

# Work and residence permits

## CONTENTS

- [Important information on work and residence permits](#)
- [General health provisions](#)
- [Work permits](#)
  - [Work permits in specific employment situations lasting up to three months](#)
  - [Certain exceptions to the work permit requirements for employment situations lasting up to three months](#)
- [Offers of employment and employers' responsibilities](#)
- [Residence permits](#)
- [Financial support requirements](#)
- [Accommodation requirements](#)
- [Procedure when applying for a work permit or residence permit](#)
  - [Who decides the outcome?](#)
  - [Right of appeal](#)
  - [Renewing a permit](#)
  - [The entitlements of the permit holder](#)
- [Settlement permits](#)
- [Residence permits for studying in Norway](#)
  - [Requirements for studying in Norway](#)
  - [Financial support requirements](#)
- [Accommodation requirements](#)
- [Permits for part-time work and vacation work](#)
- [Further information](#)

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ON WORK AND RESIDENCE PERMITS

This pamphlet contains information on the conditions for being granted a residence permit or work permit in Norway.

Information on residence and work permits granted in connection with family reunification is given in a separate pamphlet. Separate pamphlets are also available on visas to Norway and Norwegian citizenship.

In some cases, residence permits are granted on so-called "humanitarian grounds". This applies to certain persons who have applied for asylum, but do not qualify for refugee status. More details concerning this are given in the pamphlet "Are you applying for asylum in Norway?"

Since 1975, immigration to Norway has been limited and regulated. This implies that **not all** foreigners who wish to do so are permitted to move to Norway and take employment here. The principle rule is that residence and work permits are only granted if there is a particular reason for living or working in Norway, for example, family reunification, or cultural exchange. Another reason could be to satisfy a specific need in the Norwegian

employment market which cannot be met by the domestic work force.

All foreign nationals who intend to stay in Norway for more than three months without working, must have a residence permit.

All foreign nationals who intend to work in Norway, whether paid or unpaid, or run their own business in Norway, must hold a work permit.

A residence or work permit is normally granted for one year at a time. Most such permits are renewable (please turn to page 24 for more details).

Citizens of other Nordic countries, personnel on foreign rail, air, bus and truck services working internationally, and necessary watchman and maintenance personnel on ships laid up in Norway are exempt from these principal rules.

Journalists, foreign newspaper staff, and radio or television teams who intend to stay in Norway on short-term assignment and are paid by a foreign employer are exempt from the requirement concerning a work permit and residence permit. However, should the assignment last more than three months, they must have a work permit which may be granted for up to four years.

Some foreign nationals are exempt from the work permit requirement if their employment situation lasts for a maximum of three months.

Certain work permits and residence permits are considered to provide the basis for a permanent connection with Norway. Permits of this kind may constitute sufficient grounds for granting the holder a **settlement permit**. Permits which constitute the basis for a settlement permit are marked specifically in this pamphlet.

**Holders of permits which do not constitute the basis for settlement are required to return to their own country when the permit expires and has not been renewed.**

#### **IMPORTANT:**

Work permits may be granted for particular types of work and under particular conditions. The categories of employment for which a work permit can be granted are described on pages 8 to 14.

In order for a foreign national to be granted a work permit in Norway, the work must fall into one of the categories described below. Anyone who applies for a work permit must have already received a concrete offer of employment. Furthermore, requirements for sufficient economic support must be met; this means that the applicant must have an adequate income. The applicant must also have a place to live in Norway.

The rules concerning residence permits are similar. A residence permit can only be granted when there is a particular reason for living in Norway.

As with work permits, requirements for sufficient economic support must also be met before a residence permit can be granted. This means that the applicant must have enough money to support himself/herself whilst in Norway. The applicant must also have somewhere to live in Norway.

As a general rule, applications for work permits and residence permits must be submitted from abroad. The applicant must await the result of the application before travelling to Norway. The procedure for applying for work permits and residence permits is described on this pamphlet.

If the above conditions are met, the applicant is eligible for a work permit or residence permit. However, if a foreign national has previously been rejected or deported from Norway, this can affect his/her possibilities of being granted a residence permit or work permit.

## GENERAL HEALTH PROVISIONS

In accordance with Section 51, paragraph 4, of the Immigration Regulations, when a foreign national is to reside in the country for more than three months, s/he shall be made aware of the duty to undergo an examination for tuberculosis.

The examination for tuberculosis is free and is to be taken as soon as possible following arrival in Norway.

The police shall give the health authority concerned the name and address of any foreign national intending to reside in the realm for more than three months. This especially applies to persons who come from countries with a high prevalence of tuberculosis.

**NB:** *It should be noted that changes may be made to the regulations described in this pamphlet.*

## WORK PERMITS

A work permit may be granted when the employment situation falls into one of the categories listed below.

A work permit may be granted to a foreign national who:

- a. ***is highly skilled or has special qualifications. A permit of this sort may constitute the basis for a settlement permit.***

### **Conditions**

The applicant's expertise/qualifications must be considered to be absolutely necessary to the work the applicant will perform. A work permit may only be granted on such grounds if that particular position cannot be filled by the domestic labour force. In such cases, the employment must normally have a duration of at least one year.

It is important that the applicant can document his/her qualifications and work experience. Such evidence, together with any other information which makes him/her particularly suited to the position, must be submitted with the application.

A work permit of this type is primarily relevant in connection with specialist expertise needed, for example, by the oil industry and other technological industries.

- b. ***is intending to establish and run a business in Norway. A permit of this kind may constitute the basis for a settlement permit.***

## Conditions

There must be adequate financial backing for the business activities. The applicant must submit a detailed description of the nature of the activities, as well as financial plans and a projected budget.

A permit of this kind might typically be granted to a foreign national who wishes to start up his/her own business activity in Norway.

- c. ***has been appointed a professorship or to another academic position of approximately equivalent level at a Norwegian public university or institute of higher education. A permit of this kind may constitute the basis for a settlement permit.***
- d. ***is intending to work as a researcher, research fellow, or lecturer at a research centre or institute of higher education.***

## Conditions

The engagement must be of limited duration such as a short-term contract or project. The applicant must submit details of the duration of the contract/project.

Work permits granted to researchers, research fellows or lecturers may be granted for a period of up to four years.

- e. ***is intending to work for a charity or humanitarian organization.***

## Conditions

The organization must have a particular need for international labour, or the organization in Norway must be part of an international exchange programme.

On these grounds, a work permit may be granted for a period of up to four years.

- f. ***is going to be employed as a trainee.***

## Conditions

The purpose of an engagement as a trainee is to complete part of the applicant's educational studies or provide work experience. A trainee engagement may either be an integral part of the applicant's studies or take place immediately after the applicant has completed his/her studies. There must be a natural connection between the applicant's studies or work experience and the work the applicant will be involved in as a trainee.

A work permit of this kind may not be granted for a total period of more than two years.

- g. ***is necessary in connection with the completion of contracts or the development of Norwegian business and industry.***

A work permit of this kind can be granted for a period of up to four years.

h. ***is intending to work as a missionary for a religious organization.***

**Conditions**

A missionary is defined as a person who is engaged in religious activity with the aim of promoting his/her beliefs.

In order to be classified as a religious organization, the group must have a religious basis, be organized as a congregation and must be of a certain size.

The organization's beliefs and teachings must be clearly defined.

A work permit for a missionary can be granted for a period of up to four years.

i. ***is intending to work as an au pair.***

**Conditions**

A contract must be submitted with the application. Restrictions exist as to the hours of work and wages paid.

An engagement as an au pair should have both a linguistic and cultural purpose, and should contribute to the general knowledge of the au pair concerned. The au pair must work for a family which uses Norwegian on a day-to-day basis. The family should also be representative of Norwegian culture. The au pair should be included in the family, and assist with daily duties in the family.

A work permit may not be granted to an au pair for a total period of more than two years.

j. ***has completed educational studies in Norway.***

**Conditions**

This applies to applicants who have completed educational studies in Norway.

The work must be essential for the applicant to be able to pursue his/her occupation in his/her own country. This must be documented.

A work permit of this kind may be granted for a maximum period of one year, and may not be renewed or extended.

k. ***is a musician/entertainer/artist or accompanying personnel.***

**Conditions**

When applying for a work permit, applicants must submit contracts for engagements in Norway. Contracts must be for a specific, continuous period of time, with one or more employer. As a general rule, contracts may not be altered in any way after the application has been submitted to the Directorate of Immigration.

Foreign nationals who have been granted a work permit of this kind, must leave Norway when the last contract has expired. The work permit may not be renewed or extended. The employment period in Norway for this kind of work may not exceed one year.

Musicians, entertainers, artists or accompanying personnel are exempt from work permit requirements if their engagements in Norway do not exceed a total of ten days per calendar year.

- l. ***is born of Norwegian parents. One or both of the applicant's parents must have been Norwegian nationals when the applicant was born. A work permit of this kind may constitute the basis for a settlement permit.***
- m. ***has been employed by a Norwegian shipping company and has worked on board a ship which is registered in Norsk Ordinært Register (NOR) (the Norwegian Domestic Ships Register). A work permit of this kind may constitute the basis for a settlement permit.***

### **Conditions**

The applicant must have been employed in this post for at least four of the six years prior to making an application.

- n. ***has been accepted by the employment scheme of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). A recommendation that the application be accepted must have been made by the County Employment Office. A work permit of this kind may constitute the basis for a settlement permit.***
- o. ***is an employee of a foreign public corporation or a multinational business enterprise.***

### **Conditions**

The applicant must be highly skilled or have special qualifications which the enterprise considers necessary for its activities. The work permit can be granted for a period of up to four years.

- p. ***is a journalist or other staff for a foreign newspaper, radio or television.***

### **Conditions**

The applicant must be employed and paid by the foreign employer. The work permit can be granted for a period of up to four years.

- q. ***is a sportsman or sportswoman intending to participate in a sporting activity at a high level or intending to be a coach/manager in a sporting activity at a high level.***

### **Conditions**

The applicant must have played a similar sport or have had similar work abroad in the most recent years. The skills of the person concerned must be indispensable for the activity and a statement from Norges Idrettsforbund (Norwegian Olympic Committee and Norwegian Confederation of Sports) must be submitted. The work permit can be granted for a period of up to four years.

Work permits and residence permits may also be granted in special cases where strong humanitarian factors are present, or if the foreign national has a particular connection with Norway. This could be the case if the applicant were suffering from a serious illness, or were dependent on vital treatment in Norway and were unable to return to his/her own country. Whether or not the permit provides grounds for a settlement permit in Norway is considered individually in each case.

### WORK PERMITS IN SPECIFIC EMPLOYMENT SITUATIONS LASTING UP TO THREE MONTHS

This applies to a foreign national who:

- a. ***is going to be employed in typical seasonal work or in connection with ordinary vacations.***

The work permit is valid during the period 15 May to 31 October, and for a maximum of three months from the day the foreign national enters Norway.

There are no regulations to prevent a work permit being granted to a foreign national who has job offers from several employers. However, this must be stated clearly when applying for a permit. The work permit is only valid for a total of three months even if the foreign national has several employment situations.

The work permit may not be renewed for a new three-month period within the same year.

As a general rule, the application must be submitted from abroad.

**The applicant is not permitted to enter Norway until the work permit has been granted and the applicant has been informed.**

- b. ***is highly skilled or has special qualifications, often referred to as short-term specialists.***

The applicant's expertise must be considered to be absolutely necessary for the activity concerned. If the need for this expertise is permanent, the authorities will grant such a work permit only under exceptional circumstances. The same applies if a foreign national has been granted a work permit as a specialist for the same activity during the last six months.

A work permit of this kind is typically granted to a specialist who has been invited to come to Norway at short notice, and work for a short period only. The permit is not renewable, but under special circumstances it may be extended by up to one month.

The applicant's qualifications, including educational background, must satisfy the same requirements

as in cases where a specialist work permit is granted for one year .

Certain "specialists" are exempt from the work permit requirements (see item c).

In general, a permit must have been issued before the applicant may enter Norway. However, work permits for specialists for up to three months may be applied for after the applicant has entered Norway. The application must be submitted at the police station which is closest to where the applicant is staying. The applicant must inform the police within one week of entering Norway.

c. ***is intending to work as a guest agricultural worker arranged by an exchange organization.***

A permit of this kind is not renewable.

### CERTAIN EXCEPTIONS TO THE WORK PERMIT REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYMENT SITUATIONS LASTING UP TO THREE MONTHS

Certain exceptions may be made to the work permit requirements for the following categories of foreign nationals:

- a. commercial travellers and/or people travelling on business.
- b. research workers, lecturers etc. who have been invited to Norway by an educational or research institution, or for professional or charity reasons.
- c. technical experts, technicians, fitters, consultants, or instructors. The purpose must be to install, disassemble, check, repair, or maintain machines or technical equipment, or provide information on their use. The need for this labour must not exceed three months, and it is not possible to give the same job offer to a new person.
- d. employees in private service for foreign nationals who are staying in Norway on a visit for up to three months.
- e. professional sportsmen and sportswomen. This category applies typically to professional contestants competing in sporting arrangements in Norway.
- f. civil servants who are paid by their own country. Such persons must come to Norway on the basis of an agreement between their country and the Norwegian authorities.
- g. journalists or other staff for a foreign newspaper, radio or television, when they are employed and paid by a foreign employer.
- h. tour conductor accompanying a party of foreign tourists during a visit to Norway.

It must be emphasised that categories a) to h) apply to employment situations lasting for **not more than three months**. Persons in these categories must obtain **a visa** to Norway, if they are subject to visa requirements. If a person in one of the above categories wishes to apply for a work permit or residence permit, the normal procedure must be followed. The application must normally be submitted from abroad.

### OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYERS' RESPONSABILITIES

All applicants for work permits must have received a concrete offer of employment. The employer must also draw up a standardised contract of employment. The job must remain on offer to the applicant until s/he is permitted to start working; it can take several months to process a work permit application. Working conditions and wages may not be lower than the wage agreements or regulations which normally apply to the type of

work involved and at the place of work concerned. In most cases, the employment must be full time for one employer.

The requirement that the applicant must have a concrete offer of employment does not apply to persons who have been granted a work permit on the basis of family reunification, asylum, or in connection with a residence permit granted for humanitarian reasons, or to persons who have come to Norway as resettlement refugees.

Nor does the requirement concerning an offer of employment apply for those who are intending to establish and run a business enterprise in Norway.

## RESIDENCE PERMITS

All foreign nationals who intend to stay in Norway for **more than three months** without working must obtain a residence permit. In some special cases involving "work-like" arrangements, a residence permit may be sufficient. This applies to certain categories of persons as listed below.

Residence permits in Norway may be granted to foreign nationals who:

- a. wish to study in Norway (please see the section on students).
- b. will be engaged in sporting activities in Norway. The stay must be necessary in order to establish or develop a particular sport. This type of permit may be granted for up to a total of two years.
- c. are research workers with sufficient funds to finance their stay. Such persons must be associated with a university, institution etc. for the purpose of carrying out research. This type of permit may be granted for up to a total of two years.
- d. are professional creative artists. Such persons must be able to document that their stay in Norway will be important for their professional development. This type of permit may be granted for up to a total of two years.
- e. will, by means of their stay in Norway, continue to spread knowledge and information about Norway and Norwegian culture abroad. Such persons must be able to document that their stay in Norway will be important for this activity. This type of permit may be granted for up to a total of two years.
- f. are born of Norwegian parents. One or both parents must have been a Norwegian citizen when the applicant was born. This type of permit may constitute the basis for a settlement permit.
- g. have been employed by a Norwegian shipping company and been employed on board a ship which is registered in the Norwegian Domestic Ships Register (NOR). Applicants must have been employed on the ship for at least four of the six years prior to making an application. This type of permit may constitute the basis for a settlement permit.

Residence permits in connection with family reunification are discussed in a separate pamphlet issued by the Directorate of Immigration.

Residence permits may also be granted to a foreign national for up to four years if there is a cultural agreement between Norway and his/her native country or if this comes under a scholarship programme under the aegis of Norges forskningsråd (the Norwegian Research Council).

Residence permits may also be granted in certain cases in which significant humanitarian considerations are present, or if the foreign national has particular ties to Norway.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

In order for either a work permit or a residence permit to be granted, the applicant must have a guarantee of sufficient financial support (subsistence requirements). This means that the applicant must be able to document that s/he has adequate means to support himself/herself whilst in Norway.

In the case of a work permit, the financial support requirements are satisfied if the applicant is going to be paid an adequate salary. An income from full-time employment will generally be considered adequate.

Financial support requirements similarly apply to residence permit applicants. The requirements are met if the applicant has sufficient private means. The Directorate of Immigration may require that a certain sum of money is transferred to a Norwegian bank, and that the sum is placed in a partially-closed or totally-closed account for a certain period.

Financial support requirements are also satisfied if the applicant is going to receive an adequate study grant.

A combination of income and private means is similarly acceptable.

In special cases, the financial support requirements may be satisfied if a second party guarantees to provide the applicant with adequate financial support whilst in Norway.

Details of financial support requirements in connection with residence permits for studying in Norway are given on page 27.

## ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

A foreign national who applies for a work or residence permit must have a fixed address in Norway for the period covered by the application. In practice, this means that the applicant must have the use of a house, apartment, bedsitter, or similar.

The applicant must be able to produce a sales contract, or a lease, or some other proof that s/he has a fixed address.

## PROCEDURE WHEN APPLYING FOR A WORK PERMIT OR RESIDENCE PERMIT

The general requirement is that an application must be **made from abroad**. A first-time work permit or residence permit must have been granted before the applicant is permitted to enter Norway. In other words, the applicant is not allowed to enter the country whilst the application is under consideration.

In certain cases, applicants are allowed to apply for a residence permit or work permit directly from Norway. Please contact the police or a foreign service mission for further details.

Please note that the processing of applications may take a long time.

Applications are computer registered and applicants have right of access to this information.

## **PROCEDURE**

The applicant should contact a Norwegian foreign service mission (Embassy or Consulate) to obtain application forms. The foreign service mission can give information about necessary documents to be enclosed with an application. The application should be delivered to the foreign service mission in the applicant's home country or the country where the applicant has had a work permit or residence permit for the last six months.

When the application has been considered, the applicant is informed of the results by the foreign service mission where the application was submitted.

## **WHO DECIDES THE OUTCOME**

The foreign service mission sends the work permit or residence permit application to the Directorate of Immigration which decides whether or not the permit can be granted.

## **RIGHT OF APPEAL**

If the application is rejected, the applicant may appeal the decision. The appeal should be sent to the foreign service mission which forwards it to the Ministry of Justice via the Directorate of Immigration.

## **RENEWING A PERMIT**

The various categories of applicants who are eligible for work permits or residence permits have been discussed earlier in this pamphlet. Permits issued under some of these categories are not renewable. This is stated where relevant. Permits from the remaining categories may be renewed.

The conditions associated with renewing a permit are generally the same as when applying for a permit for the first time.

## **THE ENTITLEMENTS OF THE PERMIT HOLDER**

A work permit is usually applicable to a particular job at a particular place of employment. However, this does not apply to work permits granted in connection with family reunification, or asylum, or residence on the basis of humanitarian considerations, or to resettlement refugees.

Both work permits and residence permits allow the holder unrestricted entry into Norway during the period for which the permit is valid.

## **SETTLEMENT PERMIT**

A settlement permit gives the holder the right to live in Norway and general access to work anywhere in Norway without any time limitations.

A foreign national who has lived continuously in Norway for the last three years can normally be granted a settlement permit. The foreign national must have held a permit during this three-year period which constitutes

the basis for a settlement permit. The permits which constitute such a basis are discussed specifically earlier in this pamphlet. The holder's passport is endorsed with a stamp stating the type of permit s/he has. Applications for settlement permits must be directed to the police.

Please note that the settlement permit may lapse if the holder leaves Norway for an extended period of time.

## RESIDENCE PERMITS FOR STUDYING IN NORWAY

In order to be granted a residence permit for the purpose of studying in Norway, your study programme must fulfil certain requirements (see below). Furthermore, you must submit written proof that you are able to support yourself financially whilst in Norway, and that you have found somewhere to live.

The rules described in this pamphlet apply to applicants who do not have any close links with Norway other than that they wish to study here.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDYING IN NORWAY

The educational institution where the applicant intends to study must be approved by the Norwegian authorities. Usually, this would be a college or university or institution of a similar level.

The **purpose** of the application to stay in Norway must be to pursue the intended education. The planned course of study must equip the applicant with knowledge and experience which can be put to good use in his/her home country when the study programme has been completed. This requirement also means that the applicant's proposed course of study in Norway must be a natural continuation of previous schooling/studies in his/her own country or elsewhere.

The applicant must study **full-time**, and is required to attend daily teaching at the college or university, in addition to being active in the academic environment there.

The applicant must present a plan for his/her course of studies. This plan must include details of the type of subjects the applicant intends to study in Norway. It is important to note that if the applicant switches subjects or the course of studies along the way, the residence permit will only be renewed if the new study plan is a continuation of previous studies.

**The applicant is required to return to his/her own country when the course of study is completed.** The immigration authorities will evaluate the applicant's possibility of returning to his/her country on the basis of the conditions in the applicant's country when the application is submitted.

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT REQUIREMENTS

Residence permits for study purposes are granted conditional to the applicant being able to support himself/herself financially whilst in Norway (subsistence requirements).

Financial support requirements are usually satisfied if the applicant receives a student loan or grant or expects to receive such support. Alternatively, the student must have sufficient funds of his/her own, equivalent to the amount obtainable from the [State Educational Loan Fund](#).

The stay may also be financed by income from part-time work. Financial support requirements are satisfied if the net income (income minus tax deductions) is equivalent to the amount obtainable from the State Educational Loan Fund. The other requirements for being granted a permit for part-time work must be satisfied (see below).

### ACCOMMODATION REQUIREMENTS

The applicant is required to have a fixed address for the period for which the permit is valid. This can be a house, apartment, room in a college residence, or equivalent. The applicant must be able to present written evidence of having somewhere to live.

### PERMITS FOR PART-TIME WORK AND VACATION

Foreign nationals who hold a residence permit for study purposes may obtain a permit for working part-time and during vacations. An application for a permit for part-time work may be submitted to the applicant's local police authorities in Norway.

The applicant must have a concrete offer of employment. A permit may be granted for work which amounts to 50% of a full-time job, up to **a maximum of 20 hours per week**.

In order for a student to be granted a permit for part-time work, the applicant must submit written confirmation from his/her university or college that the part-time work will not reduce the student's potential for completing the study programme.

A student may also receive a permit for full-time work for a limited period of time. The work must constitute part of the applicant's studies, or be necessary for acceptance into a further course of study.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information on work permits and residence permits may be obtained from Norwegian foreign service missions or by contacting:

***Utlendingsdirektoratet***

(The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration) P.O. Box 8108 Dep. N-0032 Oslo Tel.: 23 35 15 00

The following agencies offer advice and guidance in connection with visa applications to Norway:

**Juss-Buss** (Law  
Students'  
Legal Information  
Service)  
St. Olavsgt. 29  
N-0166 Oslo  
Tel.: 22 85 18 50

**Juridisk Rådgivning for**

**Kvinner** (JURK) (Legal Advice for Women) P.O.  
Box 6756 St. Olavs plass N-0130 Oslo Tel.: 22 85 19  
00

**Kontoret for fri  
rettshjelp**  
(Office for Free Legal Aid)  
P.O. Box 8809 Youngstorget  
N-0028 Oslo  
Tel.: 22 42 52 60

### **Free legal aid programme**

Persons with income and assets below a predetermined level may apply to the county governor (fylkesmannen) for free legal aid. If you contact a lawyer or the county governor directly, you can have your situation assessed to ascertain whether you are entitled to free legal aid.

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