the education programme is recognised as equivalent to higher education in Norway, NOKUT issues a decision, which states the duration of the education programme and to which academic degree a foreign degree is equivalent to in Norway, if relevant (bachelor's, master's, or PhD). The assessment does not say anything about the academic content of the education programme.

Norwegian universities and colleges can also recognise foreign higher education and assess the content of previous studies. In order to obtain an academic recognition, an immigrant must find an institution that offers an education as similar as possible to their education from abroad. The institution will assess whether the education led to the same qualification as the institution itself offers. Such academic recognition is most relevant for immigrants interested in further studies in Norway.

Table 3.7. Responsibility and requirement for educational assessment from abroad

	Level of foreign education			Professional qualifications (academic discipline/subject)	Regulated professions
	Upper secondary education (Vg1 or Vg2)	Vocational training (trade / journeyman's certificate)	Higher (vocational) education		
Responsibility	County (admission office)	NOKUT	NOKUT	Universities and colleges	17 different recognition authorities for professional qualifications (one of them NOKUT)
Requirement	Voluntary, but necessary to continue formal education in Norway	Voluntary but can be demanded by employers and support job applications.		Voluntary. Required to continue further studies at Norwegian university	Yes, mandatory for around 160 professions to practice in Norway
Costs	Depends, free if referred to by municipality or NAV	Free of charge, but translation of documents might be needed			Depending on the profession and if applicant is required to complete a compensation measure. For applicants with qualifications from outside of the EEA area, other costs might occur, such as a language skills test.

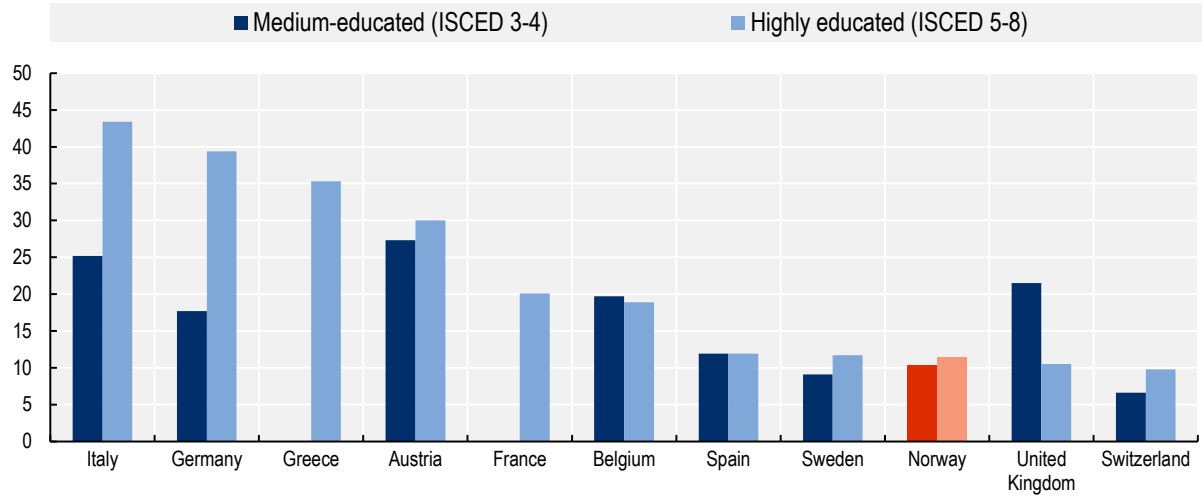
Source: OECD Secretariat based on data from official websites.

For most professions, no official recognition procedure is required before a person can start to work in Norway. However, for around 160 professions, the national law regulates specific qualifications and skills requirements. This is the case for example for nurses, teachers, and electricians. To be able to practice a regulated profession in Norway, qualifications must be formally recognised by one of 16 professional bodies. These include, for example, the Norwegian Directorate of Health, which is the authorisation authority for 29 occupational groups within the Norwegian health care system; the Directorate for Building Quality; and the Norwegian Food Safety Authority. Apart from its other responsibilities, NOKUT is the authority for professional recognition of teachers, as well as pre-school educators. Since 2016, NOKUT is also responsible for assessing vocational education and training (Box 3.7).

For regulated professions, Norway has specific distinctions for EEA citizens with rights under the EEA Agreement and non-EEA citizens. Previous national evaluations have shown that it is often difficult for newcomers to navigate this system by themselves (Office of the Auditor General Norway, 2019[60]). However, it does not follow that the system is not working. In the most recent cross-national comparable data available, 11% of tertiary educated (ISCED 5-8) immigrants in Norway identified the lack of recognition of their qualifications as an obstacle to finding a suitable job, while the share among medium-educated was 10% (Figure 3.16). This is at the lower end compared to other OECD countries and at a very similar level with comparable countries like Switzerland and Sweden.

Figure 3.16. Recognition of qualifications is no major obstacle for getting a suitable job in Norway

Share of foreign-born who identified the lack of recognition of qualifications as an obstacle



Source: Eurostat, 2014 [lfso_14oeduc].

Box 3.7. The recognition scheme for vocational education and training

Currently, the recognition scheme for upper secondary vocational education and training comprises 19 Norwegian craft and journeyman's certificates from five countries: Poland, Germany, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The scheme was established with a focus on skills in high demand on the Norwegian market. Qualifications are compared to those awarded at Norwegian upper secondary schools in the same subject.

There are major differences in the case processing time between cases where countries and qualifications have not been previously assessed by NOKUT and cases where there is a precedent. For applications without a precedent, the case processing time in 2019 was 342 days, while for applications with a precedent it was 44 days. 614 cases were handled under this specialised system in 2019. Among these, 306 were approved and 322 rejected. Rejections are often due to applicants having an education at a different level than the scheme covers as well as challenges related to verification of submitted documentation.

Source: NOKUT annual report (2020[61]).

NOKUT offers several user-friendly and fast services

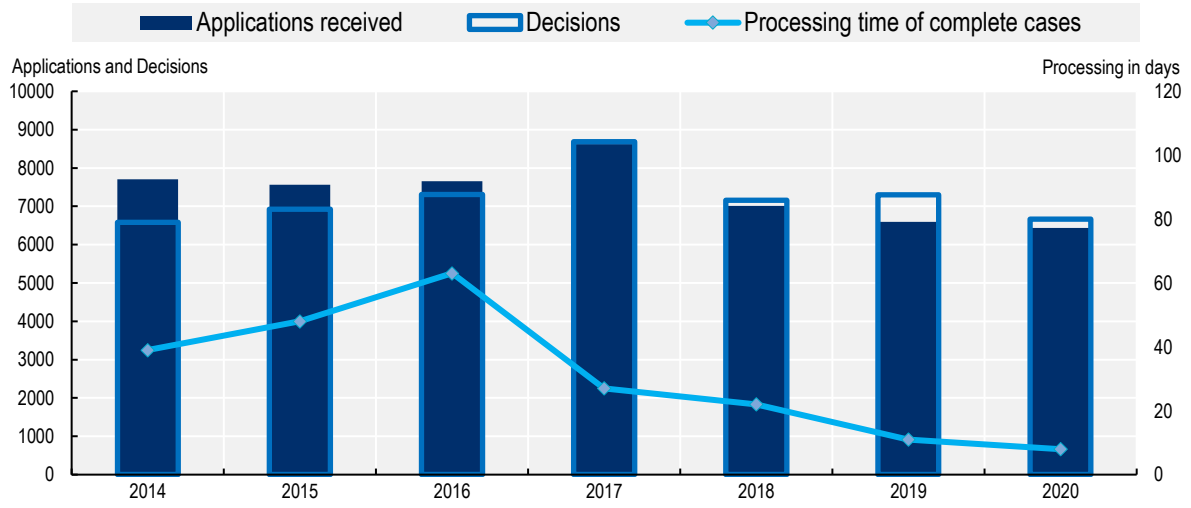
NOKUT's services and educational assessment are free of charge apart from necessary translations of documents not provided in Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Finnish or English. In addition, individuals do not have to reside in Norway to have their education level assessed and about 15% do so while still abroad.

In 2020, NOKUT required on average only 8 working days to finalise an application for higher education assessment, provided all documents were submitted, compared to 63 days in 2016. This is a strong acceleration of the process compared to previous years, despite receiving overall similar levels of applications (Figure 3.17). The average processing time, which includes waiting times due to missing documents of applicants, was 46 working days in 2020, down from its peak of 100 days in 2019. NOKUT reported a decrease in processing time as a result of improvements both technical (improved digital case system) and managerial (better routines and procedures for staff).

In 2020, about 90% of applications to NOKUT resulted in a positive outcome. The majority attested to the equivalence of a bachelor's degree (52%), followed by a master's degree (28%). A small share was assessed to be equivalent to a short cycle higher education 'Høgskolekandidatgrad' (6%) and at PhD level (2%). In addition, for several applications, the result was not a complete recognised degree, for example due to interrupted studies, but educational credits were recognised on a specific level (bachelor, master or PhD).

Figure 3.17. NOKUT has speed up its services over the past five years

Total numbers of applications and decisions and case handling time for complete applications, 2014-20



Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from NOKUT, May 2021.

For employers interested in hiring a foreign worker, but who need guidance on the degree held by the candidate, NOKUT also offers a fast-track assessment service ("turbo evaluation") during the recruitment process. NOKUT makes this free-of-charge evaluation within five working days. This evaluation is a guidance tool, not a legally binding decision. Between 2017 and 2019, NOKUT completed around 250 to 300 assessments for employers per year. The service does not include recognition for a regulated profession, which is subject to authorisation from the competent authority. NOKUT also offers a turbo assessment of the scope and level of foreign higher education for institutions considering admission of candidates to a PhD programme.

A specific scheme assesses diplomas for persons with so-called "non-verifiable documents". This assessment involves professional testing and two professional experts from Norwegian universities. They look into subjects the applicant has studied and are consider whether it is probable that their education matches what is reported on the diploma.

Under the Lisbon Recognition Convention, Norway gives refugees and displaced persons the right to have their qualifications assessed, even in cases where all documentary evidence is missing. Two specific schemes assess diplomas for persons with so-called "non-verifiable documents". The Recognition Procedure for Persons without Verifiable Documentation involves professional testing and two professional experts from Norwegian universities. They investigate subjects the applicant has studied and are consider whether it is probable that their education matches what is reported on the diploma. The resulting decision is legally binding. The other scheme is the NOKUT's Qualifications Assessment. This is done via a structured interview, where NOKUT staff try to evaluate the higher education level of a person without certificates. Divided into the two schemes, NOKUT handles about 250-300 of such cases per year.

The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) is also part of NOKUT's recognition offering, in fact it was initially piloted by NOKUT in 2016. The passport maps and summarises a refugee's education, qualifications, and work experience. The process involves a structured interview with an evaluator and an analysis of available documents.

Processes for regulated professions are complex and fragmented

Entry into regulated professions can be a long and complex process in most countries. Norway is no exception, and 16 separate authorities are charged with the process of professional certifications. For migrants, NOKUT collects the numbers of received applications from EU/EEA applicants but has no mandate to collect data from non-EU/EEA applicants. A regulatory change to allow for such data collection is pending, but currently, gathering of data regarding non-EU/EEA applicants is at the discretion of the individual recognition authority and thus not systematically available.

In 2019, 88% of applications for authorisation to practise in a regulated profession from EEA/EU migrants were addressed to the three largest recognition authorities: the Norwegian Directorate of Health, followed by the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority and the Norwegian Directorate of Civil Protection (DSB). Together these three authorities are also responsible for close to 80% of occupations. By contrast, eight of the 17 authorities received ten or fewer applications in 2019.

Over the years 2016-19, close to 60% of decisions on recognition of professional qualifications in regulated professions for permanent establishment were for qualifications obtained in only three countries: Poland (26%), Denmark (18%) and Sweden (16%). While 92% of applications from Sweden and 95% of applications from Denmark received a positive decision, the share of positive recognition of qualifications from Poland was much lower at only 75% (European Commission, 2021[62]).

Alternative pathways for skills recognition exist but might not always reach migrants

A key issue surrounding skills is the assessment and mapping of non-formal and informal skills. Many OECD countries have established programmes to identify and use prior skills (Box 3.8). All adults in Norway with the right to primary and secondary education – regardless of immigration status – have the right to be assessed for prior learning. When the right to upper secondary education was implemented in 2000, a right to a so-called "real competence assessment" (*Realkompetansevurdering*) was also established. This includes assessment of competences a person has acquired through paid or unpaid work, continuing education, leisure activities in addition to formal education.

The real competence assessment consists of four steps. It first maps out the envisioned level of education relevant for the assessment. Typically the career centre in the county offers general information about prior learning and career guidance. The education sector, working life and voluntary sector can provide information for documenting skills. In a second step, prior learning can be documented in multiple ways. For instance, course certificates, visual proof of the applicant's past work, a self-declaration or a certificate signed by a manager can all be considered as relevant documentation. In a third phase, the prior learning is assessed against the criteria of the curriculum at the education level the applicant targets. This can be done in dialogue or via a practical assessment during the execution of a task. This can also mean that the applicant is assessed against internal criteria at the workplace. In the fourth phase of the process, the applicant receives certification of the results of the assessment. Certified individuals may be exempted from parts of study in a vocational school, college or university and can use these certificates to show their approved skills (Skills Norway, 2020[63]).

The real competence assessment can provide admission to a vocational school as well as to colleges and universities without completion of upper secondary education in Norway. Candidates can also enrol in a higher-level programme, such as a master's programme, based on the real competence assessment (Eurydice, 2021[64]). In 2017, in total over 5 000 adults applied to higher education based on validation of prior learning. Among them, 14% of applicants were foreign-born, 8% from the EU and 6% from other countries. The share of applicants assessed as qualified was highest among EU-citizens (83%), followed by Norwegians (48%) and citizens from other countries at 36%. Among those assessed as qualified, 94% of EU citizens were offered a place and 77% of citizens from other countries. The share among Norwegians who were offered a place after being assessed as qualified was somewhat lower at only 70% (Olsen et al., 2018[65]).

The municipalities are responsible for offering and carrying out prior learning assessments in relation to the curricula in primary and lower secondary school, while the counties are responsible for offering and carrying out prior learning assessment towards curricula in upper secondary education. The Directorate for Education provides templates and national guidelines for the assessment at these two different levels (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2021[66]). However, each institution or vocational school has its own rules for what qualifies as sufficient prior learning and skills for admission.

In addition to the real competence assessment, other pathways to receive a certified vocational competence at the upper secondary level exist. On a dedicated webpage, “The road to a trade certificate”, the Directorate for Higher Education and Skills describes in detail seven available pathways, including the traditional model with 1-3 years each at a school and at a company, but also the option to take a trade exam after five years of work practise. This targets adults who have been working in an area for at least five years without having received formal recognition of their qualifications (Directorate for Higher Education and Skills, 2021[67]). Since 2018, other options to acquire a trade certificate have been developed, based on a mix of work practise in a company and additional training. Many allow applicants to sit a trade exam after four to five years, but data on the share of immigrants who take this option is not available. Other actors are working to map and use informal competences for employment in Norway. For instance, the Federation of Norwegian Enterprises (VIRKE) has recently developed a model called “A Balancing Act” that identifies and evaluates skills acquired at the workplace to create a unified skill standard that can be used, transferred and understood in a wider context. The model is aimed for employers and employees, but also for those working in career counselling and training.

In summary, many alternative pathways for skills recognition exist in Norway and while the initiative of many different stakeholders is positive, co-ordination and information dissemination needs to keep up with these developments. What is more, a study of the assessment system of prior learning in education and working life suggest that local differences in the interpretation of legislation exist and as in other domains, much depends on individual case by case assessments. This set-up does not ensure that eligible immigrants are offered these pathways (Olsen et al., 2018[65]).

Box 3.8. Identification of prior skills of migrants across the OECD

Online portfolios map and store prior skills and future goals

In Denmark, the online competence portfolio (Min kompetencemappe) allows to create a systematic overview of their prior learning free of charge. Education institutions and employers also use the platform for performance reviews or planning their employees' continuing education and training. At the international level, the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals to support the early-stage profiling of the qualifications and skills has the ambitious aim of ensuring that skills development, training and support for third-country nationals are effectively targeted and build on existing skills.

Informal skills can be included in search and matching tools

In Sweden, a specific job search and matching assistance programme (Equal Entry) identifies and matches newly arrived migrants with jobs, based on both formal and informal competencies. The programme consists of a broad mapping of job seekers experiences, interests, ambitions, contacts, work preferences, and skills acquired through jobs or hobbies. The officers conducting the mapping are trained to adapt the questions to job seekers who lack formal skills. They do so in a group setting, where heterogeneous groups of immigrants meet to broaden networks and share different perspectives. An equally thorough mapping is then done with employers to identify their demand. Here attention is given to finding employers who are committed to diversity and can hire the jobseekers for the long term. The programme is particularly effective in increasing the labour market participation of newly arrived female immigrants. A recent evaluation found that 37% of the women in the programme were employed or studying after the programme, compared to 27% in other, less individually focused programmes.

Video tests can assess practical work competences

To assess informal skills of migrants, Germany developed a computer-based identification tests in co-operation with research institutes and employers' associations. The tests rely on images and only few words to assess practical competencies in a wide number of occupations, including construction, pastry and meat industry, metalwork, social and health work, service sector, tree and transport industry and more. Candidates observe videos of standard tasks of the occupation and have to identify errors or put a sequence of tasks into the best order. The assessment takes around four hours and is done under the supervision of an expert. Testing is planned for around 30 professions and in six languages. Additionally, German employers are actively involved in the development of industry specific practical guidelines through vocational trade committees.

Source: (Danish Ministry of Children and Education, 2021[68]; European Commission, 2021[69]; Helgesson et al., 2020[70]).

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Note

[1] The few refugee arrivals who do not participate in the NIP are six times more often recorded as out of the population only a few years after arrival, indicating that many may have left Norway already.

4. Activating and using immigrants' skills in Norway

This chapter examines immigrants' employability and access to work. It focuses first on labour market outcomes of the low-educated and the employment situation of immigrant mothers. It looks at job quality, including income, involuntary part-time and formal over-qualification. It thereafter examines public support and re-activation efforts, including through upskilling and second-chance programmes and concludes with a discussion on policies to combat discrimination.

This report was largely completed before the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Norway swiftly adapted its integration framework to accommodate for the specific challenges arising from the inflow of refugees from Ukraine. These measures are discussed in a separate chapter (Chapter 6).

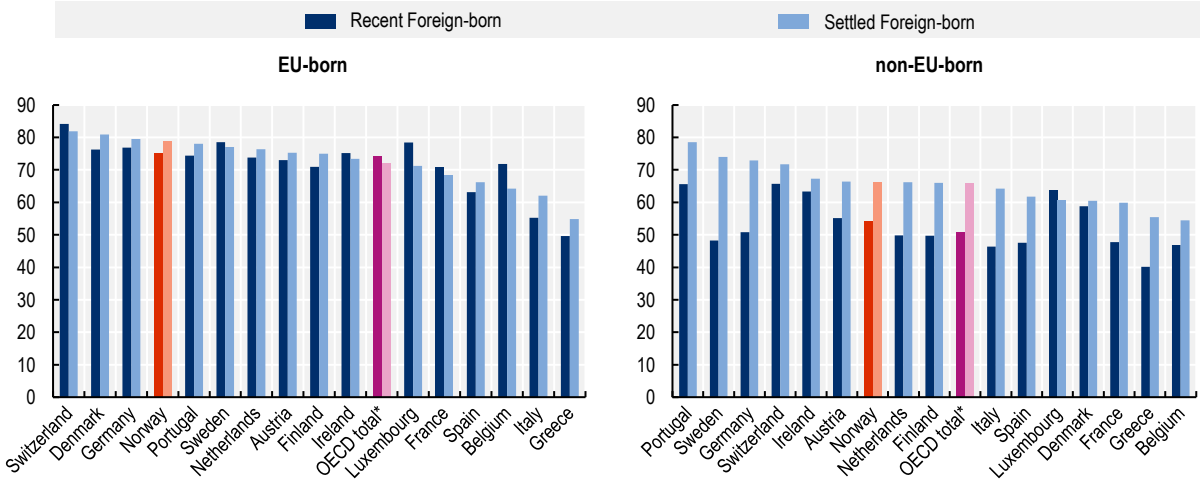
Employability and access to work

Immigrants' attachment to work varies over time and with their duration of stay in the country. Foreign-born are more vulnerable to labour market shocks and often the first to become unemployed in times of economic shocks, such as the one associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, multiple other reasons drive varying attachment to work over a person's life cycle, including skills, health, family priorities and personal preferences. Using and activating the existing skills of immigrants is thus not only a task at arrival. Ensuring employability and labour market integration in Norway also means providing pathways to work and education as well as second chances for those who have been in the country for longer.

In Norway, as in most other European countries, EU-born immigrants have a higher employment rate than non-EU-born immigrants. One reason being that the bulk of the former have come for employment, while a large part of the non-EU-born group consists of humanitarian migrants and their families, who often have lower levels of educational attainment and less transferable work experience. Their integration thus takes time. However, even after ten years or more in the country, non-EU-born immigrants in Norway, as elsewhere, have markedly lower employment rates compared to their EU-born peers. Compared to other OECD countries, and regardless of duration of residence, EU-born migrants have a comparatively high employment rate in Norway, while non-EU-born migrants are similar to the average (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. The integration of non-EU-born immigrants takes time

Employment rate by place of birth and duration of stay, 15-64 year-olds, 2019/2020



Note: Settled refers to 10 or more years of residence in the country. The OECD total considers the countries included in the graph.
Source: EU Secretariat calculations based on EU LFS 2019 and 2020.

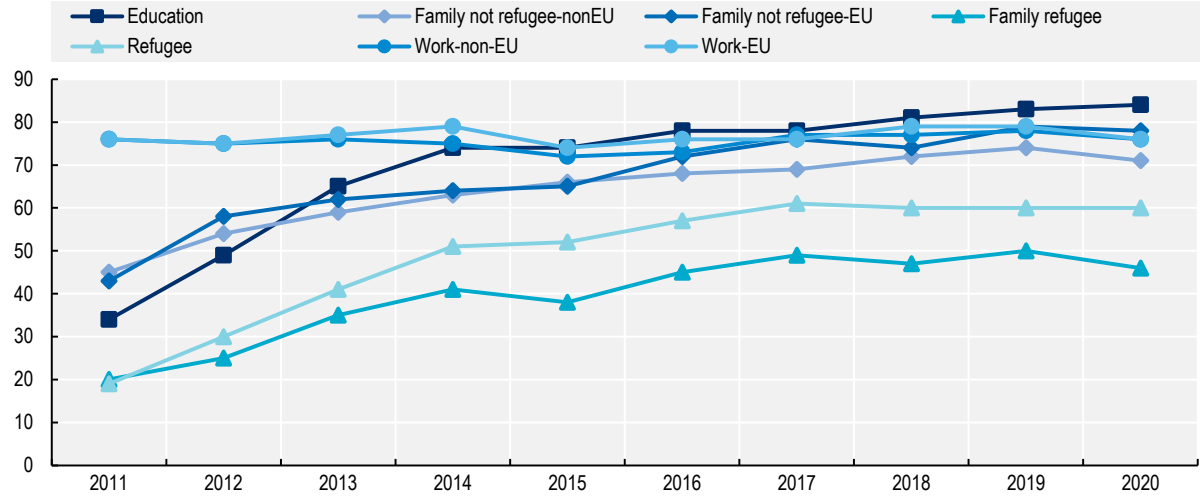
Employment rates over time differ by migration category

Norwegian data suggests that the category of admission, in other words, whether migrants came to Norway for education, work, family or humanitarian reasons, shapes the employment rate much more than the region of birth. Interestingly, the employment rate of family migrants joining a non-refugee develop very similarly irrespective of their place of birth (Figure 4.2). Likewise, labour migrants have a high and stable employment rate, regardless of whether they come from an EU or non-EU country. Immigrants coming to Norway for education are a special category. Most of them attend full-time education in the first years after coming to Norway and therefore have low employment rates, but four to five years after arrival they catch-

up and surpass the employment rate of any other immigrant group. In turn, the employment rates for refugees and family migrants to refugees evolve more slowly and stay well below the employment levels of other immigrant groups, even ten years after arrival.

Figure 4.2. Employment rates over time differ strongly by admission category

Employment rate of 15-67 year-olds, by place of birth and category of immigration, arrival cohort of 2010, 2011-20



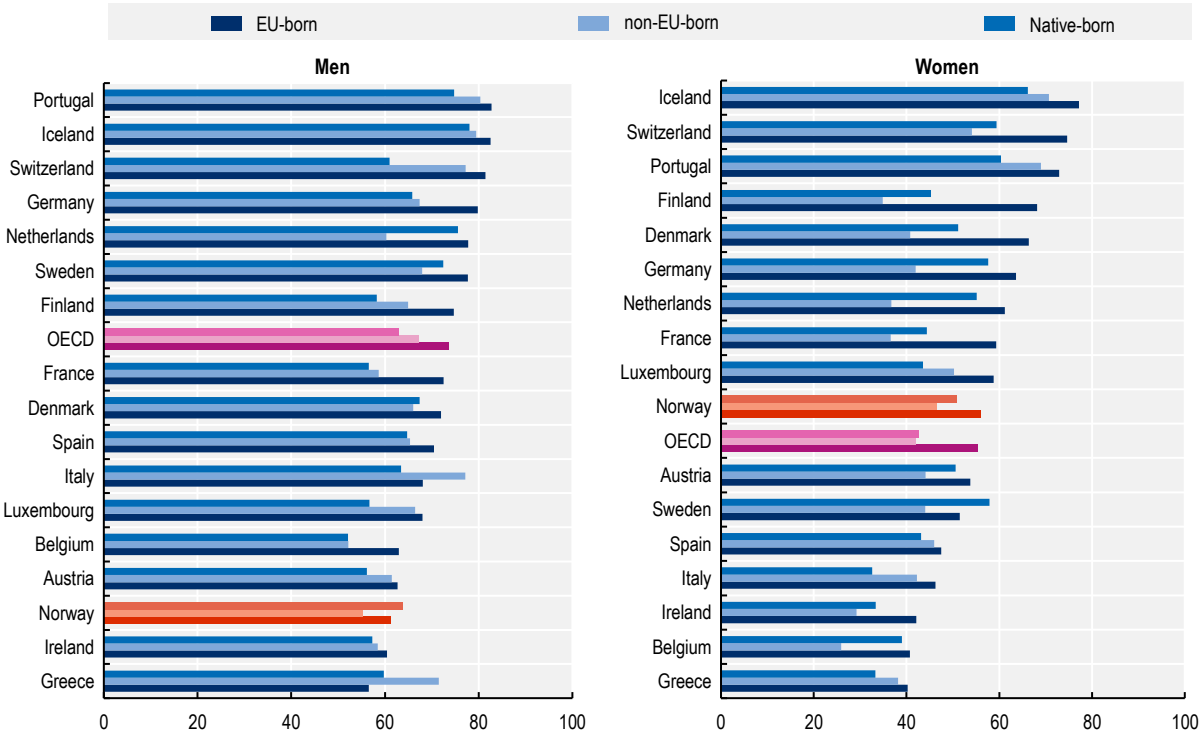
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

Immigrants with low formal education levels face difficulties

Education is an important factor for migrants' labour market integration in Norway. In international comparison, the employment rate for the low-educated foreign-born in Norway is particularly poor among men, both EU-born and non-EU-born (Figure 4.3). By contrast, among the highly educated, the employment rate is higher than the respective OECD averages for both genders and for those born in the EU as well as those from a non-EU country. One important reason for this, as discussed in Chapter 2, is Norway's knowledge-intense labour market where employment options in low skilled jobs are limited.

Figure 4.3. EU-born low-educated immigrant men have internationally low employment rates

Employment rate of low educated by gender and place of birth, 15-64 year-olds not in education, 2019 & 2020 pooled



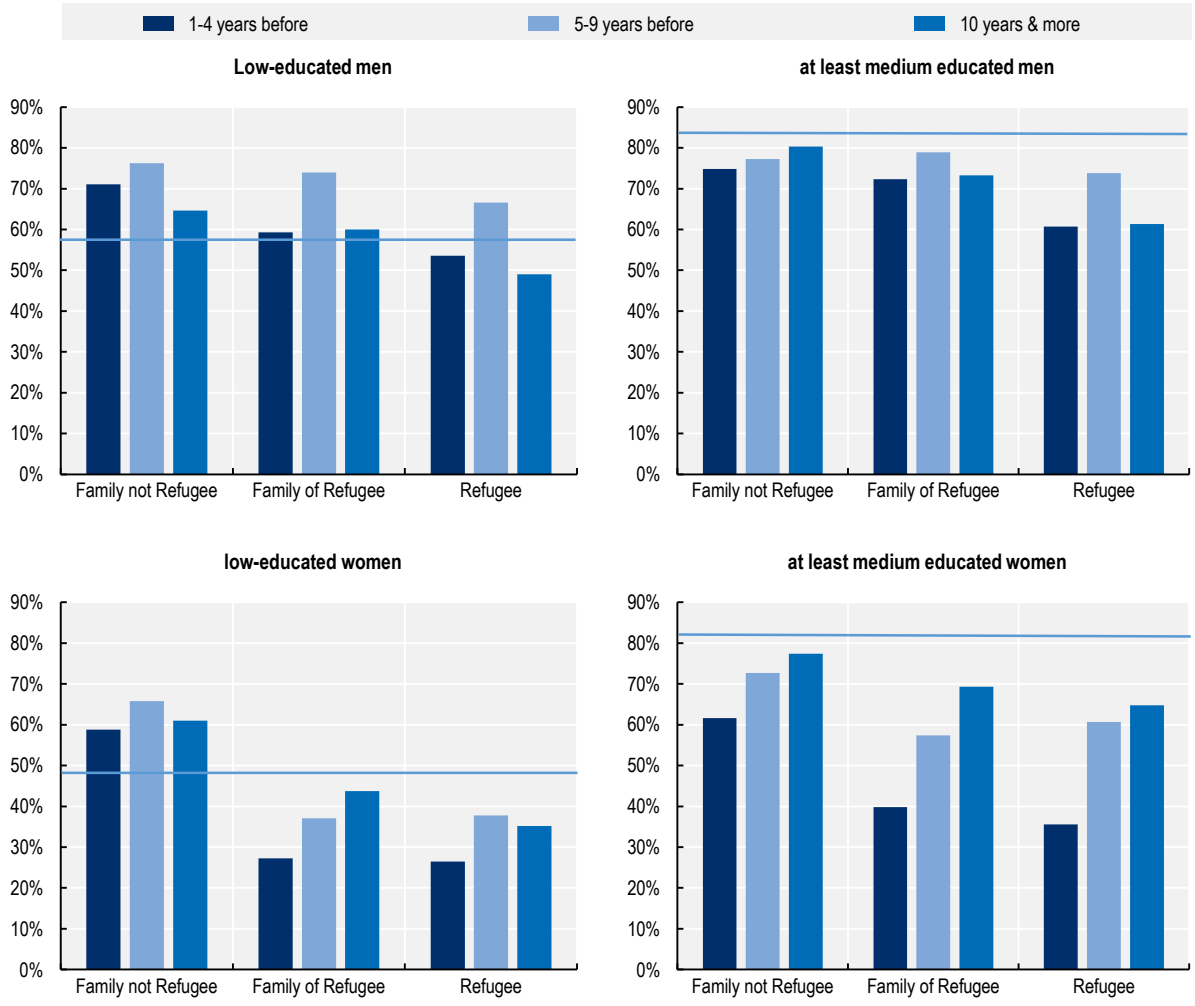
Note: The graph is sorted by the employment rate of EU-born immigrants. Low-educated refers to ISCED 0-2. The OECD average considers the countries included in the graph.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations, based on combined data from EU LFS 2019 and 2020.

Data from working aged foreign-born by admission category and gender in Norway point in a similar direction. Interestingly, the employment rate of low-educated migrant men living in Norway for ten years or more is lower than for those with 5-9 years of residence, regardless of admission category. By contrast, among those who have at least some secondary education (ISCED 3+), only among refugee men a similar pattern prevails (Figure 4.4).

The pattern of first increasing and then again declining employment rates for men has also been observed in longitudinal studies (Bratsberg, Raaum and Røed, 2017[1]). The reasons behind this worrying picture are not entirely clear, but the fact that it is not observed for those with at least upper secondary education does suggest that much could be gained by making sure that as many migrants as possible reach a secondary education level.

Figure 4.4. The employment rate is lower for some groups of settled foreign-born

Employment rate of foreign-born, by gender, admission category and duration in Norway, 2019



Note: Includes all foreign-born who arrived as adults (18+) till 2018 of working age. For the foreign-born arriving for education purposes or as labour migrant this trend is not detectable, they are therefore not shown in this graph. Their outcomes are higher the longer they are in Norway. The vertical line refers to the native-born population.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on SSB data, 2021.

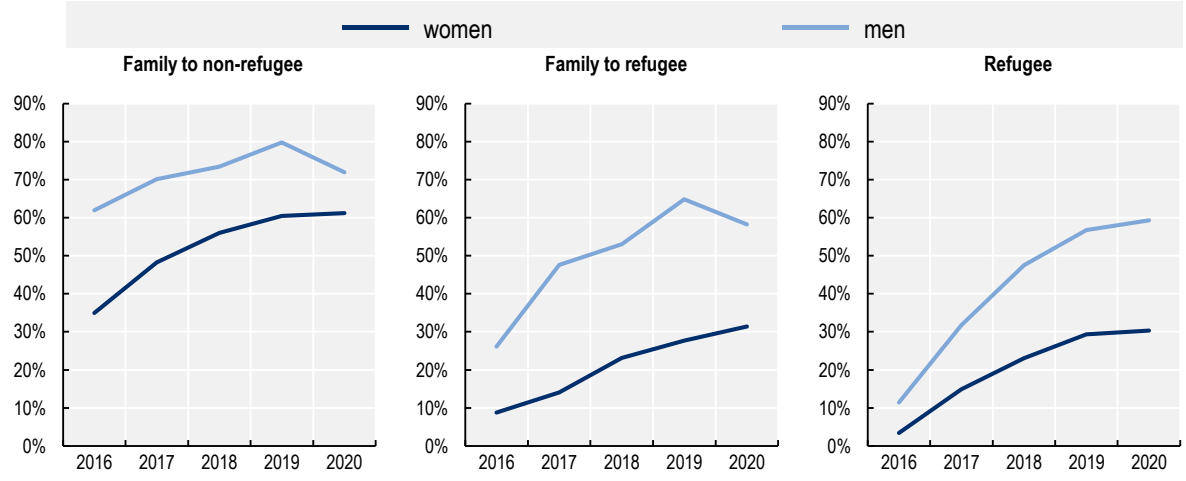
Employment trajectories differ greatly between men and women …

Besides the category of admission and educational attainment, gender plays an important role in labour market integration. While there is no major difference in employment outcomes between male and female labour migrant, large gender differences exist among family and humanitarian migrants in the years following their arrival in Norway (Figure 4.5).

For example, the employment rate of migrant women who had joined a non-refugee partner in 2015 was 60% in 2019 (after 4 years of residence), a full 20 percentage points lower than among migrant men in the same admission category. Gender gaps are even larger for refugees and family to refugees. Among the refugee cohort arriving in 2015, only 29% of women but 57% of men were employed after 4 years. Women who join a refugee partner in Norway had equally low outcomes (28%), whereas men joining a refugee partner reported a much higher employment rate (65%). As a result, the gender gap among family migrants to refugees is the largest – a striking 37 percentage points.

Figure 4.5. Among family and refugee migrants large gender gaps in employment rates exist

Employment rate of 15-67 year-olds, by place of birth, sex, and category of admission, 2015 arrival cohort, 2016-20 follow-up



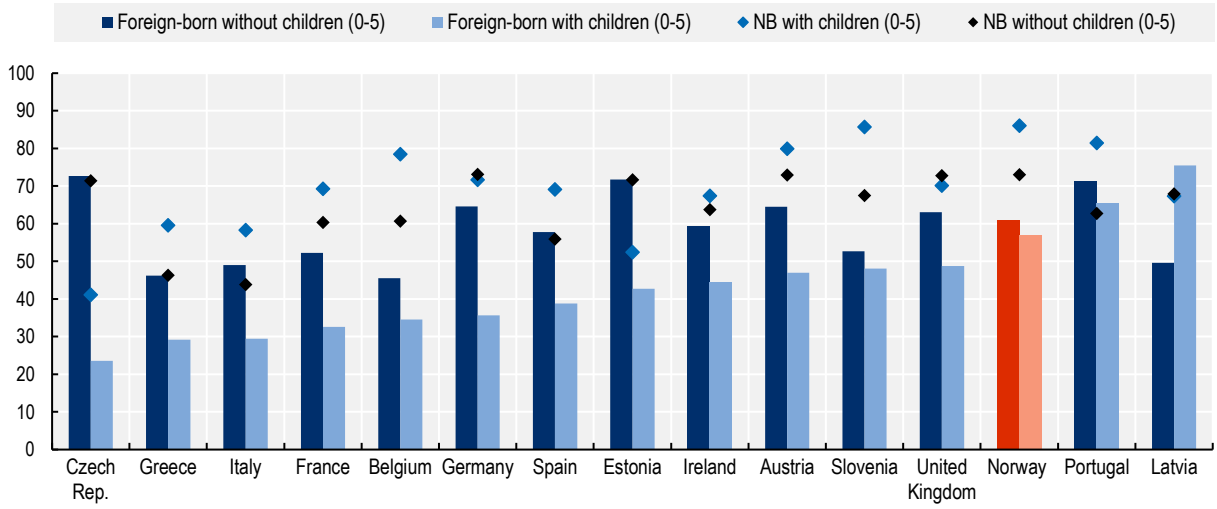
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on SSB data, 2021.

… as some migrant mothers struggle to reconcile work and childcare

A key issue related to the employment of foreign-born women in Norway is childcare. Immigrant women are more likely to have small children in the household than native-born women, as generally they are younger and tend to have higher fertility. In 2019, 25% of immigrant women aged 15 to 44 had small children compared to 20% of native-born women. Overall, however, immigrant mothers in Norway have been doing comparatively well. In 2019, 57% of immigrant mothers with small children from non-EU countries were employed, one of the highest rates in OECD-Europe (Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6. Mothers with small children have high employment rates in Norway

Women's employment rate, non-EU-born and natives by presence of children under six, aged 15- to 44, 2019



Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on EU LFS 2019 for all countries except Norway. For Norway, data from SSB, 2021 for year 2019.

However, for some immigrant mothers a labour market penalty for having small children exists. Immigrant women who have been in Norway for at least five years and who have a child below 6 are less likely to be employed compared to women without a young child. The employment penalty associated with having young children is largest among mothers who arrived as refugees and family migrants to refugees, at around 10 percentage points (Table 4.1). However, this is not particularly large in international comparison. On average across the EU, for example, the difference in employment rates between immigrant women with and without small children amounts to about 20 percentage points (OECD, 2020[2]).

Earlier research from Norway has shown that refugee women often get pregnant shortly after arrival, thus delaying their entry into the labour market (Tønnessen, 2014[3]). In contrast, women who came to Norway for study or work face only small penalties associated with having small children in the household. For family migrants to non-refugees, the difference amounts to 4 and 7 percentage points for EU and non-EU immigrants, respectively.

Table 4.1. Five years after arrival, refugee mothers' employment rate lacks 10 percentage points behind their peers without young children

Labour market status in percent of all women up to 44 year of age, adult arrivals with at least 5 years in Norway, by presence of young children and immigration category, 2019

	Foreign-born					
Migration category:	Education	Work	Family not refugee		Family of refugee	Refugee
			EU-born	non-EU-born		
No child under 6 in the household						
Employment rate	87	80	80	74	60	55
Share in ordinary education	2	1	1	2	4	4
Child under 6 in the household						
Employment rate	85	78	76	67	50	44
Share in ordinary education	2	1	1	3	5	7

Note: Foreign-born only includes adult arrivals with at least five years of residence, hence only immigrants aged 23 and older. Data does not allow to exclude immigrants attending the NIP.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

Refugee women in Scandinavian countries tend to have better outcomes than their peers elsewhere, and the tailor-made and multi-year integration programmes in the Nordics offer an important explanation (Liebig and Tronstad, 2018[4]). Prior to 2021, participants risked losing their right to language training and social studies when on parental leave. With the new Integration Act, important changes have been made to ensure that women do not lose time in the programme due to childbirth, with parental leave added to the programme´s duration.

More generally, migrant women with small children require flexible arrangements in terms of time and organisation. In interviews with women participating in the NIP, proximity and easy access to childcare were stressed as major determinants of their ability and motivation to participate in the programme (Bredal and Orupabo, 2014[5]). One possibility to provide for more flexibility is to pilot a scheme allowing participants to take the Introduction Programme on a part-time basis. Today, the programme is designed and delivered full-time, i.e. 30 to 40 hours a week. Municipalities already have a great degree of freedom to design and create a programme that suits participants' individual needs. However, previous studies suggested that women with childcare responsibilities often risked obtaining less ambitious integration measures in the past (Djuve, Kavli and Hagelun, 2011[6]), for example by receiving less vocational job-training, which has proven particularly helpful for increasing the employability of low educated migrants (Orupabo and Drange, 2015[7]). The situation is similar in Sweden, where job-seeking efforts are mainly targeted at men participating in the Introduction Programme, whereas health and rehabilitation efforts are mainly targeted at women (Dahlin, 2017[8]). To which degree this is still the case is not known.

As mentioned, family migrants admitted as family to refugees are obliged to take part in the Introduction Programme as long as their partner has not been in the country for more than five years, but for other family migrants municipalities decide if they offer participation. This means that many family migrants – predominantly women – receive less integration support (see Chapter 3).

Efforts to ensure that immigrant women with small children keep in touch with mainstream services and are continually engaged is needed to prevent potential isolation and labour market disengagement. Local out-reach programmes offering networks and integration support can help identify and reach out to stay-at-home immigrant mothers. One such project is the "District Mother", a concept adapted from the German "*Stadtteilmütter"* and introduced in Norway in 2016. The project has trained 150 immigrant mothers to reach out and provide information to support stay-at-home immigrant mothers. The aim is to improve immigrant mothers' connection to Norway by providing information on available social services, the

Norwegian labour market, and support concerning parenthood and health. The project aims to bridge the gap between women and the public by maintaining close and regular co-operation with the municipality (Bydelsmødre, 2021[9]).

Different family traditions and personal preferences of parents influence parental leave uptake. This is evident when looking at women born in Norway, but some born to immigrant parents, and some born to native-born parents (Table 4.2). Native-born women, aged 15-to-44, with immigrant parents and children under the age of six had significantly lower employment rates than their peers without children. This is a larger difference, than that between native-born women with native-born parents where the impact of having small children on their employment rate was only 3 percentage points.

Table 4.2. Having small children also disproportionately affects employment rates of mothers with migrant parents

Employment rate of native-born women aged 15-to-44, not in education, by parental place of birth and presence of young children, 2019

Native-born women to…	Child under 6 in the household	No children under 6 in the household	Difference in percentage points
Immigrant parents…	76%	82%	6 percentage points
… born in Eastern Europe	82%	87%	5 percentage points
… born in other EU/EEA	79%	82%	3 percentage points
… born in Africa	71%	79%	8 percentage points
… born in Asia	75%	82%	7 percentage points
Native-born parents	86%	89%	3 percentage points

Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

The effect of small children on mother's employment rate varies depending on the parents' country background. The largest difference was observed among the native-born offspring of immigrants who themselves were born in Asia and Africa. (Statistics Norway, 2021[10]).

Finally, comprehensive parental leave arrangements, including for fathers, support gender equality and high employment rates among women. Immigrant fathers' lower employment rate together with the current set-up of the Norwegian parental leave scheme may, however, impact the up-take and access to parental leave of immigrant fathers' negatively, thus raising concerns about gender equality in the long-term (Box 4.1).

Box 4.1. Immigrant fathers have less often access to parental leave

The purpose of the parental benefit scheme is to compensate for the loss of income, when parents are at home taking care of their infants/small children. Parents in Norway are entitled to a combined 49 weeks of paid parental leave when a child is born or adopted. Hereof, 15 weeks are reserved for each parent while the rest can be freely divided among the partners. Access and compensation are conditioned on prior employment and earnings.

Fathers' access is to some extent conditioned on the mothers' eligibility, in other words, her earnings and employment prior to childbirth. Most mothers fulfil the economic criteria (pensionable income for six of the last ten months, earning a minimum of 53 200 NOK (social benefits included) while being a registered member of the national insurance scheme). However, among those that do not qualify, immigrant mothers are overrepresented. Mothers who do not fulfil the employment and earnings requirements receive a lump sum instead of paid parental leave. In 2014, this was the case for 45% of immigrant mothers from Asia and 64% from Africa compared to only 8% among native-born mothers. As a consequence of mothers not meeting the requirements, fathers do not have equal entitlement to parental leave as men whose partners meet the requirements.

Yet, even if the mother does not fulfil the economic criteria, and does not qualify for parental leave, the father may still have access to the 40 weeks of parental leave. This applies in cases where the mother is occupationally active such as taking a publicly approved full-time education, combines work and approved education on full-time basis, participates in the Introduction Programme or the Qualification Programme on full-time basis or if the mother is unable to take care of the child because of illness or injury. Recent research following the parent cohort with children born in 2011 found that 90% of the native-born fathers were entitled to parental leave from 2011 to 2019 (the period this leave can be taken), compared to only 48% of foreign-born fathers from a non-Western country. For immigrant fathers from Western countries, the corresponding share was 73%.

When looking at the reasons for the fathers' ineligibility to parental leave and the father quota, it is most often because neither of the parents qualify for the benefit due to low employment. In 45% of the non-Western immigrants-couples none of the parents were entitled to parental benefits, compared to 8% among the native-born. The share of fathers that were entitled to the benefit but could not access it due to the mothers' inactivity, was 3% among the non-western fathers and below 1% among the native-born.

The parental leave system in Norway is overall similar to that in other Nordic countries. One exception is Sweden, where the fathers' access is not dependent on the mother´s eligibility. In a comparison between Sweden and Finland, Sweden´s more flexible parental leave scheme shows smaller gaps between native and immigrants in take-up of parental leave.

Recent legislative changes in Norway will entitle fathers with children born after 2 August 2022 to 8 weeks of parental leave independent on the mothers' occupational activity.

Source: (Line Schou, 2019[11]; Ellingsaeter, Kitterød and Østbakken, 2020[12]; Tervola, Duvander and Mussino, 2017[13]).

Migrant women are often trapped in involuntary part-time work

The reasons for working part-time are often complex and vary for people in different stages of the life cycle. Working part-time gives employees the opportunity to adapt their working hours to their own preferences, health, family situation and life stage. However, part-time work may have adverse effects for those who want to work full-time to secure income and the associated employee rights. In many OECD countries, part-time work is also a gender equality issue.

In Norway, like in most other countries, immigrant women, are overrepresented in part-time jobs. This holds particularly for women born outside the EU, where, according to the European Labour Force Survey, four in ten employed (currently not in education) work part-time (41%) in Norway. This is 10 percentage points higher than the number for native-born employed women. Over time, the share of native-born women in Norway working part-time declined from 39% in 2009 to 31% in 2019. Yet, among non-EU-born women the part-time share remained stable at 41% over the same period, and among EU-born women it increased by 4 percentage points. As a result, the gap in part-time work between native- and foreign-born women has widened considerably compared to a decade ago.

In Norway, almost one in two non-EU immigrant women state the inability to find a full-time job as the main reason for working part-time, while only one in three EU-born and one in five native-born women do. Native-born women working part-time more often indicate care responsibilities (either for children or other family members) compared to non-EU immigrant women (20% versus 8%). Attending some form of part-time education (excluding regular education) was equally common in both groups (7/6%).

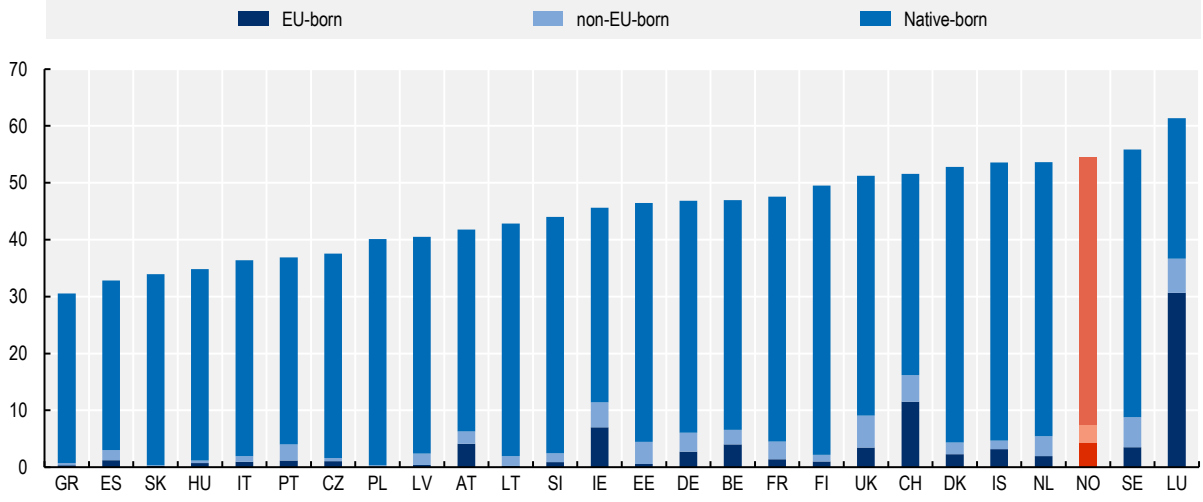
Job quality

Many immigrants work in occupations requiring lower skills…

Norway has a labour market demanding highly skilled workers. More than half of all jobs are in high-skilled occupations, requiring at least short-term tertiary education (Figure 4.7). While immigrants constitute about 19% of the employed population (aged 15-64), they are underrepresented in high-skilled occupations. Only about 13% of all positions demanding at least short-term tertiary education are filled by foreign-born workers, predominantly EU-born immigrants.

Figure 4.7. The Norwegian labour market is highly skilled but migrants do few of these jobs

Share of jobs in high-skilled occupations, by place of birth, 15-64 year-olds in employment, 2019



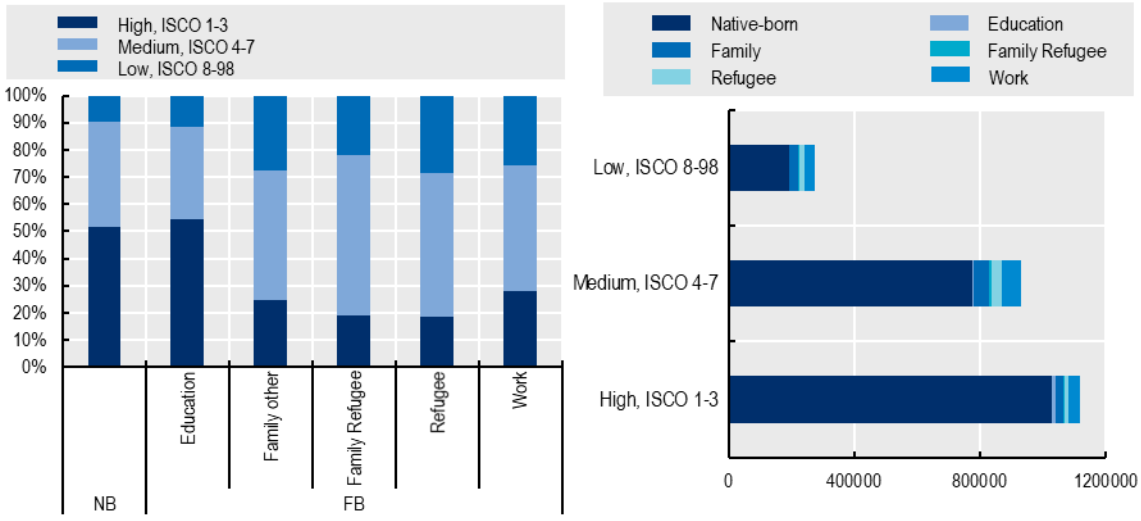
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on EU LFS 2019.

Indeed, Norwegian register data shows that most of the native-born population works in high-skilled jobs (52%). The situation is similar among the foreign-born who came to Norway for educational purposes, with 54% working in high-skilled occupations. By contrast, most migrants coming to Norway for reasons other than education are employed in medium-skilled jobs (ISCO 4-7). Refugees are most likely to be employed

in low-skilled occupations (29%), followed by family migrants to non-refugees (27%) and labour migrants (26%). Among family migrants who join a refugee, the share of those working in low-skilled jobs is slightly lower (23%) (Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8. Most immigrants work in low- and medium-skilled jobs

Share of skill level of job, by place of birth and immigration category, aged 15-66 in employment, 2019



Note: Data only includes individuals in jobs where the skill level is known. In no groups is the skill share of unknown over 6% of totals. NB: native-born, FB = foreign-born.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on SSB data, 2021.

… and the foreign-born are overrepresented in household services, hospitality, and fishing

When compared to the OECD average, sectoral concentration of the foreign-born is not particularly strong in Norway. Additionally, while the sectoral concentration of migrants increased in most OECD countries from 2005 to 2018, this was not the case in Norway (OECD, 2020[2]). Nevertheless, immigrants are strongly overrepresented in some sectors. In 2019, immigrants made up 50% of the workforce in food and beverage service activities as well as 71% of those working in the cleaning industry. They also accounted for over three-quarters of employees in private households. In 2019, about one in ten immigrants worked in construction accounting for about 22% of the overall workforce in the sector. Furthermore, immigrants made up about 40% of all hotel employees in Norway and 50% of those working in the fishing industry. What is more, these shares are likely underestimations as the figures do not include seasonal and temporary workers (Friberg and Midtbøen, 2017[14]).

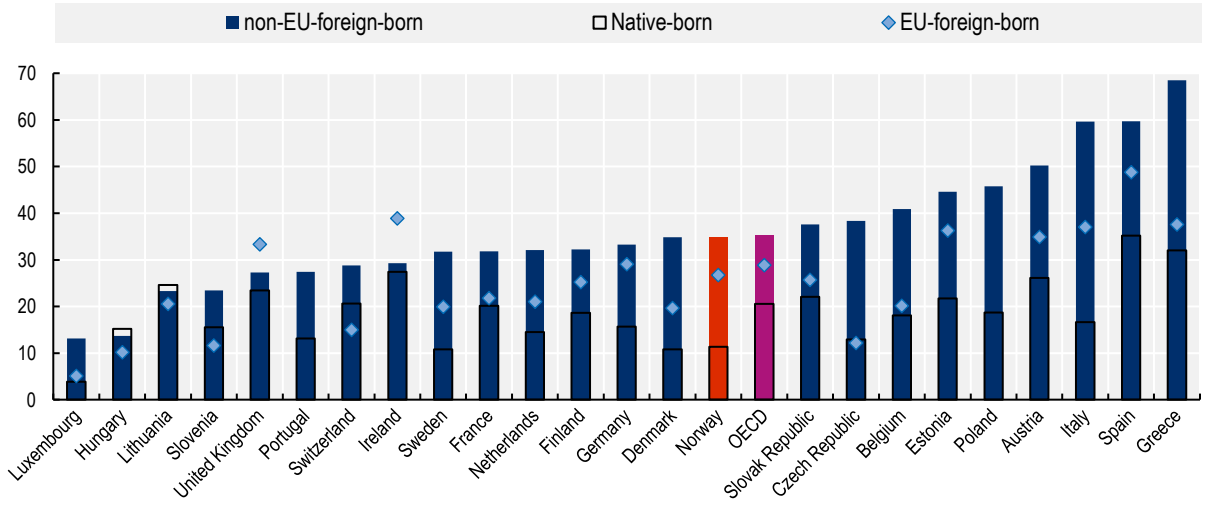
Recent migrants in Norway are strongly overrepresented in the hospitality sector, with 13% of all newcomers working in this industry around 2018, compared to 2% of natives. The difference between the native-born and recent migrants in the hospitality share was one of the largest OECD-wide. Settled immigrants (living in Norway for at least 10 years), on the other hand, mostly worked in domestic trade such as the wholesale and retail trade sector, with similar sectoral employment rates as the native-born (11% and 13% respectively) (OECD, 2020[2]).

Formal over-qualification rates are high, especially among family migrants

Formal over-qualification, defined as having attained a high level of formal education (ISCED 5-8) while working in a job that requires only low levels of educational attainment (ISCO 4-9), is substantial in many OECD countries. While only a low share of tertiary educated natives in Norway work in a job below their formal qualification level, this is quite often the case for immigrants, regardless of origin (Figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9. A large share of tertiary educated immigrants work in lower-skilled jobs

Percentages of 15- to 64-year-olds employed with tertiary education in a lower-skilled job, excluding those in education, 2019



Note: The OECD average is the weighted average of the countries shown in the graph.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on EU LFS (2019), 2021.

Indeed, closer analysis has shown that higher formal over-qualification rates of immigrants are a structural issue across occupations, countries of origin, and gender (Larsen, Rogne and Birkelund, 2018[15]). Norwegian register data show that the incidence of over-qualification is highest among refugees and family migrants to non-refugees with one in two tertiary-educated employed being formally overqualified for their jobs.

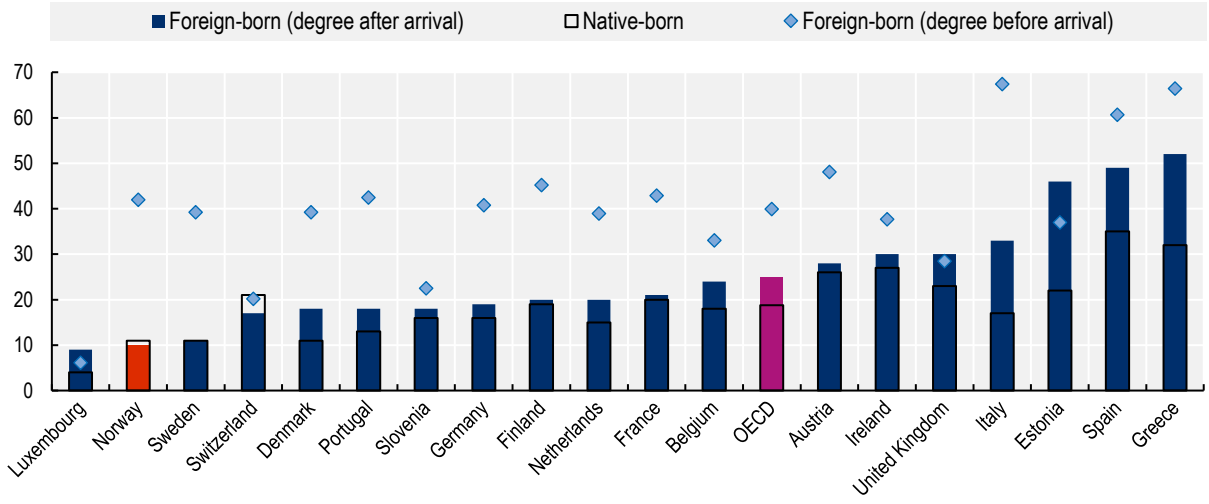
Interestingly, tertiary-educated family migrants to non-refugees are more likely to be overqualified for their jobs than their peers who joined refugees. This might at least in part be due to a lack of support as the former are not eligible for the Introduction Programme. Many of the family migrants concerned are also not eligible for free language training.

An important factor influencing the chances of being formally overqualified in Norway is the place of residence. Highly educated immigrants who live in urban centres tend to have lower incidences of over-qualification (33%) than those settled in medium sized urban areas (45%) and rural regions (56%). While there is also an urban-rural difference for the native-born, it is much less pronounced (15% vs. 21%).

An interesting observation is that employed immigrants with a Norwegian degree no longer face a higher over-qualification than their native-born peers (Figure 4.10). Immigrants who had arrived for education purposes at least five years earlier also have a high employment rate, 87%, equal to the one among tertiary educated natives in 2019. This suggests that the main issue is the transferability of foreign qualifications, either due to lower skill levels associated with such education or to lack of transparency about their actual value. Analysis of data from the OECD Survey of Adult Skills shows that, controlling for actual skills and language knowledge, differences in wage returns to education between domestic- and foreign-educated immigrants in Norway are particularly (OECD, 2018[16]). This in turn suggests that much could be gained by enhancing transparency through recognition and bridging (see Chapter 3).

Figure 4.10. Tertiary educated immigrants with a Norwegian degree work in skill adequate jobs

Percentages of tertiary educated employed in lower-skilled job who earned their highest degree after their immigration date, 2019



Note: The date of first entry into the country is used as a proxy to calculate a degree obtained in the country. As a result all native-born are treated as having earned a national degree, in fact an overestimation of this group. The OECD average is the simple average of the countries shown in the graph.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on EU LFS, 2019.

Many immigrants have relatively low income and are more likely to face relative poverty

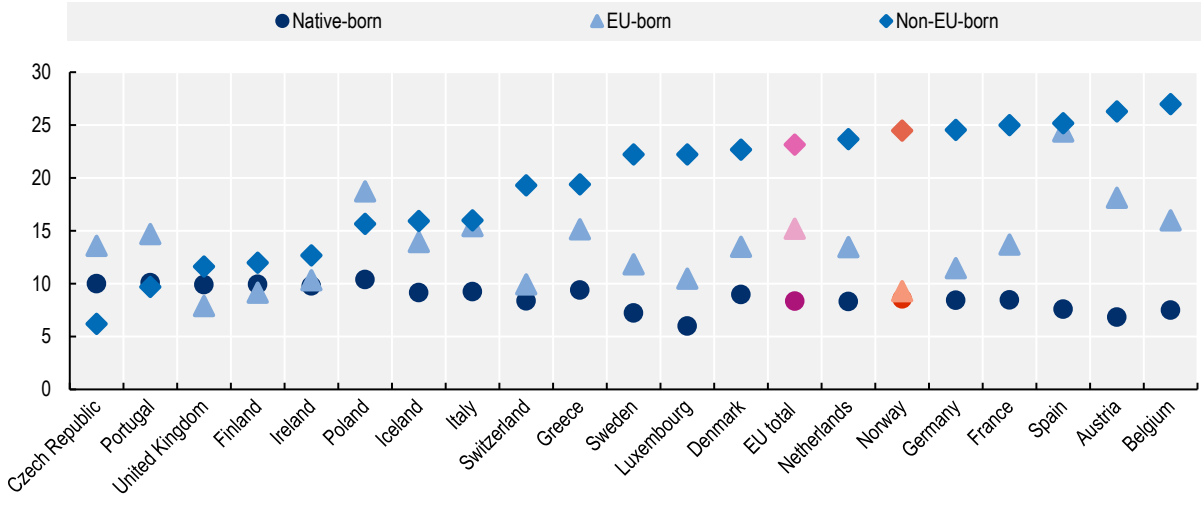
Norway has one of the highest income levels in the OECD. Especially in absolute terms, immigrants in Norway enjoy high levels of income. In 2019, the median income of non-EU-born immigrants over the age of 16 was around EUR 23 000, compared to EUR 28 000 among EU-born and EUR 30 000 among natives in Norway (per person adjusted for 2017 PPP in EUR). As a result, the median income of non-EU-born immigrants in Norway was higher than that of most EU-born and native-born in many other OECD countries (OECD/European Union, forthcoming[17]).

The high income levels are also mirrored in high wage levels, which are a key reason why Norway attracts many labour migrants. In 2004, when Norway opened its labour market for the then new EU member countries from Central and Eastern Europe, the Norwegian labour market experienced what can best be described as a supply shock, with large numbers of immigrant newcomers arriving in Norway with low reservation wages. As a result, wages increased more slowly in sectors with high immigrant employment, such as in construction (Bratsberg and Raaum, 2012[18]). Research confirmed that labour migration from new EU member states led to higher wage inequality in Norway (Slettebak, 2020[19]). Some policies have been implemented to tackle the issue (see below), but despite these efforts there remain substantial wage differences between the native- and foreign-born.

Despite having high wages in absolute terms, about one in four non-EU-born immigrants in Norway is in the lowest income decile. What is more, the income gap between the native-born population and immigrants is large (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11. One in four non-EU-born immigrants has a relatively low income

Share of persons living in the lowest income decile, aged 16+, by place of birth, 2020



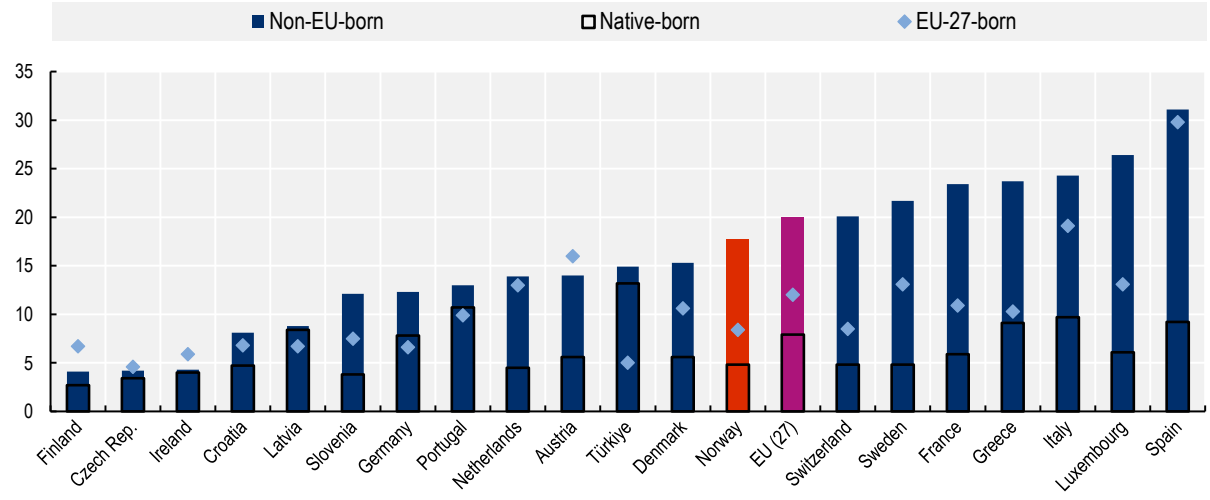
Note: Data was collected in 2020 but refers to reference year 2019. Distribution of income calculated by person.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on EU SILC and DEU SOEP, 2021.

Immigrants in virtually all OECD countries face higher risk of relative poverty than their native-born peers (OECD/European Union, 2018[20]), and Norway is no exception. In 2019, about one in ten native-born adults in Norway lived at-risk-of-relative poverty compared to almost one in four (24%) foreign-born adults. Among non-EU immigrants, the respective share was 31%. Higher at-risk-of-relative poverty levels among immigrants can partially be attributed to their lower employment levels. Hence, comparing relative incomes among the employed after accounting for social transfers provides additional insight.

Interestingly, employment does not seem to protect immigrants well from poverty. Immigrants in employment in Norway are almost three times as likely to be at-risk-of poverty as their native-born peers. Immigrants' at-risk-of in-work poverty rate is slightly below the EU average but higher than in comparable countries (Figure 4.12). Previous research concludes that there are very few people in Norway who live at-risk-of-relative poverty among people who work full-time.

Figure 4.12. Over 1 in 6 non-EU foreign-born are at risk of relative poverty despite working

In-work at-risk-of-relative-poverty rate in percent, aged 18 and over, 2019



Note: The at-risk-of-poverty rate is the share of people with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfer) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers. This indicator does not measure wealth or poverty, but low income in comparison to other residents in that country, which does not necessarily imply a low standard of living.
Source: Eurostat, 2021 [ILC_IW16__custom_1 171 270].

As a result of their parents' socio-economic challenges, many children of immigrants grow up in poor households. In 2020, children in immigrant households were about three times as likely to grow up in relative poverty as their peers in native-born households (26% versus 9%) in Norway (see Chapter 2 for a discussion). Among all children growing up in a poor households in Norway about 60% have immigrant parents. To address the needs of children in poverty, a National Strategy for Children growing up in low-income families (2020-23) was launched towards the end of 2020.

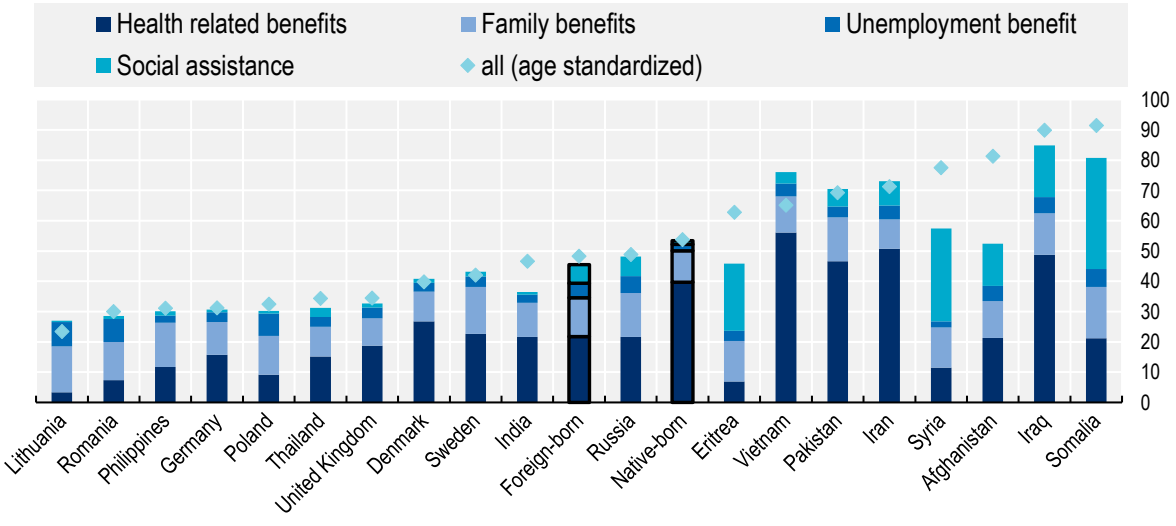
Public support and re-integration efforts

Immigrants and natives take up different benefits

Public support and second-chance offers for immigrants allow host countries to activate and use immigrants´ skills throughout their working lives. The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) plays a key role and their database on benefit expenditure by place of birth provides several insights. Most importantly, just prior to the pandemic, age-standardised levels of public benefit expenditure (excluding pensions) were similar among the foreign- and native-born population, while being slightly higher among natives than immigrants in earlier years (see Chapter 2). However, the type of benefit expenditure differs strongly by place of birth: health-related benefits were higher for the native-born, whereas unemployment and social assistance benefits were higher among the foreign-born, with large differentiation among different origin groups (Figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13. Benefit expenditures by place of birth and type of benefit, 2019

Benefit expenditure (excl. pensions) per inhabitant by place of birth and type of benefit (left) age-standardised expenses (right), 18-66 year-olds, 2019



Note: Health-related benefits includes sickness benefit, care benefit, training allowance, attendance allowance, work assessment allowance, disability benefit, and basic benefit. Family benefits include parental benefit, adoption benefit, lump sum grant, child benefit, cash-for-care benefit, single parent benefit. Unemployment benefits also include new benefits for 2020: Wage compensation benefit and unemployment benefit for self-employed and freelancers. Social assistance also includes qualification benefit. Note that social assistance depends on household income and is meant to secure income for the whole household. Social assistance is included here for the person to which it is paid out.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from NAV, May 2021. For additional information on methodology see Lien (2015[21]), Benefit payments from NAV to immigrants, www.nav.no/no/nav-og-samfunn/kunnskap/analyser-fra-nav/arbeid-og-velferd/arbeid-og-velferd/stonadsutbetalinger-fra-nav-til-innvandrere.

Non-EEA immigrants have priority access to active labour market programmes

As mentioned in Chapter 2, NAV is in charge of labour market (re-)integration programmes and offers services for immigrants as part of their broader assistance to all registered job seekers. Everyone who formally applies to a NAV office and requires assistance has the right to a need-for-assistance assessment. However, since places for receiving assistance are funded by grants from the *Storting*, not everyone who applies may end up securing a spot. Overall, three groups of jobseekers are prioritised when allocating intervention places and therefore make up the bulk of participants in NAV initiatives:

- Young people under the age of 30,
- The long-term unemployed,
- Immigrants from non-EEA countries.

Due to the priority access, non-EEA immigrants do not need to overcome common ex-ante barriers when it comes to participating in active labour market policies (ALMPs), (Bonoli and Liechti, 2018[22]). Nevertheless, the specific offers made to immigrants by each municipality are difficult to follow-up up on, as not all work-oriented measures are actually available in all municipalities (Djuve et al., 2017[23]).

Data from NAV suggests that one in four ALMP participants is foreign-born, which is less than their share among the unemployed (42%). However, when considering only full-time job seekers (i.e. excluding those with disability benefits, a benefit predominantly taken up by the native-born) about one in two is an immigrant. Among participants in ordinary labour market schemes immigrants accounted for about one in two (48%) in the last quarter of 2019 and for the same share in the last quarter of 2020 (Statistics Norway, 2021[24]).

As immigrants from the Eastern EU countries are not a priority group in access to NAV measures (see above) one could expect that they face access restrictions. Data suggests that they indeed have a lower participation rate. While immigrants from Eastern EU countries accounted for about 12% of the unemployed in the fourth quarter of 2020, only about 4% of participants in ordinary labour market measures in the last quarter of 2020 were from an Eastern EU country (Statistics Norway, 2021[24]).

Wage subsidies appear to be a successful measure for immigrants in Norway

Cross-country evidence on what active labour market policies work best for immigrants shows that wage subsidies have a positive impact on employment outcomes, whereas counselling, job search assistance, training, and subsidised public sector employment do not have a significant effect (Butschek and Walter, 2014[25]). In Norway, the effect of ALMPs on immigrants are rather well studied (for an overview see Calmfors and Sánchez Gassen (2019[26])). The findings for Norway confirm that wage subsidies, in other words subsidised private-sector employment, seems to be among the most effective labour-market programmes for promoting regular employment among immigrants, at least in the short run. Subsidised public-sector employment and on-the-job training do not appear to be effective.

In 2019, almost a third (31%) of wage subsidy beneficiaries were immigrants, three-quarters of whom from non-EU countries. The share of immigrants in wage subsidies increased relatively strongly in a short time, from previously 26% in 2017 and 29% in 2018. Among those leaving the support scheme with full ability to work, both the foreign- and native-born were equally successful. In both groups, about two in three former beneficiaries (67/68%) were in employment without other support subsidies six months after leaving the scheme. Among those who left with an impaired ability to work, both the foreign- and the native-born showed similarly low levels of employment (29/30%) without any other benefits six months later.

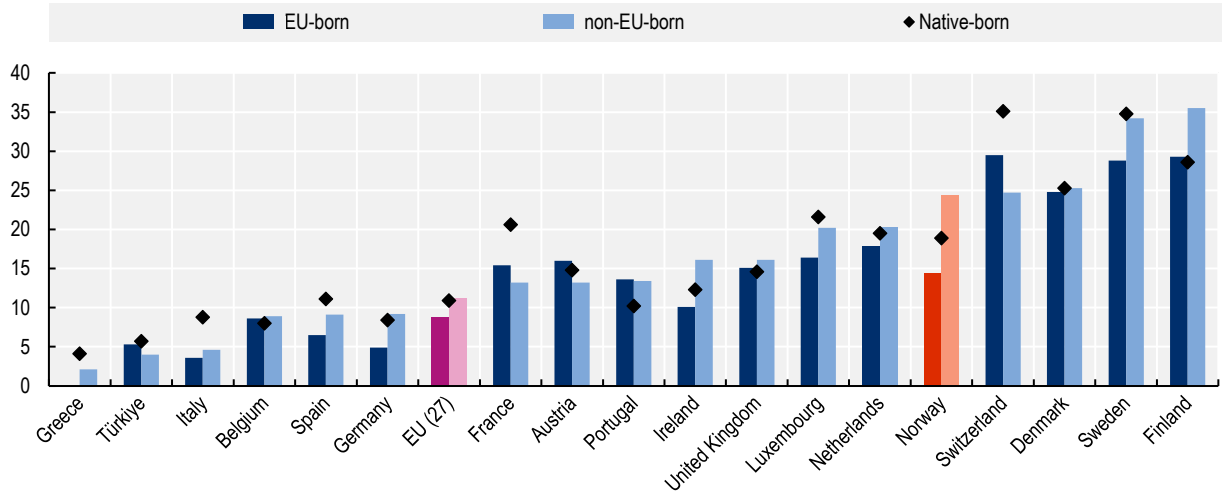
Increasing upskilling options throughout working life needs to remain a priority for all

NAV can provide different options for training and upskilling for those aged 18 and above in need of more qualifications to secure a job. This includes short work-oriented courses with theoretical and practical training. The content varies depending on the county's labour market needs. Since 2016, there has been the possibility to enter vocational training and pursue further education at an upper secondary school (either individually or in groups); a measure previously reserved for people with disabilities. In addition, former Skills Norway, now part of the Directorate for Higher Education and Competence, promotes access and participation in formal, non-formal and informal adult education through research, basic skills, integration, career guidance and programmes and subsidies.

Data on the participation of immigrants in adult education and training shows that non-EU immigrants have higher adult education and training participation than the native-born, however at lower overall levels than Norway's Scandinavian neighbours. However, there is a large underrepresentation of EU-migrants (Figure 4.14).

Figure 4.14. EU-born immigrants are least likely to upskill in Norway

Participation rate in adult education and training (last 4 weeks) by country of birth, 25-64 years old, 2019



Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from Eurostat, July 2021.

As of April 2020, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and record-high unemployment in Norway, the simultaneous take-up of unemployment benefits and education was temporarily allowed. Before, it was possible to attend education while receiving unemployment benefits only in exceptional cases, as education in principle could not be financed with unemployment benefits. Recent analysis from NAV showed that about 75% of those benefiting from the temporary change in eligibility started higher education, but an increase in those who took vocational education was also recorded and the number of vocational training at upper secondary or vocational schools increased. Extended eligibility allowing the simultaneous take-up of both education and unemployment benefits has been assessed as a more effective tool than previous measures for getting more jobseekers to complete vocational education. As immigrants are overrepresented among the unemployed and about one-third of the adults in need of upper secondary education is an immigrant, anecdotal evidence suggests that the measure supported the upskilling of unemployed immigrants, but the exact outcomes should be assessed in more detail. From October 2021 onwards, eligibility requirements have been tightened again but remain more accessible than before the pandemic. While unemployment benefits should not function as an alternative to other student support measures, measures seem to have benefited those under the age of 25, which Norway particularly targets with its educational efforts. Here, the newly introduced restriction of allowing access going forward only to people at least 25 years of age seems counterproductive to this declared goal. A full 42% of unemployment beneficiaries in the scheme which took upper secondary education were under 25 years of age (Danielsen and Sørbø, 2021[27]). By tightening eligibility, these individuals lose this additional educational option, despite evidence that an investment in human capital formation can be expected to yield large returns for this lower-skilled and younger group (Benda, Koster and van der Veen, 2019[28]).

Two national second chance programmes support labour market (re-)integration

The Qualification Programme

Norway has an extensive "Qualification" Programme for persons with reduced capacity to work but who are ineligible for benefits related to unemployment, illness, or disability. As a relatively large-scale nationwide programme, it has supported the (re-)integration of adults (18-67 years of age) into the labour market since 2006. During the one-year full-time programme, with the possibility of a one-year extension, participants receive a qualification benefit, which is two times the National Insurance basic amount and on par with the introduction benefit. The programme includes work-oriented activities, education and training as well as close individual follow-ups and guidance. Changes to the Social Services Act in 2019 now allow for more flexibility in the qualification programme, such as targeted education offers, flexible intake and the opportunity to start the programme several times.

Those who start the programme are characterised by little work experience and low pensionable income. What is more, seven out of ten participants have received financial social assistance the year before starting, while about half have been long-term social assistance recipients. About 40% of participants have taken part in labour market measures the year prior to taking-up of the programme (Åsland Lima and Furuberg, 2018[29]).

Due to the set-up of the qualification programme and the overrepresentation of immigrants among recipients of social assistance, it is not surprising that in 2017, among the close to 4 000 participants almost 60% were immigrants (Åsland Lima and Furuberg, 2018[29]). The same research shows that all foreign-born and most strongly those with 3-5 years of residence in Norway achieve better outcomes in the programme than native-born. While the detailed admission category is not available in the data it is unlikely that these are former NIP participants (due to the access criteria of being long-term unemployed) and rather other groups of newcomers, such as family migrants who do not have access to extensive integration programmes upon arrival.

Notwithstanding the high share of migrants among the participants, a recent investigation by Norway's Office of the Auditor General found that many immigrants who have the right to the programme are not offered the possibility to participate. The report also stressed large differences in this respect between municipalities as NAV offices and municipalities tend to assess similar cases differently with regulations offering considerable discretion. For instance, in a field experiment when three identical applications from foreign-born were send to 45 different municipalities, some NAV offices rejected all applicants, while other NAV offices granted access to the programme for all three cases. One reason for treating similar applications of immigrants differently is municipalities' assessment of the role of low Norwegian language skills. While some case workers see weak Norwegian language skills as a factor that reduces a person's capacity to work, making them eligible for the programme, other offices assess this as not a sufficient limitation. What is more, despite offered funds, not all municipalities do offer the programme, for reasons not entirely clear. For instance, in 2018, municipalities received funds to offer the programme for 9 000 persons but only provided places to about 5 200 persons – a mere 60% (Office of the Auditor General Norway, 2019[30]).

The Job Opportunity Programme

As seen above, a significant share of migrant women, especially mothers, remain outside of the labour market. For these women, Norway offers a special second chance programme called "Jobbsjansen" (Job Opportunity Programme). Until the 2020 Integration Act, the grant scheme consisted of three tracks, each dedicated to either (A) stay-at-home immigrant women, (B) immigrant youth who needed more primary or lower secondary education or (C) NIP participants who needed more time in the programme.

Under the new provisions, Jobbsjansen is a programme exclusively designed to integrate migrant women, while other subsidy schemes are available to municipalities for the other migrant groups. Since its fundamental reform in 2021, the programme targets unemployed migrant women aged 18 to 55 (the former track A) who, after some years in Norway, still have difficulties in entering the labour market and need basic skills while not being covered by other labour market schemes. About 60% of all participants have children. Former participants of the Introduction Programme (NIP) may be eligible for Jobbsjansen, but have to wait at least two years after completing the NIP (IMDi, 2021[31]).

The programme is somewhat similar to the Introduction Programme in terms of design – it must be adapted to individual needs and consists of various qualification measures, such as courses in Norwegian and social studies, work practice and other training elements, as well as health-promoting activities. It can last up to two years, with a possible extension of one year. Participants with little to no education are eligible for a four-year programme. What is more, all participants receive benefits, funded by grants from IMDi, while taking part in the programme (Riksrevisjonen, 2019[32]).

In 2020, 34 projects received funding to support 1 200 participants – both new participants and those from previous years. This is slightly more than earlier when around 1 000 participations were funded per year (Høgestøl and Skutlaberg, 2019[33]). The majority are enrolled in the programme for longer than a year. In 2020, around 350 women de-enrolled from the programme, 74% successful, as 58% ended up in employment and 14% in education. Around 13% dropped-out of the programme along the way mainly due to health problems, pregnancy or changing location. This is an improvement from 2017 when 17% dropped out. The rest of the participants that completed the programme were transferred to other labour market measures (8%) or were unemployed. Overall, the results from the programme have improved over the past decade. The share in employment or education have increased from 52% in 2012 to 74% in 2020 (Høgestøl, Lerfaldet and Kristoffersen, 2020[34]). Given the target group these are favourable outcomes. The programme is currently being upscaled and has received additional funding in 2021.

The overall favourable results are potentially linked to Jobbsjansen offering significant individual support to participants, particularly in the form of longer/more time slots with caseworkers. However, they may also stem from a positive selection bias, as participants have to apply for the programme and are thereafter selected on their suitability in terms of succeeding in the programme. There is also significant variation in outcomes across origin groups. For instance, among the women who participated in Jobbsjansen between 2013 and 2017, close to 70% of women coming from China and the Philippines got a job after completing the programme, compared to 30% of women from Syria and Afghanistan and only 14% of women from Somalia (Riksrevisjonen, 2019[32]). Another future challenge is the fact that most successful participants still have low earnings. Only around 40% of all participants can be considered self-sufficient after the end of the programme. However, this share is just 4% at the start (Riksrevisjonen, 2019[32]). In 2020, 49% of participants who de-enrolled, complete or stopped the programme, had a self-sufficient income. What is more, while before participation three in four women (75%) had their family and others as source of main income, after the programme this share was reduced to 27% (Høgestøl, Lerfaldet and Kristoffersen, 2020[34]).

Mentorship – a currently underdeveloped support measure

One promising measure to integrate immigrants into the labour market is mentorship. It helps in providing migrants with the necessary networks in the labour market, by matching immigrant jobseekers with native-born with a similar occupational profile. Mentorship is becoming increasingly widespread but small-scale, raising questions about efficiency.

In 2018, 12 mentorship programmes that specifically target immigrants were publicly financed, thereby doubling the offers available in 2014 (IMDI, 2020[35]). The initiatives tend to be small, generally involving less than 20 migrants. In 2014, 73 immigrants were offered mentoring programmes and the number had grown to 204 in 2018. Grants provided to programmes range from NOK 100 000 to 900 000, depending

on the number of participants. While mentorship programmes have different target groups, the overwhelming majority of mentees are adults with high educational attainment. The majority (55%) had attained a master's degree, 42% had a bachelor's degree and the rest had only completed upper secondary education (Bjørnset and Kindt, 2019[36]). Programme objectives varied, making appraisal difficult. Some have quantitative goals such as increasing the number of participants in employment, while others have more qualitative goals, such as boosting self-confidence. The small scale of programmes further raises the question of efficacy.

In an assessment of all national mentorship programmes that received funding, regular training for the mentors as well as competence mapping and a well-researched matching were found to be important components for successful labour market integration. Clarification of expectations by both the mentee and mentors as well as structured joint activities (such as courses, trainee positions, CV writing and interview training) were also found to be important. While the majority of the mentors report satisfactory experiences, many identified language difficulties as the main obstacle for why their mentee experienced difficulties in finding a job. Language difficulties also worked as a barrier in their mentoring, as it was difficult to teach specific work-related jargon when basic language skills were missing (Bjørnset and Kindt, 2019[36]).

Combating discrimination and supporting diversity

Discrimination is well documented in Norway

Discrimination is a key obstacle to immigrants' social and economic integration alike. While its quantification and impact are difficult to assess, both have been relatively well studied in Norway.

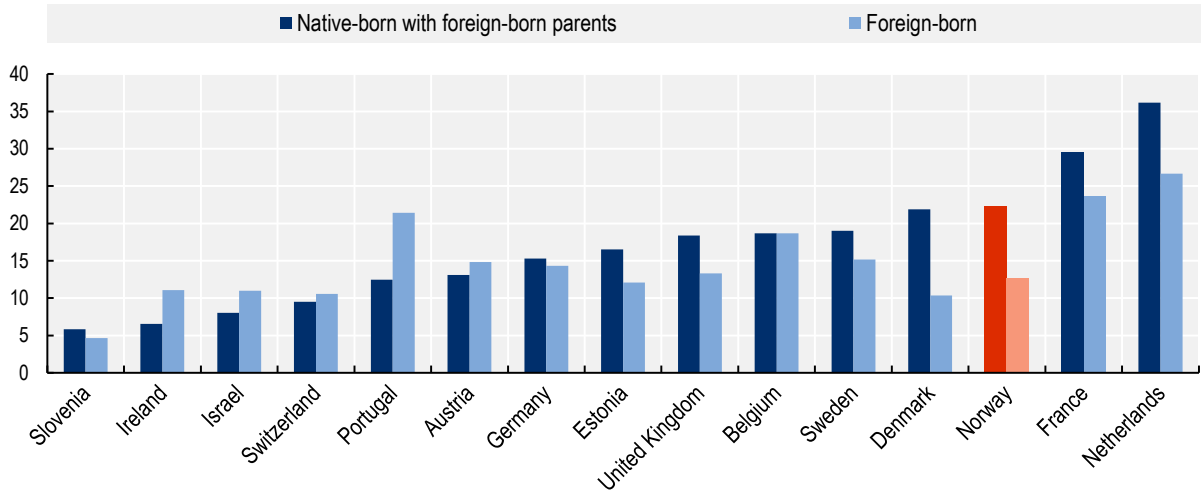
One possible measure is self-reported discrimination. While this is not an objective measurement of discrimination, it is a good indication of social cohesion. There are two sources. The first is the Norwegian Quality of Life Survey, which covers a sample of the main immigrant groups in Norway. In the 2020 survey, 47% of natives with immigrant parents reported that they had experienced discrimination over the last 12 months. The share was 39% for the foreign-born (Støren, Rønning and Gram, 2020[37]).

The second source is the European Social Survey (ESS). It has much smaller samples and due to different definitions, it is not directly comparable to the Norwegian Quality of Life Survey. On the other hand, it includes the entire immigrant population and allows for international comparison. According to the latest figures, in Norway, 22% of native-born youth with immigrant parents state that they belong to a group that is discriminated against in Norway. Shares among foreign-born youth are much lower at only 13% (Figure 4.15). The figure for the native-born with immigrant parents is one of the highest in the OECD.

Both the Norwegian Quality of Life Survey and the ESS show for Norway, as for most other European countries, higher self-reported discrimination among native-born offspring of immigrants. This indicates that immigrant offspring born in Norway have a higher awareness of discriminatory behaviour in Norway than those who have been born abroad.

Figure 4.15. Many Norwegian-born with immigrant parents experience discrimination

Share of 15-34 year-olds self-reporting discrimination, by own and parents' country of birth, 2008-18



Note: Share responding that they belong to a group that is discriminated against based on ethnicity, nationality or race.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from European Social Survey, 2021.

While self-report studies show perceived discrimination, they do not capture actual occurrences of discrimination. Several randomised field-experiments comparing the job-search success of fictional candidates, who differ only regarding their name, show that individuals with "foreign sounding" names face discrimination in the hiring process. For example, when two identical job applicants were considered, those with a "Pakistani sounding" name were 25% less likely to receive an invitation to a job interview compared to applicants with a "Norwegian sounding" name. Discrimination was higher in the private sector than in the public sector and more pronounced against men than women (Birkelund et al., 2014[38]).

Discrimination has also been documented in the housing market. One experiment examining the Norwegian housing market found that men with Arabic sounding names were least likely to receive a positive response to their apartment request (Andersson, Jakobsson and Kotsadam, 2012[39]). Other studies found that immigrants in Norway often pay higher rents than the native-born and are more likely to be arbitrarily evicted (Forbrukarrådet, 2021[40]).

Further evidence of actual discrimination are the complaints send to Norway's Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud. The Ombud offers guidance, free of charge, to individuals, union representatives, employers and organisations, government officials and trade union representatives who have questions related to equality and discrimination. Each year it handles around 2 000 guidance cases. Around half of handled cases are questions related to the workplace and the labour market. When it comes to grounds of discrimination, gender, disability, and ethnicity (which includes language and religion) each typically make up around 15-20% of the yearly total number of cases.

In addition, the Ombud can provide guidance on how to bring a case to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal (see below). The tribunal, which has been operating since 2018, decided about 400 cases in 2020 and 530 in 2021. Overall, about 40% of the cases were connected to the workplace, where discrimination or similar practices are most identified. In both years, 27% of the cases dealt with issues of discrimination/harassment based on ethnicity or religion, followed by disability (23% of the cases in both years) (The Anti-Discrimination Tribunal, 2022[41]).

Overall, public awareness of discrimination is increasing in Norway. In the 2020 edition of the Integration Barometer, 84% of the Norwegian population believed that immigrants are discriminated against – a record high. Moreover, the share of respondents who believed that discrimination occurs to "a large degree" more than tripled between 2013 and 2020 (from 9% to 32%). Most respondents believed that discrimination of immigrants occurs especially in the labour market (90%) (Brekke, Fladmoe and Wollebaek, 2020[42]).

Policies targeting employers combat discrimination and encourage diversity

Norway has a relatively strong and longstanding framework to address the issue of discrimination, with various Action Plan against immigrant discrimination already in place since 1992.

Norway, like most OECD countries, has recently taken new measures to combat discrimination and encourage diversity. In 2018, the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act came into force, merging four anti-discrimination laws therefore covering equality and anti-discrimination related to gender, ethnicity, religion, belief, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, pregnancy as well as maternity and paternity leave. Under the new Act, the government established an Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal, a complaints body that makes final, legally binding decisions on harassment and discrimination cases, including possible compensation.

In Norway, all employers – regardless of size and sector – are obliged to document their equality and anti-discrimination work. Since 2020, public and private enterprises with more than 50 employees must make active, targeted, and systematic efforts to combat discrimination. This includes systematic investigations and an annual positive obligation to report their equality work. Companies may also receive support from Norway's Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud who is working to establish agreements with large national firms to provide guidance on this obligation. In 2020, this included joint work with Norway´s largest banks and one of the largest grocery chains. The agreement covers guidance on equality work for all grounds of discrimination, including ethnicity. The guidance takes the form of workshops on company duties, with lectures as well as awareness training.

Two new Action Plans strengthen measures against racism and discrimination. The Action Plan to combat Discrimination and Hatred towards Muslims (2020-23) aims to prevent and deter racism and discrimination against Muslims and persons believed to be Muslims. The action plan contains 18 measures. The Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the Grounds of Ethnicity and Religion for 2020-23 contains 50 measures in many different areas, including work life, housing and health, research and knowledge, education, public debate, and public service. Among them is a pilot scheme with anonymous job applications within the civil service to respond to discrimination in recruitment, as well as initiatives to strengthen research on discrimination in the workforce and the establishment of a State Secretary Committee to ensure that all efforts are well co-ordinated. An additional Action Plan against racism and discrimination will focus on labour market integration and on youth and will be launched towards the end of 2023.

Combating indirect discrimination through language requirements is a challenge

Selective hiring practices are difficult to demonstrate as characteristics which have not been explicitly taken into account, or are not observed, could account for an employer's preference for certain candidates rather than outright discrimination.

Evidence from Norway suggests that experience matters and shapes employer's future hiring decisions of the same ethnic group. Three randomised field experiments on ethnic discrimination in the Norwegian labour market found that employers with negative experiences with immigrant workers were unwilling to give job applicants from the same immigrant group an opportunity, whereas employers with positive experiences were more willing to hire these workers. Employers without experiences with immigrant workers were rather risk-averse and used general stereotypes (Birkelund et al., 2020[43]). The resulting

interpretation of origin country of immigrants as an indicator of their skill and fit to perform particular jobs has been documented before in Norway (Friberg and Midtbøen, 2017[44]).

The requirement of proficiency in Norwegian is a way to hide outright discrimination in the labour market. While discrimination on language grounds is prohibited in Norway since 2006, the practical implication is limited. A recent report on the issue of "what employers talk about when they talk about language" highlights that the result of Norwegian language tests fails to function as intended, as employers make little use of this information in the recruitment process and consider subjective assessments to be more reliable than objective and neutral criteria. For instance, significantly more employers trust that a candidate who writes that they have a good written and spoken command of Norwegian will be able to meet their language requirements on the job, compared to individuals who indicate that they passed the official B2 level language test. It thus seems that for employers, the job seeker's self-reported skills may have higher informational value than a standardised language assessment. This runs counter to the objective of the Norwegian language test to make the recruitment process more objective and neutral. Hence, the standardised language assessment does not appear to function as intended (Mathilde Bjørnset, Marianne Takvam Kindt and Jon Rogstad, 2021[45]).

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5. Transmitting skills to children of immigrants in Norway

This chapter focuses on the transmission of skills from immigrants to their children in Norway. It first provides an overview of the integration outcomes of children of immigrants and presents challenges that remain to ensure a lasting integration of this group. It provides a short presentation of the overall system of family support and follows the life-path of children of immigrants, from pre-school over primary and secondary education to the labour market transition.

This report was largely completed before the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Norway swiftly adapted its integration framework to accommodate for the specific challenges arising from the inflow of refugees from Ukraine. These measures are discussed in a separate chapter (Chapter 6).

Descendants of immigrants – a benchmark for integration policy

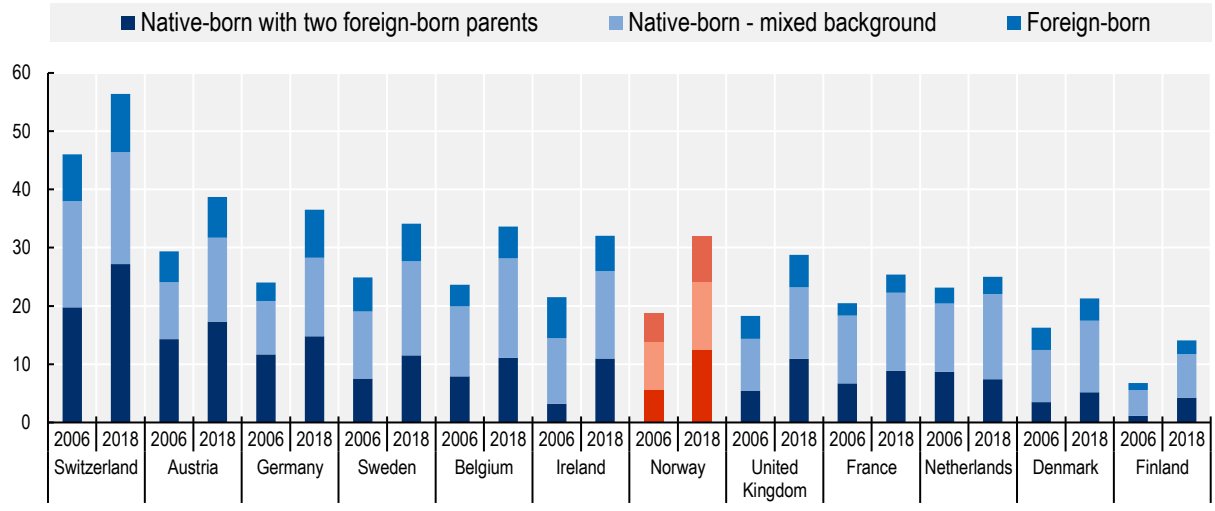
How well the children of immigrant parents are integrated in the education system and labour market is generally considered one of the best measures of the long-term success or failure of integration policy. As children of immigrants, both those who are native-born and those who arrived at a young age, have been raised and educated in the country, they should not, in theory, encounter the same difficulties as migrant adults who have obtained their skills in an often very different context. Ultimately, the expectation is that their outcomes be similar to those of native-born to native-born parents. Ensuring that youth with migrant parents can reach their full potential in the education system and the labour market will be important going forward, especially given their rapidly rising share among the youth population.

Children of immigrants – an increasing share of the young population in Norway

A large and increasing share of young people in Norway are immigrants or have parents born abroad. In 2021, over one in three children in Norway (34%) under the age of 15 had at least one foreign-born parent. Overall, in this age group, more than one in five children (21%) was either an immigrant (7%) or born in Norway to two immigrant parents (14%). A further 13% were of mixed origin, with one native-born and one foreign-born parent. Also, in the OECD area the increase in Norway was strong, as depicted with the latest comparable data from 2018, below (Figure 5.1) (OECD, 2021[1]).

Figure 5.1. The share of children born to immigrant parents has increased strongly

Percentage of the population aged 0 to 15 years old, 2006 and 2018



Source: Secretariat estimates from EU SILC (2006 & 2018), 2020.

The largest group of native-born to migrant parents have parents born in Pakistan, accounting for 9% of the total. This is not surprising, as Pakistanis are one of the most longstanding immigrant groups in Norway, with the majority arriving in 1970s. After Pakistan, the second largest group are native-born to parents from Somalia and Poland (8% respectively), followed by Iraq and Viet Nam.

Education and labour market outcomes

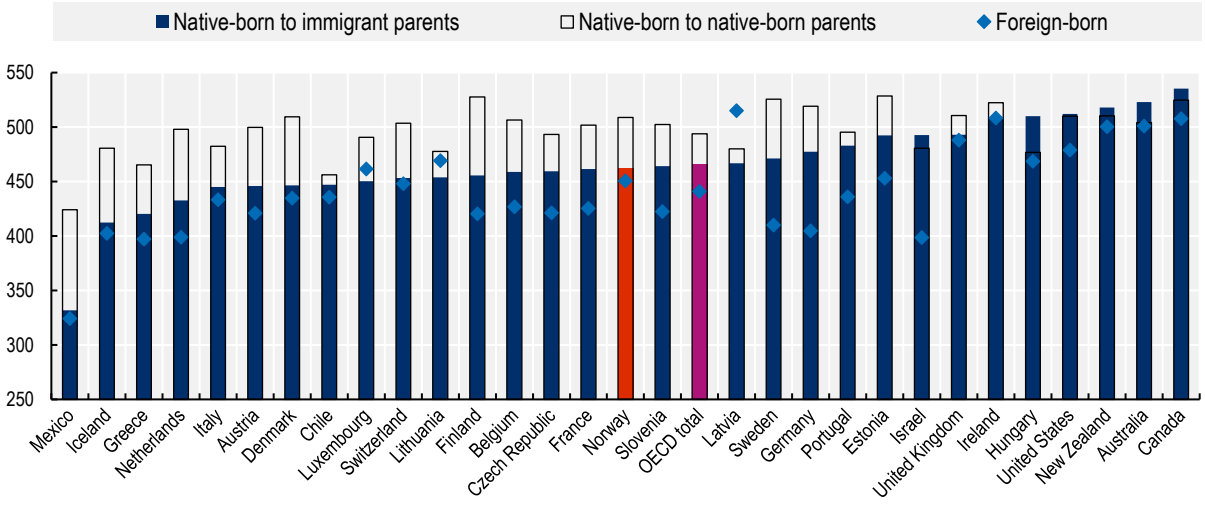
Children of immigrants perform at OECD-average levels in school

The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests reading skills among children at age 15. Just like in most OECD countries, the educational outcomes of foreign-born students lag behind those of native-born students in Norway. This is no surprise given their adjustment to a new language and school system. However, also the native-born to immigrant parents tend to perform less well in school than their peers with native-born parentage (Figure 5.2).

The performance gap between native-born students with native-born parents and those with immigrant parents amounts to 46 points, close to one year and well above the OECD average performance gap at 29 points.

Figure 5.2. Native-born and foreign-born students with foreign-born parents have a similar literacy competence

Reading performance of 15-year-old students by own and parental place of birth, 2018



Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on OECD (2018[2]), PISA 2018 Database, www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2018database/.

Norway's performance in PISA has stagnated over time with similar performance gaps between students of immigrant- and native-born parentage in 2018 and 2009. By contrast, in Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands the performance gap widened substantially, while it decreased in the United States, Belgium and France.

On the other hand, results from PISA 2015 show that Norway has been particularly successful in reducing the share of students who lack basic reading skills at age 15. OECD wide the share of native-born children of foreign-born parents who perform poorly at school has dropped by 6 percentage points between 2006 and 2015. In Norway, the share fell most drastically by 21 percentage points (OECD/European Union, 2018[3]).

The language spoken at home is related to students´ reading proficiency. Across the OECD, students of immigrant parents speaking the language of instruction at home score on average 36 points higher than those who speak another language. In 2018, 8 out of 10 immigrant students and 40% of the natives born to immigrant parents spoke another language at home. Interestingly, speaking Norwegian at home leads to only slight reading score improvements in Norway (5 points) compared to around 50 points in other countries such as Sweden, Switzerland and Austria (OECD, 2018[2]).

Educational outcomes depict large gender differences

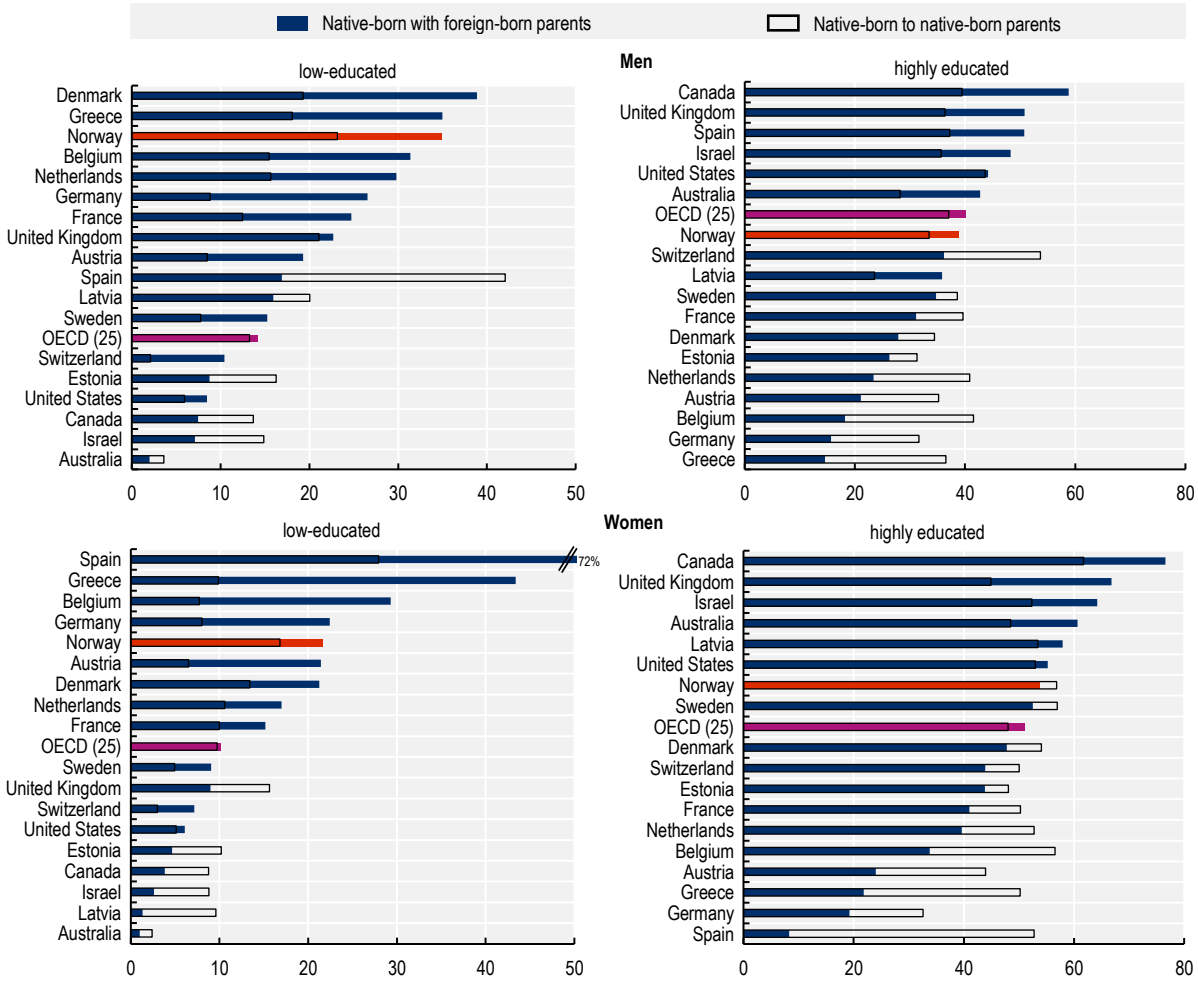
Differences in educational attainment at larger ages are less pronounced in Norway. In 2019, about half of the native-born to immigrants aged 25 to 34 who were not in education, had completed tertiary education (ISCED 5-8), about the same as for their peers with native-born parents. The high share of highly educated native-born to immigrant parents sets Norway apart from most other European OECD countries where native-born immigrant offspring are less likely to be highly educated than their peers of native-born parentage (OECD/European Union, 2018[3]). In contrast, a larger share of the native-born to immigrant parents aged 25 to 34 years are low educated compared to their peers with native-born parents (27% vs. 20%). These differences are slightly above latest available average among European OECD countries (OECD/European Union, 2018[3]).

What is more, over the last decade, the gap between educational outcomes of native-born youth with parents born abroad and their peers with native-born parents has narrowed. For instance, between 2010 and 2019, the share of the highly educated increased by 13 percentage points among children of immigrants and by 6 percentage points among children of natives. At the same time, the share of the low-educated declined by 4 percentage points among offspring of immigrants, while it has remained about the same among offspring of natives.

The overall rather favourable picture is somewhat nuanced when disaggregating by gender. In Norway, gender gaps in educational outcomes are larger than across the OECD and those in comparable countries. OECD-wide, men are overrepresented among the low-educated; this is also true in Norway. However, among the low-educated, the gender gap is more than twice as large among the native-born with immigrant parents as among their peers with native parentage (Figure 5.3). For the foreign-born who arrived as children (not shown in the graph) the gender gap is particularly large (22 percentage points), compared to an average of 5 percentage points across the OECD. There are also large gender gaps among the highly educated, but this concerns in particular the native-born with native-born parents. Just like in the rest of the OECD, women are overrepresented among the highly educated.

Figure 5.3. Native-born young men with migrant parents are often low-educated

Percentages, 25- to 34-year-olds not in education, around 2017



Source: OECD Secretariat calculations adapted from data in (OECD/European Union, 2018[3]), *Settling In 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration*, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307216-en.

Labour market outcomes of children of immigrants improved

The employment rate of native-born children with immigrant parents aged 15 to 34 and not in education reached 67% in 2017 (the latest year for which international comparable data are available), significantly lower than the OECD average (73%). In particular, the gap between natives born to immigrant parents and their peers with native-born parents was 14 percentage points in Norway, similar to those in Austria, Germany and France (OECD/European Union, 2018[3]).

Looking at national data over time, the employment rate among the native-born to foreign-born parents aged 15 to 34 has tended to increase, while it has remained relatively stable for those born to native-born parents (Table 5.1). In 2019, 73% of the young native-born with immigrant parents' not in education were employed, compared to 83% among their peers with native-born parents.

A rather unique feature in Norway is the fact that for those born in Norway to immigrant parents, the employment rate is slightly higher among women than men. In 2019, 74% of the 15- to 34-year-old women born in Norway to immigrant parents not in education were employed, compared to 72% among their male peers. By contrast, among those with native-born parents, men had a slightly higher employment rate (84% vs 82%). Among 15- to 34-year-olds, immigrant men were also more likely to be employed (70%) than women (58%). The difference among this latter group is largely driven by the gender gap in employment rates among migrants from a non-European country.

Table 5.1. Gaps in labour market outcomes remained over the past decade

Shares in employment and registered unemployed 15- to 34-year-olds not in education, 2010, 2015, 2019, 2020*

	2010		2015		2019		2020*	
	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate	Employment rate	Unemployment rate
Native-born to immigrant parents	69%	7%	68%	6%	73%	4%	70%	7%
Native-born to native-born parents	83%	3%	81%	4%	83%	2%	82%	3%
Immigrants	64%	7%	61%	8%	64%	6%	61%	10%

Note: Those in employment might include individuals working part-time. *Shares for 2020 are preliminary.
Source: OECD Secretariat calculations based on data from SSB, 2021.

While employment rate increases with educational attainment, across all levels of education, rates remain lower among natives with immigrant parents than among their peers with native-born parents. Indeed, gaps are larger at the high end of the qualification spectrum. Among those aged 25-to 34 with a tertiary education, excluding those in education, 93% of the native-born to native-born parents were employed in 2019, compared to 84% of those with parents born in an EU country and 85% of those with parents born outside the EU. Among the low educated, only 59% of native-born children of immigrants were employed, compared to 62% of their peers with native-born parents.

Looking at those not in employment, education or training (NEET) one observes a relatively favourable picture among native-born, but only prior to the pandemic. In 2019, 13% of native-born 15-34 year-olds with parents born abroad were NEET, against 10% of their peers with native-born parents. Compared to 2010, this share has remained unchanged among offspring of native-born, and decreased by 1 percentage point among offspring of immigrants, slightly narrowing the gap. Among foreign-born youth the results differ strongly by age of arrival. About 15% of youth who arrive before the age of 12 were NEET in 2019, a share only 2 percentage points higher than those native-born to immigrant parents, and notably 3 percentage points lower than in 2010. However, like in other OECD countries, in parallel with the age of arrival the NEET rate increases, and among those who arrived between 12-15 years of age 20% were not in employment, education or training in 2019.

The pandemic impacted the labour market situation of vulnerable youth, and increased NEET rates of each group in Norway though strongest among offspring of immigrants. In 2020, 18% of native-born 15-34 year-olds with parents born abroad were NEET, at similar levels to what is observed across the EU. Foreign-born who arrived before the age of 15 had similar NEET rates (17%) and were thus faring better in Norway than their peers across the EU (20%). Native-born to native-born parents in Norway had the lowest NEET rate at 13%, also outperforming their peers across the EU 16% (OECD/European Union, forthcoming[4]).

Looking at another particularity of Norway, that is the high share of youth receiving incapacity benefits, also shows that immigrant offspring have similar outcomes compared to native-born to native-born. In 2016, 6% of all young people aged 15 to 29 received incapacity benefits in Norway. This is three times higher than the OECD average and more than in any other OECD country (OECD, 2018[5]). National figures from 2019 show that native-born to native-born parents aged 15 to 34 not in education are more than twice as likely to be recipients of incapacity benefits compared to immigrants in the same age cohort (8% compared to 3%). Mental health has become a primary cause of benefit dependency among young people, but there are also indications that the benefit has served as a source of income support for difficult-to-employ jobseekers in times of labour market slack. High recipient rates of incapacity benefits are not a new phenomenon, and Norway has undertaken significant efforts in recent years to tackle the issue. While the access to incapacity benefits have been tightened, the figures suggest that further efforts are needed (OECD, 2018[5]).

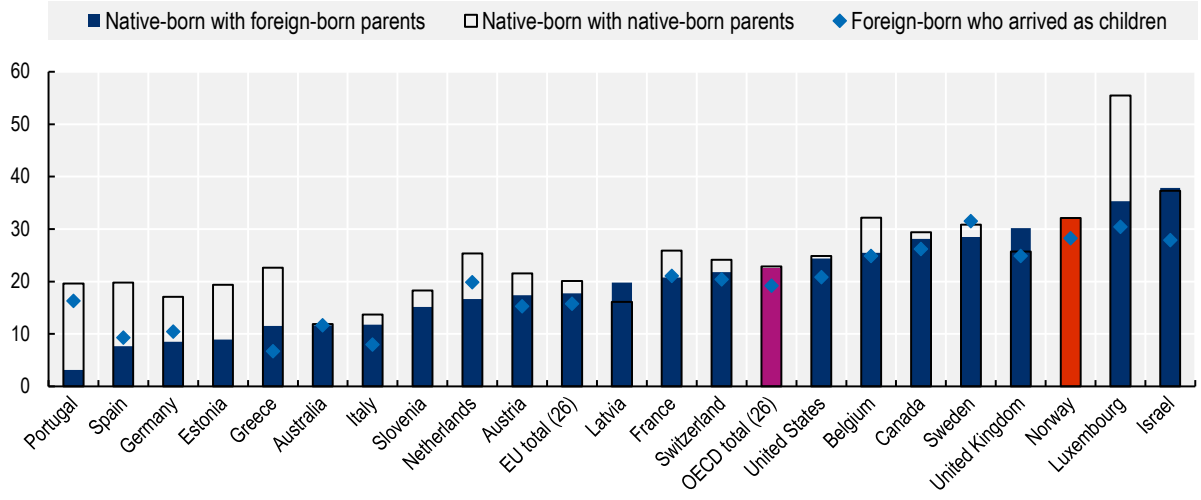
Finally, formal over-qualification affects young natives similarly, irrespective of their parents' country of birth. In 2019, 21% of native-born women to immigrant parents aged 25 to 34 and 24% of native-born men to immigrant parents worked in jobs for which they were formally overqualified, compared to 17% and 21% of their peers with native-born parents respectively.

Public sector integration works well

One of the drivers of the outcomes of youth with migrant parents is the public sector, which accounts for a relatively high share of youth employment in international comparison. Norway stands out as one of the few OECD countries where the share of natives with foreign-born parents working in public sector jobs is equal to that of their peers with native-born parents (Figure 5.4). This is at least in part a result of longstanding policy efforts. Already since 2002, employers in the public sector, including state-owned companies, must invite at least one applicant with a minority background for an interview. Since 2012, public sector employers need to hire the candidate with parents born in a non-western country, in case of equal qualification.

Figure 5.4. Youth with migrant parents are well integrated into the public sector

Percentages of employed in the public sector, 15- to 34-year-olds, around 2016



Source: OECD/European Union (2018[3]), *Settling In 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration*, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307216-en.

Public sector employment of youth with migrant parents generates several benefits. First, the presence of civil servants with migrant parents enhances diversity within public institutions, making them more representative of the communities they serve. Second, how the wider public perceives immigrants and their children depends in part on their 'visibility' in public life and the contexts in which they become 'visible'. Teachers, police officers, or public administrators with migrant parents, can also act as role models (OECD, 2021[6]).

Integration as a whole-of-family issue

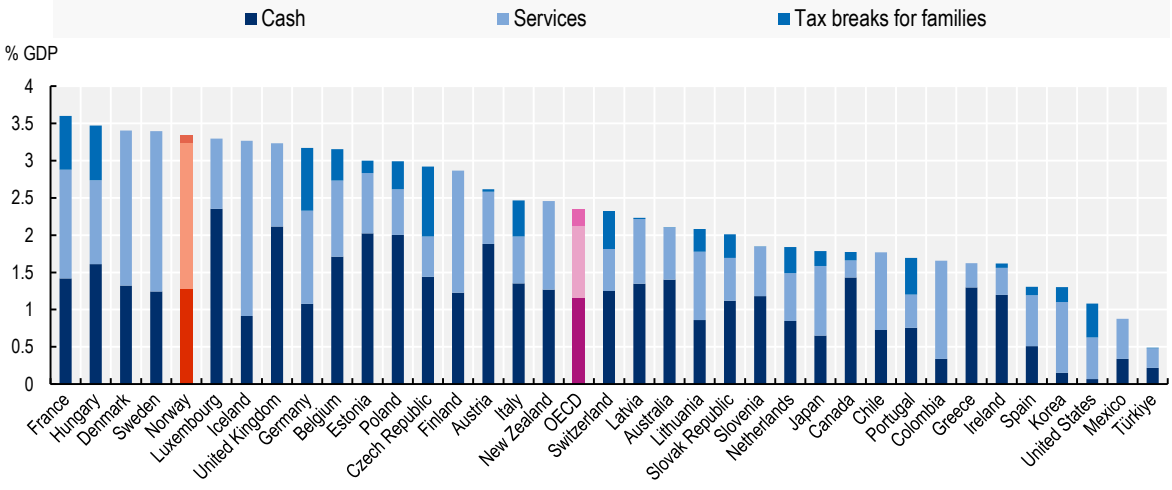
The Norwegian system for family support

Across the OECD, in spite of progress across generations, integration challenges of migrant parents, both in terms of educational attainment and the labour market, are frequently transmitted to their native-born children (OECD, 2017[7]). Against this backdrop, a growing number of countries have adopted programmes that involve both migrant parents and their native-born children in the integration process (OECD, 2021[6]).

Norway has particularly favourable conditions to adopt a whole-of-family approach to integration. It ranks among the OECD countries with the highest social transfers to families relative to GDP, most of these being provided as services (Figure 5.5). Moreover, the public income spend on early childhood education is substantial. In 2016, expenditure for early childhood education and care (ECEC) per child was almost twice as high as the OECD average (OECD, 2020[8]).

Figure 5.5. Norway has a high rate of social expenditure on services to families

Public expenditure on family benefits by type of expenditure, percent of GDP, 2017 and latest available



Source: OECD Social Expenditure Database (2021[9]), www.oecd.org/social/expenditure.htm.

OECD-wide, Norway also ranks as one of the most family-friendly countries, due to its long duration of paid parental leave for both fathers and mothers, high rates of childcare enrolment, and high quality as well as availability of preschool education (Chzhen, Gromada and Rees, 2019[10]). The Norwegian benefit system for new parents offers long and generous coverage. All parents that have received a pensionable income for at last six of the last 10 months, earning a minimum of 53 200 NOK (social benefits included) and are members of the national insurance scheme, are entitled to 49 weeks of parental leave. Each parent is granted 15 weeks while the rest can be freely divided between the partners. The father´s access to leave

is however conditioned upon the mother's economic activity before and after childbirth (see Chapter 4). Mothers who do not fulfil the employment and earning requirements receive a lump sum. While most mothers fulfil the economic criteria, immigrant mothers are much less likely to do so. In 2014, 45% of the mothers from Asia and 64% of the mothers born in Africa received a lump sum, compared to 10% among the native-born (Line Schou, 2019[11]). There is no more recent data available but anecdotal evidence suggests that this situation has remained unchanged. Norway has also a cash-for-care system, which will be discussed further below.

Norway offers parental guidance courses, mandatory for some migrant groups

Norway recently enhanced information of migrant parents about bringing up children in the Norwegian society. Individuals participating in the Norwegian Introduction Programme (NIP) since the new Integration Act of 2021 are required to attend a course on parenting and how to raise a child in Norway if they have minor children (see Chapter 3). It is possible for the municipality, in consultation with participants in the programme, to provide courses in parental guidance even if participants have children who are older than 18 years. This is unique in the OECD context, as other countries do not have similar mandatory programmes or courses.

The new offers are, in part, a response to previous research on migrant parents' and their children's perspectives and concerns. In a 2019 report, foreign-born parents reported that they lacked networks and support when raising their children and often felt insecure and alone in their parental responsibility (Horgen, Og and Bjørnset, 2019[12]). Course material has also been developed for the NIP on forced marriage, female genital mutilation, honour violence and negative social control.

Information on bringing up children in Norway can also prevent that gender roles and norms in families work as a barrier to girls in their educational and employment ambitions. Traditional gender norms are often found to continue across generations (Dale, Lindley and Dex, 2006[13]) (see Chapter 4 for an in-depth discussion on mothers' employment). While differences exist across different foreign-born populations, the opinion of immigrants in Norway on gender equality in job access are progressive (Box 5.1).

Some OECD countries offer parents and children programmes in tandem. Programmes of this type exist in several countries, including in Austria, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia and Sweden. Vienna, for example, runs a learning support programme for immigrant mothers, who can learn German in parallel with their children at their ECEC centre or school. Other projects involve immigrant parents in further learning activities. New Zealand, for example, provides refugee families and secondary school-aged children with computer literacy training, a computer and a one-year internet connection through the "Computer in Homes" programme.

In some cases, children's schools or kindergartens offer additional support to migrant parents. France has a large-scale national initiative to "open the school for parents for the success of the children" which provides language training in schools for parents to help them better understand the education system. In the German city of Hanover, elementary schools organise biweekly meeting groups ('backpack parent groups`) for immigrant parents. During these sessions at their children's school, parents learn about the topics taught in their child's class. The groups also teach them host-country language skills and encourage them to participate in school activities (OECD, 2021[6]).

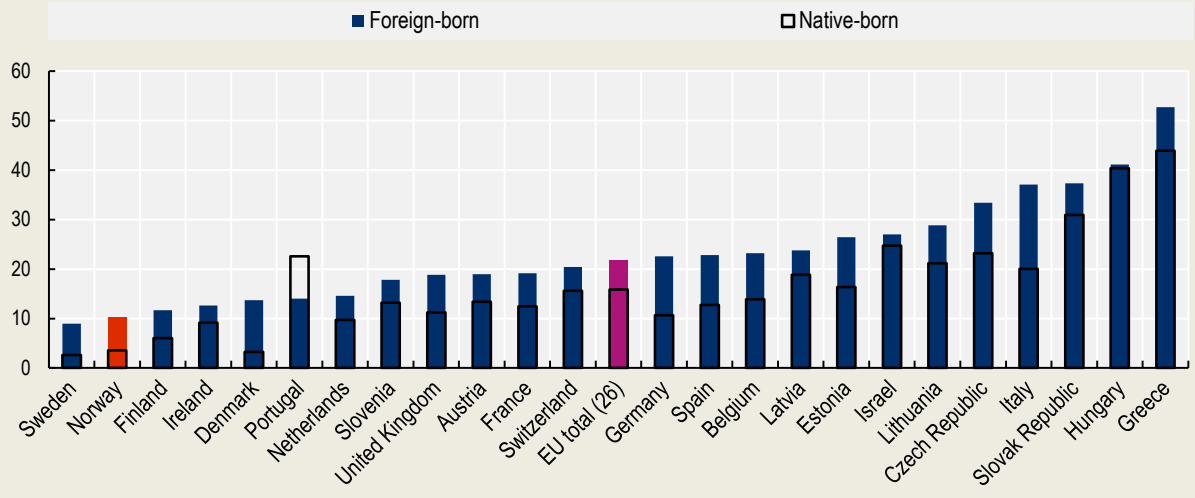
Box 5.1. Opinions on job access in Norway are progressive

In a 2009 survey in Norway, 72% of migrants from Pakistan answered that it is the man's main responsibility to support the family, compared to 16% among the native-born. 60% of the respondents from Pakistan further answered that the mother should be at home taking care of the kids, compared to 11% among the native-born households. The report further shows that while the immigrants interviewed in the report are less supportive of mothers working, their descendants, similar to the native-born population are more approving (Kavli and Nadim, 2009[14]). The results indicate a significant degree of acculturation from one generation to the next.

This is similar to OECD findings, showing that values present in the host-society shape attitudes towards gender equality. Norway is one of the forerunners when it comes to positive attitudes towards gender equality. Figure 5.6 shows that in countries where the approval rates on gender equality are high, they are also high among immigrants. In fact, immigrants in Norway hold more gender-equal views than the majority of natives in other countries.

Figure 5.6. Immigrants have progressive attitudes on gender equality in job access in Norway

Percentages who agree that "when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women", 2008-16



Source: OECD/EU (2018[3]), *Settling In 2018: Indicators of Immigrant Integration*, https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264307216-en.

Early childhood

For children born in Norway to migrant parents, and for those who arrive at a young age, learning Norwegian is often a first challenge. Norway does not have any data on foreign-born children or native-born children to immigrant parents in kindergarten, but instead gathers data on the share of children who speak another language than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish or English at home. The share of children from these so-called "language minorities" has tripled in recent years (from 6.2% in 2006 to 19% in 2020) (SSB, 2021[15]). Given the increasing share of immigrants in Norway, this share is expected to grow further. This will put further emphasis on the importance of pre-school education in stimulating language development

among children living in households speaking another language at home than Norwegian, as well as ensuring that these children have access to Norwegian training as early as possible.

Checks for early language development exist but are not focused on Norwegian

In Norway, health clinics perform routine assessments of children's language abilities at age two and four. Assessments includes checking for delayed language development due to health reasons – for example stuttering. While the health check-up is mandatory, there are different practices with regard to how children with an additional or different mother tongue are assessed. In the case of children with a different mother tongue from Norwegian, at the two-year consultation, it is the parents' assessment of the child's language abilities which is the basis for the assessment. At the four-year consultation, the clinics can observe whether the children speak Norwegian or not, but the focus is on a suspicion of delay in overall language acquisition, not focused on Norwegian language skills for children with foreign-born parents (Norwegian Directorate of Health, 2021[16]). Herein, a lack of Norwegian might not be detected. Likewise, many pre-school institutions assess language proficiency, in 2019, around 80% of the institutions performed such checks (Fagerholt et al., 2020[17]), but again this is not mandatory nor standardised.

Under the current framework, it is not until primary education that educational institutions are systematically performing language proficiency assessments of students who have a mother tongue other than Norwegian or Sami on their Norwegian language skills. The assessments are conducted by first grade teachers and based on their own professional consideration. Since August 2016, the kindergartens and elementary schools have a joint responsibility to ensure children's safe and good transition from kindergarten to primary school. However, this obligation has not resulted in a systematic language screening prior to children's entry into elementary school.

Ensuring that all children have sufficient proficiency in the national language before starting primary school is key for ensuring that they have equal opportunities in the education system. In contrast to Norway, other OECD countries therefore have a systematic assessment of language proficiency in pre-school institutions. For example, in Denmark, every minority language speaking child is assessed both in kindergarten and thereafter upon admission to primary school. Children in the United Kingdom undergo a routine English language assessment at age two to three. A follow-up assessment is performed at the end of the 'Early Years Foundation Stage', which is usually the academic year in which children turn five. Hesse, in Germany, performs routine German language screenings in all ECEC institutions at the age of four. Where language difficulties are detected, children are referred to a follow-up screening at the public health department to consult with a paediatrician. Children with language difficulties receive one year of special support prior to entry into primary school in the form of a "preparation course" (*Vorlaufkurs*) (OECD, 2021[6]).

For institutions who need it, Norway offers extra support. In 2015, the majority (76%) of kindergartens reported that they had specific support and language stimulation in place for all children in need of this, including children with special needs and children with another mother tongue (Haugset, Dyblie and Haugum, 2015[18]). An earmarked grant is given to strengthen the development in the Norwegian language for minority language children in kindergarten. The grant is given to municipalities which meet the following two criteria: That at least 10 percent of the children in kindergartens in the municipality have another mother tongue than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish, or English, and that this group of children consists of at least 50 children. In 2020 the grant included 123 municipalities and 85 percent of all minority language children in kindergartens (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021[19]).

ECEC enrolment of immigrants' children has long-term educational benefits

In recent years, improving kindergarten attendance of children with immigrant parents has been a policy priority. The measures implemented have been successful, but kindergarten enrolment has still increased

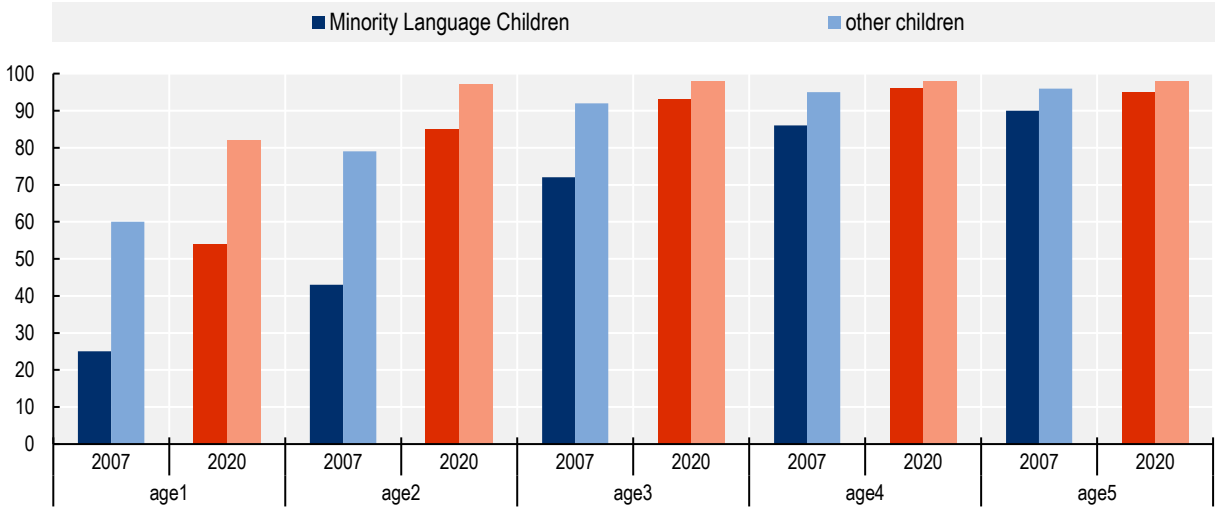
stronger among children of native-born parents than among children with immigrant parents. Between 2006 and 2016 the kindergarten enrolment rate of children aged 2 to 5 years increased from 75% to 81% for those with foreign-born parents and 70% to 90% for those with native-born parents. Overall, the kindergarten enrolment rate of children aged 2 to 5 years in Norway is higher than the OECD average (70%), it is similar to that in France (81%) or Austria (80%) but lower than enrolment in Finland (87%), Belgium (95%) and Spain (88%) (OECD/European Union, 2018[3]).

In 2020, 85% of the children speaking another language than Norwegian, Sami, Swedish, Danish, or English (hereinafter referred to as minority language children) aged 1 to 5 were enrolled in kindergarten. For other children the enrolment rate was 95%. Importantly, the remaining gap is driven by very young children although the enrolment rate for this group has increased substantially since 2007, as depicted in Figure 5.7.

Attending Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) benefits disadvantaged children, especially those with migrant parents. Impact analysis on children's' later performance in school suggests that 3 to 4 years of ECEC attendance results in the largest gains (Balladares and Kankaraš, 2020[20]). In Norway this implies that children at the age of 3, at the latest, should attend ECEC. As depicted in Figure 5.7, this was the case for 93% of minority language children in 2020, up from 72% in 2007.

Figure 5.7. Increase in ECEC enrolment has been strong for minority language children

Enrolment in ECEC by age and language spoken at home, 2007 and 2020



Source: Statistics Norway and Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (2022[21]), Migration and Integration 2020-21, https://www.regjeringen.no/en/dokumenter/migration-and-integration-20202021/id2898583/.

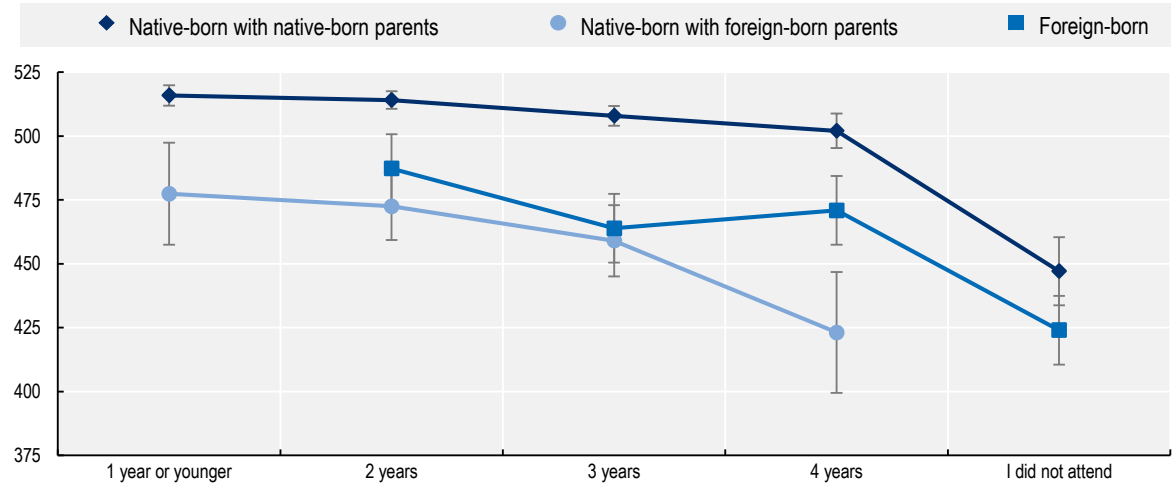
This data suggests that recent policy efforts in Norway including an introduction of a maximum fee for parents, a legal entitlement for all children to a place in a kindergarten, discounts for siblings, and free core hours for children aged 2-5 from families with the lowest incomes have been successful at increasing ECEC attendance, while keeping it voluntary. At the same time this information also needs to reach immigrant families (see below).

Accessible and comprehensive early childhood education and care (ECEC) has particularly positive effects on immigrant children's future educational performance (OECD, 2021[6]). Children of immigrants in Norway who have attended ECEC score higher in the PISA reading assessment, on average, than immigrant students who did not attend kindergarten. The age at which children first attend ECEC also matters.

Children born in Norway to immigrant parents who had joined kindergarten at age 4 had significantly lower reading scores at age 15 compared to both migrant children and native-born children of native-born parents, and their peers who joined earlier. Overall, earlier enrolment is correlated with better PISA reading scores outcomes for all children (Figure 5.8). Given the time-lags involved, the improvement (including in relative terms) in ECEC attendance as shown in the previous pages, can be expected to bear strong benefits for the educational outcomes in the coming years.

Figure 5.8. Joining ECEC has a strong impact on literacy for children of immigrants in Norway

PISA reading scores by age at which children started preschool, by own and parents place of birth, 2018



Note: Lines show results in PISA by age of starting ECEC with a 95% confidence interval.
Source: OECD (2018[2]), PISA 2018 Database, www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2018database/.

To boost early enrolment of minority language children, Norway has made several efforts. The Directorate for Education and Training's website provides information in over 20 languages (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019[22]). In addition, some municipalities have developed specific outreach programmes targeting immigrant families. By spring 2020 all municipalities were given access to fiscal statistics regarding household income, thus making it easier to grant low-income families the national schemes for lower parental fees in kindergartens. One of these schemes is a national subsidy for low-income families introduced in 2015, which ensure that the family doesn't pay more than 6% of their income for a full-time place in kindergarten, limited upwards by the general maximum parental fee limit. An earmarked grant was introduced in 2018 and is given to municipalities with 80 or more minority language children not attending kindergarten. The aim of the grant is to enhance the municipalities' work regarding information about and recruitment to kindergartens.

In Oslo, an earlier scheme offering subsidies for free kindergarten hours in five districts with high immigrant concentration were found to increase the enrolment of native-born children with immigrant parents (especially girls) by 11.5 percentage points. The intervention halved the attendance gap between children with immigrant parents and native-born parents (Drange and Telle, 2015[23]). A national scheme offering subsidies for 20 free kindergarten hours per week for all children from low-income families were therefore introduced in 2015 for 4- and 5-year-olds. The scheme was extended to include 3-year-olds in 2016, and 2-year-olds in 2019. The improvements in the uptake of early childhood education can be expected to result in better educational outcomes in the years to come.

Indeed, longitudinal studies in Norway have revealed positive effects of free childcare on participation and subsequent educational performance in fifth grade (Drange and Telle, 2015[23]; Bråten et al., 2014[24]; Drange, 2018[25]).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when kindergartens and schools were officially closed during spring 2020, they remained open for vulnerable children, among which many children of immigrants. Indeed, the contact with the Norwegian society and language is particularly important for children of immigrants, especially those who have low-educated parents with little Norwegian knowledge.

Cash-for-care benefits disincentives ECEC attendance

Parents may receive a cash-for-care benefit for children aged 13 to 23 months who do not attend kindergarten. For children who do not go to kindergarten, NOK 7 500 is paid per month. The payment is phased out according to the number of hours spent in kindergarten. Historically, immigrants have disproportionally obtained cash-for-care benefits in Norway. Between 2011 and 2015, cash-for-care benefits were paid for about 51% of children with native-born parents aged between 1 and 2,compared to 68% of children with foreign-born parents (Lima, Arntsen and Rudlende, 2020[26]). In the past, the subsidy accounted for a substantial part of the aggregate income of immigrant women from countries such as Somalia, Iraq, Morocco, and Pakistan but had a negligible importance on the income of native-born (Liebig, 2009[27]).

To encourage recently arrived immigrants to send their children to kindergarten and promote the labour market integration of immigrant mothers, Norway restricted access to cash-for-care benefits in 2017. Eligibility was now tied to the membership in Norway´s National Insurance Scheme for a minimum of five years, subsequently excluding recent immigrants and newcomers. The change has led to some decline in cash-for-care beneficiaries among immigrants – while in 2016, 43% of all beneficiaries had been immigrants, that numbers went down to a little over a third in 2020.

Early research suggested that the introduction of the cash-for-care subsidy in 1998 may have decreased the labour supply of immigrant women from non-OECD countries by up to 12%, compared to 4% among native-born. The difference between the two groups was partly driven by the already lower employment and activity rates and consequently lower incomes among the immigrant recipients. The reduction in labour supply due to incentives by the allowance was strongest among the already unemployed and inactive mothers, whereas the subsidy had largely no effect on the labour market supply of women who were already active before the reform (Hardoy and Schøne, 2010[28]).

It appears that the benefit is still predominantly used by low-income households and the unemployed. As figures from 2018 show, 68% of the immigrant mothers were out of work when receiving the benefit, compared to 54% among the native-born. Since kindergarten attendance results in a loss of the cash-for-care subsidy, children in recipient families have a lower kindergarten attendance rate (Sandvik and Gram, 2019[29]).

While the new residence restriction led to some decline in immigrant beneficiaries, there is no evidence that it has achieved its objective of increasing labour market participation (Lima, Arntsen and Rudlende, 2020[26]). The reason may just be that among those rendered ineligible by the reform, many already struggled to enter the labour market and were either unemployed or/and participated in labour market support measures.

The incentives for families to send young children to kindergarten are reduced by the expenses associated with attendance. In 2021, the maximum fee for full-time kindergarten attendance was NOK 3 230 (EUR 330) per month. Kindergartens may charge families for additional expenses on top of the maximum monthly fee. This concerns mainly extra charges for food expenses, which may vary significantly. The cash-for-care benefit is therefore almost twice as large as the monthly costs associated with kindergarten. Although there are various fee reductions for low-income families, as described above, the cash-for-care

benefit nonetheless disincentives the kindergarten attendance of young children. In the past, up to 4 in 10 immigrant families who were entitled to the support actually took it up (Moafi, 2017[30]). To reduce this number, Norway recently enhanced information and outreach efforts to inform immigrant families about fee-reduction measures.

Integration into the primary and secondary education system

Children of immigrants face particular challenges when integrating into the school system. These often include speaking another language than Norwegian at home as well as fewer parental guidance and support to navigate through the system. Norway supports children of immigrants in integrating and succeeding in the educational system via targeted measures.

The education system focusses on "adapted education", in which ordinary classroom education should adjust to the needs of individual student. The education system also strives to achieve universal equity which can be particularly helpful for immigrant students. Measures include a longer period of compulsory education, delayed tracking, and school choice. Compulsory education begins at age 6 and ends at age 16. Students are first tracked into different educational pathways based on interest and partly on performance at the age of 16.

Norway offers specific support for newly arrived students

All children, including asylum seekers, who will remain in Norway for more than three months have the right to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education. Newly arrived immigrant children are either placed directly in an ordinary class corresponding to their age and receive extra hours in Norwegian language training and if necessary, they are also entitled to mother tongue instruction, bilingual subject teaching, or both or in some cases start in a specific introductory class, the so-called introduction offer. The placement depends on the resources of the municipality and the county. The introductory class is a special language programme divided into separate groups, classes or schools and may last for up to two years. A decision may only be made for one year at a time. The goal is to prepare new students as quickly as possible to follow ordinary classes (NOKUT, 2021[31]).

Postponing teaching of the curriculum until students master the language of instruction is however controversial and an assessment of the scheme in Norway found that schools as well as parents and their children value a quick transition to mainstream classes (Rambøll, 2016[32]). While students are allowed to stay in the special classes for up to two years, schools have often limited the offer to one year. Specific introductory classes are mainly used by upper secondary schools, while primary schools provide additional language training in combination with the ordinary curriculum. National data on the outcomes of those enrolled in special language training are missing. A 2016 survey indicates however that one year is enough for most students but not always sufficient for students with little previous schooling (Rambøll, 2016[32]).

Since 2016, counties and municipalities may offer more education on primary school level to students who lack the prerequisite skills to complete upper secondary education. There is no data on how many immigrants are offered this opportunity nor if the efforts have been successful in terms of the students' later performance in upper secondary school. The offer is not mandatory, so students may decline it and still be eligible to enter upper secondary education.

In other countries, later school leaving is used to mitigate the negative effects of late arrival. In New Zealand, late arrivals can remain in secondary education beyond the age of 19. The German state of Bavaria raised the compulsory age for vocational schools from 18 to 21, and in individual cases up to 25 (OECD, 2021[6]). Between 2017 and 2019, Norwegian schools could receive grants from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) for providing primary schooling to immigrant youth aged 16 to 24 years

with short period of residence in Norway. From 2020, the responsibility for allocating and financing the scheme has been transferred to the counties (Høgestøl and Skutlaberg, 2019[33]).

In addition to offering targeted support in regular education institutions, some countries have developed specific "catch-up programmes" for recently arrived migrant students as an alternative to mainstream education. For example, the "Newcomer Schools Program" in the United States targets recent adolescent migrants with low levels of literacy, previous schooling, or English proficiency. Based on repeated English language assessments, the programme provides one to three years of first language development and second language instruction, lessons in core academic subjects, leisure time activities, and skills development for self-directed study, career counselling, and an "email buddies" scheme linking newcomers with students from local mainstream schools.

Language support is widespread but quality unclear

All primary and upper secondary students from language minorities have the right to special language training. This means that the student either follows the regular school curriculum but with slight adjustments in terms of the language level of instruction or follow a specific curriculum for students with basic Norwegian. Students may also be offered special mother tongue or bilingual instruction in addition to regular school hours.

An evaluation of the language support however indicates that mother tongue and bilingual instruction is offered to a lesser extent and mainly depends on the resources of school. An evaluation also showed that in 2016, 7% of all students in primary education received special language training (Rambøll, 2016[32]). Students with a right to special language training also have a right to spend two additional years in upper secondary school. The training ends when the student has reached a "sufficient" level of proficiency in Norwegian, allowing him or her to follow the normal instruction of the school. However, no national formal language level defines what constitutes 'sufficient proficiency' and it is up to the school and individual teachers to decide. The language level at which students lose their right to special training may therefore vary, and subsequently their ability to follow ordinary training. Earlier evidence of challenges in mapping the language proficiency of students have also been reported. In a 2016 evaluation of the services provided under special language training, schools reported difficulties in assessing what level of Norwegian constitutes 'sufficient proficiency' to follow regular training (Rambøll, 2016[32]). The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training has therefore developed a new, digital tool for mapping Norwegian skills, available to municipalities and teacher from January 2021. The results of the new digital tools remain to be seen. Regular follow-ups on the educational performance could complement the digital tool followed by further educational support to students who have completed special language training.

To better meet the needs of children with another mother tongue than Norwegian, public policy has in recent years focused on improving the competences of teachers in second language training and multicultural pedagogy as well as developing tools to help schools and kindergartens map the language proficiency of immigrant children (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2015[34]). There are however, no official competence requirements for teachers in special language training. In a survey covering 1 500 schools, only one in four (24%) teachers who taught students in special language training had an education in Norwegian as a second language (Rambøll, 2016[32]) Training in multicultural pedagogy and cultural diversity is, however, a mandatory component of the teacher programme.

As stated, the scope and content of the additional language support should be adapted to individual needs. Still, the design and delivery of support is up to the resources of municipalities and school. Assessments show that the scope, quality, and type of language support therefore varies (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2010[35]; Rambøll, 2016[32]; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2014[36]). Schools have reported difficulty in finding competent teachers such as bilingual teachers. This is particularly the case in smaller municipalities which must often rely on officials who carry out a wide variety of duties, rarely with specific competence in special language training (Rambøll, 2016[32]).Guaranteeing the teaching competence among teachers for minority

language students is key, given the increasing number of youths with migrant parents. Imposing specific formal teaching requirements is one solution, another is supporting schools and municipalities with resources to hire teacher with the right qualifications. One recent initiative that can help to address the lack of bilingual teachers is the project Flexible education. The project provides online bilingual teaching in mathematics and sciences in Arabic, Somali and Tigrinya for newly arrived students who have difficulties in following ordinary teaching due to lack of Norwegian skills. While physically-present bilingual teachers are preferred, an evaluation has found that systematic use of online training has been successful in improving students' learning outcomes. The project has therefore been made permanent and discussion are ongoing on expanding to more subjects (Nilssen Haave, Liland Hartveit and Randen, 2019[37]).

Lack of skills is identified too late

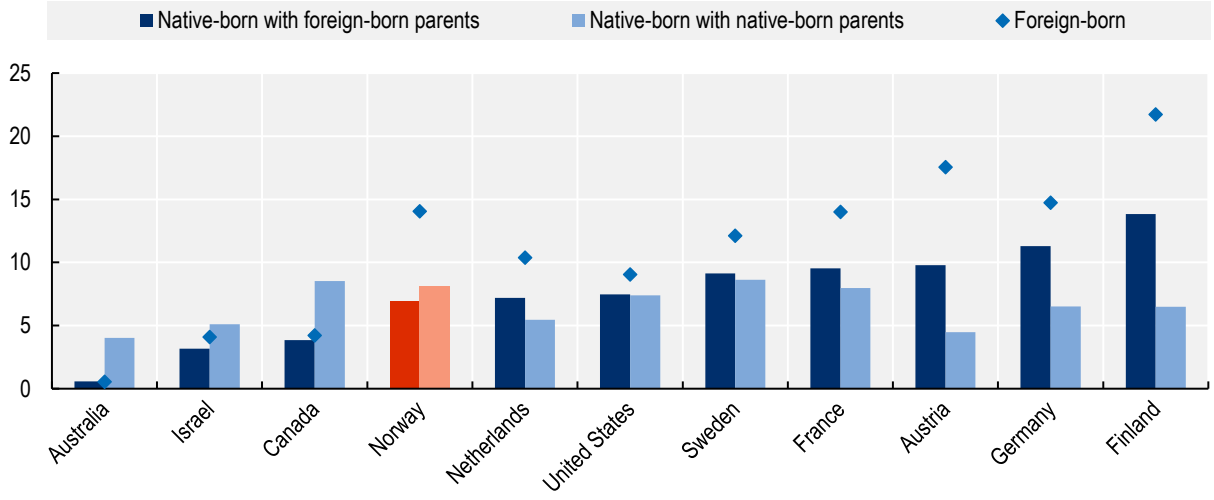
All students who have completed primary school have a legal right to pursue three years of upper-secondary education, regardless of their grades in primary school. Still, the grades in primary school are closely correlated with students' probability of successfully completing upper secondary school.

Looking at the average primary school outcomes, both immigrants and native-born students to immigrant parents achieve slightly lower grades than the overall average (39 and 42 points versus the average of 43 points in 2021). The risk of dropping out of upper secondary school is highest among those with grades below 30 points. Among those with grades below 30 points, 24% had foreign-born parents.

The share of early school leavers in Norway is relatively high among immigrants who arrived in Norway before the age of 15 (14%), but low for those born in Norway to native-born (8%), and to immigrant parents (7%) (Figure 5.9). The share is lowest among Norwegian-born youth with two EU-born parents at 4%. In 2018, the drop-out rates of children born outside EU were almost three times as high as for those EU-born children (15% versus 5%) (OECD/European Union, 2018[3]).

Figure 5.9. Early school leaving is mainly a concern among young immigrants

Percent of 15- to 24-year-olds neither in school nor training, who have gone no further than lower-secondary school, by place of birth and parents' place of birth, 2020



Source OECD/European Union (forthcoming[4]), *Settling In 2023: Indicators of Immigrant Integration*.

Students who are missing lower secondary school points due to absence or poor performance can still enter upper secondary education based on an individual assessment, but the share who attends upper secondary education is low and among them only a few complete. Among those that started upper secondary education in 2014 with no primary grades only 23% graduated within the standard time and 28% dropped out (SSB, 2021[38]).

The share of students with missing lower secondary school points has increased from around 3% in 2007 to 6% in 2020 (SSB, 2021[39]). The rise is partly driven by the increase of new arrivals in Norway. In 2020, respectively 16% and 13% of all 16-year-old immigrant boys and girls were without primary school credits. Among the native-born boys to immigrant parents the share was 8%; slightly higher than for boys born to native-born parents and native-born girls with immigrant parents (5%). COVID-19 restrictions risk exacerbating the existing gap between children of immigrant parents and their peers born to natives (Box 5.2).

Box 5.2. COVID-19 restriction risk widening the educational performance gap between children in immigrant and native-born families further

School closings, the shift to online classes and other limitations in the school system due to the COVID-19 pandemic are expected to have especially harmful effects on immigrant youths and children. In Norway, schools and kindergartens were closed nine weeks in the beginning of the pandemic. For Norwegian students in primary school, each week of school closing meant a loss of 23 hours of face-to-face compulsory instruction time.

Recent findings from the Netherlands show that the shift to distance learning led to an overall learning loss, with more severe consequences for children in disadvantaged homes. Children with immigrant parents are not only overrepresented among poorer households but are also more often living in smaller homes making it more difficult to study at home. Weaker access to educational support from parents due to poorer language skills is another factor exacerbating the groups' disadvantage.

To which degree the pandemic has impacted on educational performance of children of immigrants in Norway is not clear. However, the share of youths not in employment, education or training increased by an average of 1 percentage point in European countries. In Norway it increased by 0.5 points, however the NEET rates among foreign-born youths increased from 11 to 13%.

Source: (Engzell, Frey and Verhagen, 2021[40]; OECD, 2020[41]; Eurostat, 2021[42]).

Succeeding in upper secondary education

As elsewhere, the completion of upper secondary school is key in succeeding on the Norwegian labour market. While upper secondary education is required to enter higher education, its completion also has higher labour market returns (Dagsvik, Hageland and Raknerus, 2011[43]). Several recent educational initiatives aimed to increase the completion of upper secondary school to 90% in 2030 and create an education system that better prepares students for the labour market and higher education (Box 5.3). Among the proposed changes students will more time to complete upper secondary education as well as a right to an apprenticeship – both likely to benefit children with immigrant parents, who often struggle to complete their education in standard time and to find an apprenticeship placement, as discussed in the following.

Box 5.3. The reform of Upper Secondary Education

In March 2021, the Norwegian Government proposed a reform of upper secondary education – Fullføringsreformen – med åpne dører til verden og fremtiden (*The completion reform – with open doors to the world and the future*). If implemented, the reform will be the biggest change to upper secondary education since 1994. The reform includes a set of measures to ensure that all students are entitled to education, until they have passed a vocational certificate or qualification for higher studies.

Proposed measures

- All students in upper secondary education shall have the right to complete their education irrespective of age and how long it takes. Today students are entitled to three years of full-time upper secondary education. The current right applies until students turn 24 years old. The government proposed that these restrictions are removed.
- The right to completion will create an obligation on schools and the municipalities to systematically work to help students who are at the risk of failing a subject.
- The compulsory core subjects in upper secondary education should be reduced to Norwegian, English, Mathematics and a new subject aimed at "preparing students for the future". The exact content of the new subject is yet to be decided. Reducing the number of core courses will, according to the government, allow students to spend more time on subjects that are more suitable for their future goals.
- The reform plans to introduce a right to an apprenticeship or an equivalent offer. In cases where a student does not receive an apprenticeship, they should be enrolled in further education for two years.
- All that are enrolled or have completed their upper secondary education, regardless of the study track, should have the possibility to start a vocational education. This responds to the rigid structure of today, where students have no right to obtain more than one vocational certificate. Hence, students enrolled in the general study track currently do not have the possibility to change the path and obtain vocational education.

Source: (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2021[44])

Upper secondary completion rates continue to be low for some groups

In 2019, 17% of young people aged between 25 and 34 had not completed upper-secondary education, which puts Norway above the OECD average of 15. While upper-secondary non-completion is on the decline across the OECD, Norway is the only country with comparable data for 2009 and 2019 where the share of young adults without upper secondary education has increased (OECD, 2020[45]).

In the cohort of 2014-20, less than one in two foreign-born students successfully completed upper secondary education in the standard time (45%). When including those who were able to finish upper secondary in more than the standard time, the share increases to 62%. For the native-born to immigrant parents, the corresponding shares were 65% in standard time and 78% with extended time, while among students born to native parents they were 69% and 82% respectively. The drop-out rates are highest among the foreign-born (20%), and about the same for the native-born to immigrant parents as for their peers to native-born parents at 8.5%. The difference between the native-born groups widens however when looking at pupils who have completed upper secondary education but failed the final examination.

Across all education programmes, native-borns to immigrant parents are twice as likely to have failed the final examination compared with their peers born to native-born parents (8% versus 4%) (SSB, 2021[46]).

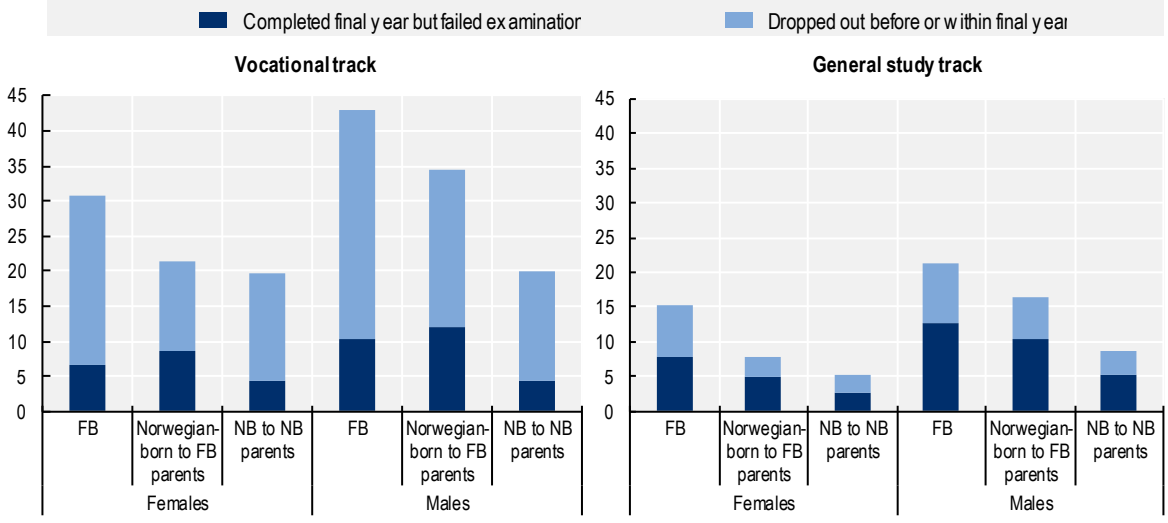
Immigrant boys in vocational education programmes have especially high drop-out rates

Irrespective of educational track and parents' country of birth, boys are at a higher risk of dropping out of upper secondary education. One in four immigrant men drop out of upper secondary education, while one in ten children with immigrant or native parentage does not complete upper secondary education. The drop-out rates among immigrant girls are more than twice compared to their native-born peers: 16% for foreign-born, 5% for offspring of immigrants and 7% for native-born to native-born parents (SSB, 2021[46]).

Drop-out rates are higher for students in vocational education programs than in the general study programmes. While rates are higher for boys than for girls regardless of parentage, it is interesting to note that the differences are much more pronounced among boys with immigrant parentage (Figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10. Four out of ten immigrant men in vocational track drop out or fail the final exam

Percentages of drop out and failed final examination in upper secondary education, by education programme, own and parental place of birth, 2014-20 cohort



Note: FB =foreign-born; NB = native-born.
Source: OECD Secretariat based on data from SSB (2021[46]), 12969: Gjennomføring i videregående opplæring, etter fullføringsgrad, todelt utdanningsprogram, kjønn og innvandringskategori 2006-12 – 2014-20. Statistikkbanken, https://www.ssb.no/statbank/table/12969/.

There are several complex reason for why a person decides to drop-out of school. For immigrant youth, age at immigration is important. The drop-out rates are highest for the youth with short residence in Norway. Among migrant men with 3-5 years of residence in Norway, the drop-out rate from vocational education in the 2014-20 cohort was 39%, compared with 25% for those with more than 10 years of residence (SSB, 2021[47]).

As mentioned, the threshold to enter upper secondary education is low. All students who completed primary education irrespective of grades, have a statutory right to upper secondary education. Still, past academic performance is the strongest predictor for students´ upper secondary education. Overall, more students with lower performance in primary education enter vocational programmes.

The current vocational educational model consists of two years in school followed by a two-year apprenticeship. One important reason why students choose the vocational track is a preference for a more applied approach.

Student who are not admitted to their preferred study programme and/or are dissatisfied with their programme are also more likely to drop out. Overall, students with immigrant parents report higher degrees of discontent with their educational programme choice and more difficulties in choosing a programme (Frøyland and Gjerustad, 2012[48]). Supporting students with immigrant parents to make informed educational choices could be particularly effective in preventing them from dropping out.

While all students have access to early career guidance and counselling services in Norway, there are no specific initiatives that target students with migrant parents like in Denmark or Austria. Since 2003, Denmark has been running the "We Need All Youngsters" campaign to support 13-20 year-old youths with migrant parents to complete their education. The campaign is centred on enhancing professional, social and personal skills through homework assistance, role models, internships, and fairs informing about available VET opportunities. The Austrian programme 'Integration Ambassadors` encourages successful young migrants to become ambassadors of integration and visiting schools and associations to motivate other youths with migrant parents to see higher education as an opportunity (OECD, 2021[6]).

Youth with migrant parents face difficulties in securing an apprenticeship placement

Despite increases in apprenticeship offers over recent years, 24% of those who applied for an apprenticeship in 2020 were not accepted (Norwegian Directorate of Education, 2021[49]). Immigrants and, in particular, native-born men with immigrant parents face great difficulties in securing an apprenticeship. Less than three in five young men with migrant parents were able to find an apprenticeship in 2017/2018. Somewhat surprisingly, shares are even lower among native-born men with migrant parents than among their foreign-born peers (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Men with migrant parents struggle to get an apprenticeship contract

Percent of applicants who received an apprenticeship contract, by own and parental country of birth and gender, 2017 and 2018 average

	Foreign-born	Native-born to immigrant parents	Native-born to native-born parents
Total	62%	62%	78%
Men	58%	57%	78%
Women	70%	75%	79%

Source: Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2019[50]), What impact does immigrant background have on the chances of getting an apprenticeship?, https://www.udir.no/tall-og-forskning/statistikk/statistikk-fag-og-yrkesopplaring/analyser/hvilken-betydning-har-innvandrerbakgrunn-for-sjansene-for-a-fa-lareplass/.

The fact that youth with migrant parents struggle more to secure an apprenticeship is concerning, as getting a placement gives a big boost to the further education and employment prospects. Among immigrants 80% of those that secured an apprenticeship were in employment nine years after completion of upper secondary school, compared to 70% for those that did not get an apprenticeship. The corresponding share was 81% and 73% for the native-born with immigrant parents and 87% and 77% for those with native-born parents (Bratholmen and Ekren, 2020[51]).

Recent research has shown that employers screen potential apprentices according to grades and absenteeism in school. Students who get an apprenticeship have on average 4 percentage points less absence and 8 more grade points than students who did not get an apprenticeship (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2018[52]). Even when controlling for differences in grades and absence, areas in which immigrant students frequently lag behind their peers, boys with migrant parents still face greater challenges in finding an apprenticeship. A recent study suggested that boys born in Norway to immigrant parents have, on average, a 12-percentage point lower probability of getting a contract compared to other native-born boys after controlling for grades, absenteeism and parental education (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2019[53]). The gap remains due to a lack of networks and support during the application process, or discriminatory hiring practices (see Chapter 4). Indeed, research from Norway has shown that identical job applications with a Pakistani instead of Norwegian sounding name were 25% less likely to receive an invitation to a job interview (Birkelund et al., 2014[54]) Attention on what employers can do to address discrimination has recently been an issue of discussion.

The government provides subsidies to apprenticeship suppliers. The subsidies are in general not differentiated, but companies can receive extra grants for apprentices with special training needs e.g. due to short residence periods and weak Norwegian skills. However, it seems rarely used in this context. In 2017, only 2% of the companies that received this grant did so for hiring an apprentice with a short period of residence in Norway. A better targeting and potential extension of the subsidy scheme could be considered in this context.

Mentorship programmes can support immigrant youth in finding an apprenticeship

Research from Norway indicate that students who find apprenticeships often benefit from their father´s networks and labour market contacts (Lødding, 2009[55]). A survey by the Norwegian Employment Services further showed that four out of ten companies did not publicly announce vacancies in 2017, but instead relied on their network and other informal recruitment channels (NAV, 2017[56]). This puts students with immigrant parents at disadvantage as they often have less access to networks and resources than their peers with native-born parents (OECD, 2021[6]). Mentorship programmes could support students with immigrant parents to leverage their own networks to overcome resource and information asymmetries. An earlier contact with employers through an earlier start of apprenticeship training could also help students get valuable contacts and expand their network.

In Norway, the scale and scope of mentorship- and other networking programmes has expanded in recent years, but still remains limited, especially for youths with only upper secondary education. Youth over 22 years of age may apply for a mentor through the Norwegian Employment Service. The offer is thus not specifically tailored to immigrants and is only offered to those already taking part in active labour markets measures such as work-training, education or wage subsidies and are in need for extra support to carry out those measures. Data from NAV shows that in 2020, 350 individuals got a mentor through this scheme. Parents place of birth is not identifiable in this data, but age and own place of birth. Half of the group that received a mentor via NAV programmes in 2020 were foreign-born but only 40% are under the age of 30. What is more, among young people under the age of 30 who received a mentor, 90% were born in Norway. Hence, among the 350 individuals in total, only 5% were young foreign-born. Compared to 2016-18 this share decreased from 8%. Overall, this scheme is more used by older immigrants for reasons that are not clear. Mentorship is a relatively low-cost and effective intervention to reach immigrant youth. The successful community-based mentorship programmes could be further expanded (Box 5.4).

Box 5.4. Fostering relationships of trust and positive development between offspring of migrant parents and university students

"Nightingale" is a community-based mentorship programme for young immigrants and the native-born with immigrant parents. The programme provides the offspring of migrant parents in primary school with a mentor enrolled at university. In weekly meetings during the school year, mentors work towards improving the child's proficiency in Norwegian, increase their school motivation and self-esteem, with the long-term objective of motivating the child to pursue higher education. The scheme was first implemented in Sweden in 1997 and came to Norway in 2008. An evaluation of the first five years, with around 900 participants, found that the programme was successful in compensating for gaps in learning environments at home. Four out of ten children improved their language skills, and more than half improved their social skills. One reason for the success is that the mentorship programme is a part of the university's student ordinary degree. To extend the reach of the programme, integrating it into more university's degrees would be of help.

Source: Jessen, Gundersen and Hynek (2018[57]), Evaluering av Nattergalen-en oppfølgingsstudie, www.hioa.no/nova.

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6. Integration of refugees from Ukraine in Norway

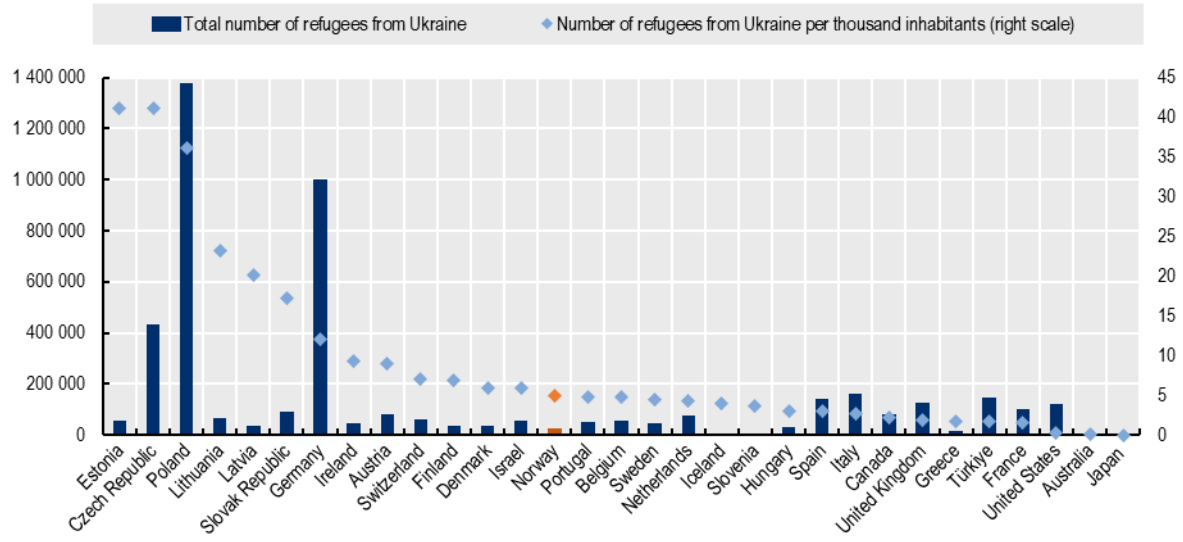
This chapter focuses on the integration of refugees from Ukraine in Norway, following the unprovoked large-scale aggression of Russia against Ukraine. It first outlines the context for integration of this group, including their legal status, their socio-demographics, and the previous diaspora presence of Ukrainians in Norway. It proceeds by outlining the policy response. Norway reacted swiftly in upscaling its reception system, including registration, housing, and settlement. In contrast to other Nordic countries with similar systems, Norway provides full access to available integration programmes. It also undertook systemic changes for this specific group, such as easier skills recognition and support for learning English during the Introduction Programme.

Context

The unprovoked large-scale aggression of Russia against Ukraine since 24 February 2022 has generated a historical movement of people fleeing, unseen in Europe since the World War II. By mid-October, the UNHCR had recorded 4.2 million refugees[1] from Ukraine registered for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes in Europe. By means of comparison, it took two years to reach 3 million Syrian refugees. While the neighbouring countries of Ukraine have received most of the refugees, high numbers have also found refuge in other OECD countries, including Norway. While flows to Norway have been well below those reported elsewhere, both in absolute terms and relative to the population (Figure 6.1), they are the most significant inflows of refugees in Norwegian history. In relative terms, numbers so far are also slightly higher than in Sweden.

Figure 6.1. Neighbouring countries of Ukraine have received the majority of the refugees

Registrations from Ukraine for temporary protection or similar national protection schemes, mid-September 2022



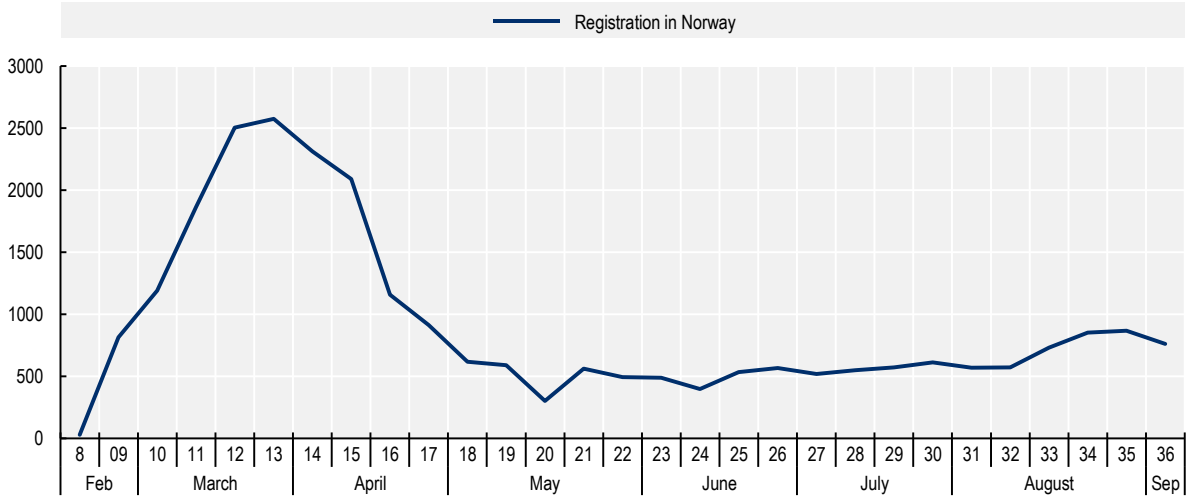
Source: Adjusted from OECD (2022[1]), *International Migration Outlook 2022*, https://doi.org/10.1787/30fe16d2-en.

The current crisis differs from earlier situations in many ways. This includes the high share of fleeing children and women, and the related high incidence of family separation. It is not clear if male partners will join their families in host countries. Together with the current uncertainty, this makes it difficult to assess the social and economic impact of the crisis as well as its duration. Nevertheless, many countries including Norway managed to respond swiftly to the new situation by issuing a set of policy changes to their migration and integration system. This chapter provides an overview of the policy changes in Norway as an immediate response to the aggression.

Inflows of refugees from Ukraine to Norway

Figure 6.2 Arrivals from Ukraine peaked in the first months

Weekly registrations in Norway, Feb-Sep 2022



Source: Data from Norway from Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, September 2022.

By mid-October 2022, close to 30 000 persons from Ukraine had applied for temporary protection in Norway, of whom half women (over 14 000) and slightly under 10 000 children (Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI), 2022[2]). The number is thus already at par with the 30 000 asylum seekers registered in the previous record year 2015. Over the first months, Norway received fewer applicants per month than Sweden, Denmark and Finland, but since July the numbers arriving in Norway have been higher, at least compared to Sweden and Denmark. Registrations in July and August 2022 have also been higher than in the previous two months.

In April, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) started to develop three scenarios estimating the future arrivals of refugees from Ukraine. The scenarios consider different parameters and result in planning levels of high, middle and low arrivals of refugees from Ukraine as well as a planning level. The latest update of the scenarios from mid-October recommended the municipalities and authorities to prepare for the middle scenario. The planning level suggested that around 40 000 Ukrainians will come to Norway in 2022 and additional 30 000 in 2023 (Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI), 2022[3]). This is a significantly higher number than the Directorate's preparation for settling a total of 5 500 refugees from across the globe in 2022, before the invasion – and highlights the need for rapid scale-up of Norway's reception and integration system (IMDi, 2022[4]).

Legal status

Prior to the war, Ukrainian nationals who were holders of valid biometric passports benefited from visa-free travel allowing them to enter Norway without an entry visa, and stay for up to 90 days within 180 days.

On 24 February 2022, Norway suspended the exit obligation, allowing Ukrainian citizens who were in Norway on permits or visa-free visits set to expire to remain until further notice. On the same day, Ukrainian asylum seekers were also taken out of the 48-hour procedure. This is the process where applicants from

countries that, in the opinion of the Directorate of Immigration (UDI), are considered as generally safe and where the application for asylum will be processed and rejected within 48 hours.

Whilst Norway is not bound by the EU's Temporary Protection Directive, the government announced on 4 March 2022, it would mirror the EU's decision in offering temporary collective protection to all Ukrainian citizens who had fled Ukraine after 24 February 2022. From 11 March, individuals received temporary collective protection with a valid permit for one year. Protection was also granted to other third country nationals and stateless persons who have had international or national protection in Ukraine and those who are close relatives of the mentioned groups (Office of the Prime Minister, 2022[5]). The changes included an exemption from the rule of individual assessment, which allows protection of an entire group of people. The last time this was done in Norway was during the Kosovo crisis in the late 1990s. At the end of April 2022, Norway extended the temporary collective protection scheme for displaced people from Ukraine. Ukrainian citizens who were in Norway before 24 February could also receive collective protection.

The residence permit Ukrainians hold is valid for one year, but contrary to other humanitarian permits, this duration cannot count towards a permanent residence (which usually requires 5 years). The collective protection permit can be renewed twice, so be granted for three years in total. Thereafter, it is possible to apply for protection or another type of residence on individual grounds (work, family, education).

In most OECD countries, a change of status is possible. In Australia and Canada, an application for another permit (including for permanent residence) can be lodged after a certain time from the expiration of the previous status. In several EU countries, shifting from temporary protection to employment-based or family status is permitted, subject to eligibility criteria.

Socio-demographics of new arrivals

As in other OECD countries, arrivals from Ukraine to Norway were predominantly women with children but also a high share of elderly. Until mid-October, 29% of arrivals from Ukraine to Norway were at most 15 years of age, 19% between 16 and 29 and 11% above 60 years. Overall, 78% of working aged (20-59 years) arrivals from Ukraine were women (Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI), 2022[3]). The demographics of registrations in Norway are thus similar to those of other European countries like France, Greece or Spain where one-third of recorded arrivals were children. In contrast half of registrations in neighbouring countries such as Poland and Moldova were children (OECD, 2022[6]; OECD, 2022[7]).

The limited information currently available on the level of education of Ukrainian refugees to the OECD suggests that a higher share of them is tertiary educated than among other refugee groups. What is more, refugees from Ukraine seem to be higher educated than the general Ukrainian working-age population, among which 56% of the women and 43% of the men were tertiary educated in 2020. Some OECD countries have also reported that the initial arrival cohorts who came in March and April had a higher education level then those arriving in later months (OECD, 2022[7]).

Data on the group's educational level in Norway has not yet been published. Preliminary findings from the EUAA-OECD Survey of Arriving Migrants from Ukraine (SAM-UKR) show that 71% of respondents who gave information about their educational background stated a tertiary education. Likewise, a survey of Ukrainian refugees in Germany in mid-March found that 73% of adults had tertiary education, this figure was 61% of registered adult Ukrainian refugees in Spain.

Diaspora presence

The Ukrainian-born population in Norway before the war was relatively small and counted to around 6 500 persons in the beginning of February 2022. Among them 3 000 were Ukrainian citizens and thereby eligible for the protection scheme, the remaining 43% of them had Norwegian citizenship. Before the crisis, Ukraine was the 35th most common country of birth among immigrants in Norway and only about 0.8% of Norway's

foreign-born population was born in Ukraine (Statistics Norway, 2022[8]). This contrasts with a large diaspora presence of Ukrainians across the EU, where they were representing the third-largest group of third-country nationals at the end of 2020, after those from Morocco and Türkiye (OECD, 2022[9]).

The majority of the Ukrainian-born living in Norway prior to the war were young and female, 60% under 40 years old and 70% were women. Most of them had come to Norway for family formation and other family reasons (60%), thereafter for work (20%) and education (20%) (Dzamarija, Sørlien Molstad and Østby, 2022[10]).

Policy response

Scale-up of Norway's reception system

Police registration and digital ID

Norway has since the onset of Russia's war against Ukraine made efforts to simplify the registration and settlement process. This has contributed to ensuring a faster processing and settlement of refugees. On 12 March, Norway decentralised its asylum registration to ensure that asylum seekers can register throughout the country. In addition to registering at the National Arrivals Centre in Råde, the National Police Immigration Service was expanded to register asylum seekers at several locations in eight police districts – Agder, Southwestern, Western, Møre og Romsdal, Trøndelag, Nordland, Troms and Finnmark. While Ukrainians can stay in Norway for 90 days without registration, Norway encouraged arrivals to register so the Norwegian authorities know who is in the country.

Registered individuals received a temporary identification number. The Norwegian Digitalisation agency (Digdir) set up an electronic ID scheme which allows refugees from Ukraine to quickly use public services, such as health care and a digital mailbox (Digdir, 2022[11]). This is a new arrangement with potential benefit for all future refugees.

Housing

In order to house the large number of individuals fleeing Ukraine as quickly as possible, more than half of EU and other OECD countries have relied, at least initially, upon the willingness of private citizens to host these refugees in their homes. This is also true for Norway, where early evidence suggest that around half of those who have fled Ukraine to Norway have found shelter in private accommodation. While the share is larger than for earlier inflows in Norway, it is lower than in some OECD countries for which data is available. In Finland and Latvia, for example the share of displaced persons in private accommodation is around two-thirds, while in Belgium and Italy it is around 85%-90% (OECD, 2022[9]).

Due to the rise in new arrivals, UDI has as of 1st of June set up 85 new emergency accommodation centres across the country, housing 20 000 refugees (UDI, 2022[12]). The quick set-up was made possible due to simplified rules concerning the construction and running of accommodation centres (Regjeringen.no, 2022[13]). The centres are temporary and will be dismantled as soon as the refugees are offered settlement or a place in a more permanent asylum reception centre.

Individuals fleeing from Ukraine with family members in Norway and those who found private accommodation can stay in these places and do not need to relocate to an asylum centre or the newly opened emergency accommodation centres. Amendments allow municipalities in these cases to be reimbursed for the costs of these Ukrainian refugees who choose to live in private homes, outside the asylum reception system (UDI, 2022[14]).

Settlement

By the beginning of October 2022, among those 25 000 that had received temporary collective protection, over half, around 19 000 had been settled in a municipality. The rest are waiting to be settled and are either staying in a private accommodation or an asylum centre. On average, individuals have waited approximately one month after being granted collective protection until they are settled. This is a considerable faster settlement than in previous years. In comparison, the average waiting time was approximately five months over the years 2016-18, and a bit over 3 months in 2019.

According to IMDI, all municipalities have shown a strong willingness to adapt for and accept the unexpected higher numbers of new arrivals (IMDI, 2022[15]). Based on the request from IMDI, the municipalities have said they can settle close to 36 000 refugees in 2022, a much higher figure than the initial request to settle 5 500, before the invasion.

The settlement process for Ukrainian refugees initially differed somewhat from the ordinary procedure (Sveen and Bakken, 2022[16]). During the first weeks the mapping only included gathering information on family relationships, possible networks in Norway, needs for special facilitation (such as wheelchairs) and pets. Normally, humanitarian migrants are moved from the reception facilities to municipalities that match their professional and educational profile. However, in contrast to other groups of asylum seekers, the mapping of refugees with temporary collective protection is not mandatory before settlement. Instead, this group only has a right to such mapping after settlement in the municipality. While this provision allowed speeding up the settlement process, it also meant that initially the settlement placement did not consider the individual refugee's needs and competencies, increasing the risk of an incorrect settlement. Since the end of May 2022, however, mapping also includes information on education and previous occupation (Regjeringen.no, 2022[17]).

Supporting municipalities

Just like in the ordinary settlement procedure, all municipalities receive an integration grant for every refugee from Ukraine they settle – the grant shall cover the additional expenditure the municipalities have for the settlement and integration work for the first and following four years. In 2022, the grant for the first year of settlement ranged between NOK 190 000 and NOK 234 900 depending on the refugees age and background.

However, due to the lower numbers of arrivals over the past years it was not expected that all municipalities accept to settle refugees. This meant that at the beginning of the aggression, many municipalities were not ready to settle new arrivals, and given the uncertainty in arriving numbers, municipalities could not be sure if they would actually receive refugees even if they stepped up, invested and prepared for a potential arrival and signalled that to UDI.

To incentivise municipalities to welcome and settle the many new arrivals, the government decided that all municipalities will be compensated for their efforts to build-up and strengthen their settlement capacity, even in cases when refugees are never settled in their municipality. The compensation was set at NOK 50 000 per place in a municipality which was requested by IMDI and prepared for by the municipality but never filled with an arriving refugee.

The compensation scheme is temporary and only for 2022. Compensation will be paid in 2023 after the results for 2022 are summarised. While the scheme may be unnecessary in 'normal' times, it has an important function for crisis preparedness and its impact on municipalities' willingness and capacity to accept refugees should be closely monitored.

To support the municipalities with the new arrivals, Norway has made it easier for the municipalities to temporarily recruit retired staff. Seniors who help with the reception of the Ukrainians for example in kindergarten or school can do so without seeing their total pension reduced.

Voluntary commitment also has an important supplementary role to the municipalities work and the government has apart from providing extra funding to NGO's and other civil society organisations also encouraged municipalities to make use of the local voluntary organisations in their integration efforts. (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2022[18]).

Access to integration support

Compared to the majority of other receiving OECD countries, Norway's integration offers and measures to Ukrainian refugees are generous and wide – providing them with almost the same offers as to other refugees. Individuals with temporary protection can work and reunite with their family in Norway, they have full access to kindergarten, education, health services etc. Beyond providing access and scaling up existing programmes, specific support is also in place for vulnerable groups (Box 6.1).

Not all OECD countries offer Ukrainian refugees similar access to integration offers as other refugee groups. Instead, they identified specific measures to assist Ukrainians with their immediate needs, considering their duration of stay as temporary in nature. Norway's rationale is that whilst many have expressed the desire to go back to Ukraine as soon as possible, and the permit is temporary with return in mind, the government is also preparing for a scenario when this is not or no longer feasible.

Box 6.1. Addressing needs of vulnerable groups

Access to health services: Asylum seekers, refugees and persons with decisions on temporary collective protection have the same right to health care as the rest of the population. The health sector has received additional funding to better help the new arrivals. Municipalities are recommended to map the condition of the Ukrainian refugees in the reception centres. In addition, tuberculosis examination immediately after arrival is mandatory as well as provision that all Ukrainian refugees should be offered vaccination against COVID-19, measles and other diseases such as polio. To relieve pressure from the health services and provide more flexibility, the government has allowed the sector to make exceptions from certain provisions such as time limits for follow-up checks and right to health co-ordinator etc.

Unaccompanied minors: In the ordinary procedure, the settlement municipality is responsible for deciding on the appropriate placement of unaccompanied minors based on an individual assessment of the needs of every child. Foster homes are often chosen for the younger children under the age of 15. However, many unaccompanied minors are placed in shared accommodation with staff. To speed up reception and prioritise resources, authorities are allowed to make temporary exceptions to the number of inspections and deadline for training for the family homes. Until the 9 October, 474 unaccompanied minors had been recorded, 62% of them between 15-17 years old.

Source: (Helse Norge, 2022[19]; Barne- og familiedepartementet, 2022[20]; Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI), 2022[3]).

The Introduction Programme

As discussed in Chapter 2, Norway's flagship integration scheme for refugees and their families is a multi-month, often multiannual full-time programme including language training, information courses, educational and labour market programmes called the Introduction Programme. All individuals under temporary protection have access to this.

To ensure a fast integration of the new arrivals from Ukraine, the Norwegian Government has made several changes to the Norwegian Introduction Programme (NIP). Changes aim to first, adapt the programme to Ukrainians' specific needs and second, to support municipalities with the extra work from the overall high number of new arrivals.

Contrary to other refugees for whom NIP participation is mandatory, individuals under temporary collective protection (as is the case for refugees from Ukraine) have a right but no obligation to participate in the NIP. In contrast to other refugee groups, they are only entitled to Norwegian language training for up to one year.

The extent of participation in the NIP and the characteristics and outcomes of participants compared to non-participants will be crucial to monitor going forward. This can also provide valuable lessons for the programme at large.

For those who choose to participate, the NIP shall include work and education measures as well as language training and parental guidance. However, and in contrast to other groups, social studies, a course that teaches about Norwegian society and norms, is not mandatory.

The municipalities have a duty to provide a flexible programme for refugees with temporary collective protection. A key consideration hereto will be to consider the needs of single mothers.

Language training

As a key difference to the programme for other groups, municipalities have to offer training in English for those Ukrainians who want to participate in the NIP, but who do not want to train in Norwegian. Other and earlier refugee groups have no training in English (Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion, 2022[21]). According to Norwegian officials, the English language classes are focused on preparing higher skilled participants for further studies in Norway, as many higher educational programmes require a certain level of English but not necessarily Norwegian.

While offering English language training may be more cost and time effective for temporary stays as it may help to speed up the labour market entry, it is also important that they do not come at an expense of longer integration efforts that include a focus on Norwegian language training. In general, irrespective of the short or long-term focus the integration measures offered such as education and upskilling courses may still help to build skills that will be useful when people return to Ukraine.

Individuals who choose not to participate in the NIP have a right to one year of Norwegian language training. They also have access to the recently introduced Klippekort in Norway (a possibility for EU citizens to train in Norwegian). Vouchers for language courses are also offered to Ukrainians in other countries, for example in Luxembourg.

The Nordic countries long have been in the forefront of offering long-term integration support for humanitarian migrants through their (multi)annual integration programmes. Yet, this time Norway and Sweden have for example chosen different approaches demonstrating their different expectations on the duration of the Ukrainian refugees in the country. Contrary to Norway, temporary protection holders in Sweden do not have access to “Swedish for Immigrants”, which otherwise is free of charge and available to all immigrants. There is no access to publicly funded language courses in Finland either.

Welcoming children and young peoples’ access to education

The number of persons fleeing Ukraine since the Russian aggression is not only unprecedented in size, but also regarding their demographics. Of those seeking temporary collective protection from Ukraine in Norway by mid-October 2022, almost half were under the age of 30 and 26% were between 6 and 19 years old. This poses specific education challenges. (Utlendingsdirektoratet (UDI), 2022[3])

Norway has adopted temporary measures to make it easier for kindergartens and schools to welcome refugees from Ukraine. The municipalities’ obligation to provide children with a full-fledged educational programme within one month after arrival was extended to a three-month deadline. This was done as the earlier one-month deadline was difficult to meet when many children were arriving at the same time with the risk that municipalities would refuse to accept further refugees.

All Ukrainian children will follow the ordinary Norwegian curricula, and while schools can choose to use the Ukrainian distance-learning programme, it is not mandatory and the programme should not replace the ordinary curricula (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2022[22]).

At the beginning of March 2022, the Ministry of Education and Research reached out to Norwegian universities about their capacity to accept Ukrainian students who have had to interrupt their education in Ukraine due to the war. Among the answering institutions, the University of Oslo has announced that it can accept 800 students. The University has also arranged digital language training in Norwegian for the Ukrainian students (Mikkelsen, 2022[23]). The Ministry of Education allocated funds for 1 000 study places set aside for refugees, primarily intended for people who have fled Ukraine. By the end of July, however, surprisingly few students from Ukraine had applied (Tønessen et al., 2022[24]).

To make it easier for refugees to start higher education in Norway, a temporary scheme, starting from fall 2022, will allow institutions to make exemptions for refugees who want to study at a higher educational institution without fulfilling certain academic requirements. The scheme applies to all refugees and is not limited to Ukrainians nor those with collective temporary protection. It is the institutions that assess each applicant individually and whether the applicant is considered qualified to complete the relevant programme (Regjeringen.no, 2022[25]).

The government has also tried to support Ukrainian students already in Norway when the aggression started. In March, the government established a scholarship scheme for students from Ukraine, Russia and Belarus who due to the war had lost access to subsistence funding. Eligible students were given up to NOK 11 500 per month from March to August. PhD students have received up to NOK 21 000 a month. Over the spring semester 50 Ukrainians, about 70 Russian and 1 Belarusian student applied for this support. For the fall semester 2022, only Ukrainian students are eligible for the scheme (Regjeringen.no, 2022[26]).

Ensuring a fast entry into the labour market

Skills recognition and removal of qualification requirements

To facilitate a quick labour market entry Norway has made changes so that those with Ukrainian degrees can get their education recognised automatically on the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education's (NOKUT) websites without having to apply to NOKUT for an individual assessment (NOKUT, 2022[27]). This is only applicable for non-regulated professions. While not officially needed (as not applicable for regulated professions), the automatically generated recognition certificate may still help when applying for a job and for matching job seekers with employers.

Officials from NOKUT have highlighted that most Ukrainians arrived in Norway with all or partial documents aiding the recognition processes immensely. Ukraine has also been at the forefront in digitalising student data, and the collaboration with the European Network of Information Centres is working well.

For regulated professions, Norway is looking into making it easier for Ukrainian health care professionals to work, via exemptions for certain documentation requirements. This is in line with efforts in other OECD countries. The Slovak Republic and Spain are two countries currently looking into how to facilitate access by medical personnel to the labour market. In Norway, this might mean a new and separate recognition scheme for health professions for refugees who lack documentation of completed education to ease their educational approval. An existing recognition scheme aimed at refugees does not yet apply to the health professions.

Another form of support for employment is the removal of qualification requirements, such as formal language requirements for certain professions. Lithuania will exempt Ukrainians with temporary protection from the language requirements for certain employment such as teaching for a period of two years. Individual qualification determinations will be at the discretion of employers.

In Norway, kindergarten and health staff are subject to formal minimum language requirements. And while removing or lowering these requirements for Ukrainian refugees may help this group enter these jobs, it could discriminate other groups. Another option is to encourage and incentive employers to temporarily lower their language requirements for all refugee groups.

Fast-track work programme

In June 2022, a specific fast track for individuals with collective protection was launched. The track is called the 'flexible fast track' and is for refugees in the Introduction Programme who bring with them competence that is in demand in the Norwegian labour market. The track is primarily for refugees with completed upper secondary education. While it is similar to an existing fast track (Hurtigsporet) the programme for Ukrainians places particular focus on training in requirements and expectations in Norwegian working life, safety culture and the Norwegian working life model. The expectation is that the new arrivals will get into work earlier than past refugee groups. Yet, due to their short residence time, they may have poor knowledge of the requirements, expectations, rights and duties of an employee in Norway. The programme thus also provides information about rules and norms in Norwegian working context (IMDI, 2022[28]). In addition, the track may contain job-matching, qualifying measures and language training integrated with internship placement in private enterprises. Given the limited take-up of the existing fast-track measures for other refugee groups and the substantial flexibility in the standard NIP, the value-added of this new instrument is not clear.

Employment

There are no official numbers on how many of the Ukrainian refugees have found a job in Norway since the onset of the crisis. Yet, in August 2022, more than 6 100 Ukrainian were registered as employed, this is 1 600 more than the same month the year before. This includes 300 temporary workers, who are non-resident in Norway. Since April, the monthly rise in number of workers has been higher than the year before, likely due to the war. A fifth of the Ukrainians work in the health and social sector, and the majority (2/3) are women and 60% are under 40 years of age (Berge and Køber, 2022[29]).

The largest employer organisation for tourism in Norway has reported a strong interest from companies to be matched with the new arrivals (NHO Reiseliv, 2022[30]). Given Norway's low unemployment levels and current labour shortages, there are good opportunities for employment among the Ukrainians. According to Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administrations (NAV) labour market assessment from June 2022, the refugee flow from Ukraine is likely to have only a small effect on unemployment levels in Norway. Just as the higher inflow will lead to increased labour supply, the demand for labour will also increase with the need for more kindergarten and school places as well as demand in the health and integration sector (Myklathun, Sørbø and Vidal-Gil, 2022[31]).

Conclusion

Norway has swiftly reacted to the challenges arising from the inflow of refugees from Ukraine. While all OECD countries stepped up their integration measures in reaction to the inflows, the scale and scope of the reaction has varied widely, mirroring different expectations regarding duration of stay. In contrast to other Nordic countries with similar systems, Norway provides full access to available integration programmes. This signals that Norway expects that a significant share of the refugees from Ukraine will stay for the longer term, as indeed is expected from the experience with previous refugee situations in OECD countries. In addition, full access to such programmes will provide learning opportunities and experiences that could also help those who return to rebuild Ukraine, one day.

Interestingly, despite a recent large-scale overhaul of its integration system in 2021, aimed at providing more flexible and tailored support, Norway undertook systemic changes for this specific group. This is partly explained by the different legal framework and socio-demographic composition of this group. One important difference relates to the possibility to obtain support for learning English during the Introduction Programme. Other exceptional measures in place, such as around easier skills recognition, higher education and labour market access, will also help ease labour market integration in Norway. These measures should be monitored and if successful, their broader introduction for all refugees considered. At the same time, it will be important to ensure that arrivals from Ukraine who stay, learn Norwegian and have a clear pathway to long-term residence, similar to other refugee groups.

Specific attention needs to be paid to vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly, and the many single mothers. Individuals should be encouraged to take part in the NIP if their stay is not explicitly short-term.

The specific framework in place for refugees from Ukraine also provides a unique opportunity to investigate take-up and impact of the NIP. It can also serve as a test for the overhaul of the system discussed in the other chapters of this report. The newly strengthened communication channels between actors and the sharing of responsibilities between municipality and county level will be key to monitor in this regard.

More broadly, given the impressive integration research and data infrastructure in Norway on integration and its comprehensive policy response, Norway's experiences with the integration of refugees from Ukraine will provide important insights not only for the integration of refugees from Ukraine in other OECD countries, but for refugee integration at large.

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Note

[1] The term "refugee" is used in this chapter to refer to persons, who are fleeing from Russia's war against Ukraine and have obtained some sort of international protection, including not only formal refugee status (as per the Geneva Convention) but also subsidiary and temporary protection (as in the case of most refugees from Ukraine).

Working Together for Integration

Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Norway

Norway's foreign-born population has tripled since 2000, and the share of migrants among the population has seen one of the largest increases across the OECD, mostly driven by labour migration from EU countries. Most migrants from non-EU countries, in contrast, are refugees and their family members. High qualification levels and labour market participation of the native-born raise the question of an adequate benchmark for integration outcomes, especially for the low-educated refugees and their families. Against this backdrop, Norway puts significant investment into integration, and a number of recent reforms have been aimed at strengthening the system. This review, the third in a series on the skills and labour market integration of immigrants and their children, provides an assessment of these reforms and the remaining challenges. It includes an overview of Norway's integration services – and the many substantial changes in recent years – as well as challenges in access and uptake of integration offers, activation programmes and outcomes of native-born children of immigrants in Norway. Earlier reviews in this series looked at integration in Sweden (2016) and Finland (2018).

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