

Norway

Innholdsfortegnelse

- 1) Environmental pressures

Norway

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Norway comprises the western part of the Scandinavian Peninsula. Its borders are shared with Sweden, Finland and Russia. Norwegian jurisdiction encompasses vast ocean areas, including the island of Jan Mayen and the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard.



Kingdom of Norway (Kongeriket Norge)

Mainland Norway, Svalbard and Jan Mayen



Population: 5.189.435 (1. July 2015)

Population density: The average population density for urban settlements in Norway was 1.916 in 2013 compared to 1.904 in 2012. 80% of the population live in cities and villages.

System of government: Constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy.

Member of: UN, NATO, the Council of Europe, the European Economic Area Agreement (EEA) and the Nordic Council.

Norway has a long rugged coastline which stretches over 2.500 km, broken by fjords and thousands of islands. Norway is also a mountainous country with many glaciers and some of the highest waterfalls in the world. The mountains draw Arctic terrestrial species all the way from the north to the southern part of the country.

Climate

The climate is mild considering its high northern latitude, and Norway is the northernmost country in the world to have open waters. This is due to the Atlantic trade winds and the Gulf Stream. The latitude also results in great seasonal variations in daylight. The high mountain ranges, running north-south, also play an important part in shaping the Norwegian climate.

Economy

The Norwegian economy is open and mixed, with a combination of private and public ownership. The public sector has considerable ownership in key industrial sectors, such as in the oil and gas sector, hydroelectric energy production, aluminium production, banking, and telecommunications. Norway maintains a Scandinavian welfare model with universal healthcare, free higher education and a comprehensive social security system.

Much of Norway's economy depends on the use of its natural resource base. For this reason, Norway is dependent on governmental regulation in order to balance economical and environmental interests. The country is rich in natural resources, including oil and gas, hydropower, fish, forests and some minerals. The development of the hydroelectric energy sector at the beginning of the 20th century triggered industrial growth, particularly within the aluminium and ferroalloy industry, and fertilizer production. The discovery of large reserves of oil and gas in the late 1960s, gave further boost to the economy. Norway is the third largest shipping nation in the world, and aquaculture is the second largest export industry. Other important sectors include oceanic fisheries and forestry.

Environmental governance

In 1972, Norway was the first country in the world to have a ministry at cabinet level with special responsibility for environmental matters. National environmental governance in Norway is organised in a hierarchical manner. At the top is the Ministry Climate and Environment which is the leading government institution regarding environmental issues. Much of the work is delegated to a set of subordinated directorates:

- › The Norwegian Environment Agency
- › Directorate for Cultural Heritage
- › Norwegian Polar Institute
- › Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority

The directorates generally buy services from research institutions and consultants to cover environmental monitoring and assessments. Much work is, furthermore, delegated to the County Governors, of which there are 19, and the 430 local municipalities also play an important role in the implementation of environmental policies.

What are the major societal trends?

Norway is a member of the Council of Europe, was a founding member of the Nordic Council, and joined EFTA in 1960. In 1994, Norway entered into the European Economic Area Agreement with the EU, involving participation in the common market and in many EU programmes, and making EU acquis part of national legislation in many policy areas such as environmental management.

Economy

After the Second World War, economical focus moved from primary to export-based industries. However, despite a halving of man-labour years in both agriculture and fisheries, there was a doubling of production in both sectors, thanks to improved technology and management. In the 1960s and 1970s, Norway moved from an economy influenced significantly by government involvement towards a more free market based economy. However, the government initiated many industrial ventures and had considerable ownership in these. This resulted in a substantial increase in public sector employment, particularly in health and education.

Due to offshore industry and fish farming, Norway is still a considerable producer of raw materials. Therefore the balance between exploitation of natural resources and conservation of natural values is an important challenge for the Norwegian government.

In 1969, exploratory drilling in the North Sea revealed rich resources of oil and gas, which led to extensive oil and gas production. In 1973, Norway established an Oil Directorate and the state-owned oil company, Statoil. In 2004, Norway became the world's third largest producer of crude oil and natural gas. Norway's role as oil nation has resulted in an increased standard of living for the great majority, and has played an important part in shaping Norwegian society since the 1980s. Today, Norwegian oil and gas production is far larger than the hydropower production, and also many times higher than the energy consumption of the country.

Norwegian business life after 2000 has seen traditional industries, particularly the energy-demanding ones such as metal refineries, on the decline, while companies in shipping, oil and IT have grown in numbers. A change in industry focus has resulted in a population flux from the countryside to towns and cities. Efforts to counteract this trend have been initiated, but have proven less efficient than hoped for.

Norway has not been noteworthy affected by the recent financial crisis. The country has been able to cover its deficits through money from the country's pension fund, which is of significant value due to Norway's oil and gas production.

Environment

Environmental awareness became a factor in Norwegian management at the end of the 1960s. Local environmental problems due to hydro power generation were seen as some of the challenges the country had to face. There was focus on establishing protected areas, and cleaning up local sewage and eutrophy problems in the Oslo fjord and some inland waters, including Mjøsa, Norway's largest lake. Industry and point source pollution also became more strictly regulated under the Pollution Control Act, particularly in areas where there were health implications.

Restrictions within the 100-meter belt were enacted in 1965 under the Plan and Building Act, prohibiting construction too close to rivers and the coastline. The rate of dam construction slowed down in the 80s, and selected rivers were protected as a result of several protection plans.

From the middle of the 1970s offshore activities emerged as an environmental challenge, and the Norwegian state is heavily involved in regulations to protect marine resources and the environment along the coast from oil spills and emissions of hazardous substances.

In the 1980s, the focus changed to transboundary and global issues, such as acidification and other issues linked to long-range air pollution, hazardous substances, the loss of biodiversity, degradation of the ozone layer, as well as global warming.

In the 1990s, it became more evident how the Norwegian economy influenced the environment in other parts of the world. In response to this, Norway has formulated ethical norms related to environment and human rights, to be used in governmental investments abroad.

Because Norway is situated downstream of main air and ocean currents, the country is a recipient of large amounts of transboundary pollution. In addition, the effects of global warming are particularly evident in the Arctic. Therefore Norway actively participates in international environmental cooperation.

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In general, the state of the environment in Norway is improving. For instance, there are positive trends in water quality, air quality and waste management. But hazardous substances are becoming more widely dispersed in the environment, and are found in more and more species. Biodiversity is under pressure in Norway as well as other parts of the world. Major environmental pressures in Norway in the years to come are likely to include a continued trend towards urbanisation, increased energy demand, and an increase in the rate of climate change.



What are the main drivers?

Climate change: Norwegian greenhouse gas emissions rose by 3.5% from 1990 to 2014. A long-term trend of a rise in total emissions towards 2020 is expected, unless new measures are implemented. Many changes caused by climate change have already been observed in the Norwegian natural environment. Emissions from the oil and gas industry increased by 91 per cent, and emissions from road traffic increased by 31 per cent. However, the emissions from manufacturing industries fell by 39 per cent. Emissions from agriculture and landfills have also gone down.

Biodiversity: In the past 100–150 years, human activities have resulted in far-reaching changes in Norwegian nature. Changes in land use are among the greatest threats to biological diversity. Local variability in habitats and species composition is being reduced, and some species are being wiped out. Almost 4 000 species are on the current Norwegian Red List, and half of these are threatened. Invasive alien species also cause harm to local fauna and flora. The extent of areas without major infrastructure development, including wilderness-like areas, is shrinking steadily. For the country as a whole, the proportion of wilderness-like areas has dropped from 48% to less than 12% in the past 100 years.

Fresh water: Norway's rivers and lakes provide a rich freshwater environment, which is under less pressure from human activity than many countries in Europe. Challenges still remain as many rivers and lakes are altered due to hydropower regulation, urbanisation, and roads. Around 25% of Norway's water courses are at risk of not obtaining good ecological and chemical status in 2015. Long-range transboundary pollution causes acidification and brings hazardous substances to lakes and rivers.

Air quality: Air quality in Norway generally has improved since the 1990s. However, many people in the larger towns are still affected by local air pollution, and some limit values are still exceeded every winter. In Norway, between 500 and 2 000 people die prematurely every year because of air pollution. Children and the old are the most vulnerable. In the largest towns, current knowledge indicates that particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide pose the most serious risks to health, and result in a higher frequency of various types of respiratory problems.

Waste: In Norway, waste volumes have increased by almost 40% since 1995. As much as 87% of non-hazardous waste is recovered, and 95% of hazardous waste is collected. Pollutant releases from waste treatment have been reduced in recent years. Economic growth is one reason for the rising quantities of waste.

Marine Areas: Norway's marine areas are rich in resources and biodiversity. Pressures on these resources and biodiversity come directly from human activities such as aquaculture, extensive fishing, and oil and gas production. Other indirect pressures include climate change and ocean acidification. The Norwegian government is therefore developing integrated marine management plans for all Norwegian marine areas. Many coastal areas and fjords are contaminated by hazardous substances from present and previous industrial activity and dumping. Reductions in emissions of hazardous substances – and the clean-up of contaminated marine sediments – have resulted in improvements in the state of the environment in several places.

Noise: Noise is the environmental problem that affects the largest number of people in Norway. Nearly 1.4 million people are exposed to noise levels above 55 dBA outside their home. The number has increased by a quarter of a million since 1999. Sleep disturbance due to noise affects 200 000 people in Norway.

Main policy responses to key environmental challenges and concerns

Climate change and the transition towards a green and sustainable society are amongst the main challenges and environmental concerns in a wider and cross-sectoral context in Norway.

The objectives and principles of Norwegian climate policy are anchored in the broad political agreement reached in the Norwegian parliament between 2008 and 2012[3] and updated by a white paper on Norwegian climate policy[4] and Norway's sixth National Communication under the Framework Convention on Climate Change. The climate agreement includes measures and checkpoints for following up on the climate policy. Among other things, the agreement refers to sector-specific climate-action plans and targets for individual sectors. Climate-change adaptation is also a growing concern in Norway and has been addressed through the white paper "Adapting to a changing climate - Norway's vulnerability and the need to adapt to the impacts of climate change".

Sustainability should be a fundamental principle for all development in Norway. The government's strategy on sustainable development (presented to the parliament in the national budget for 2008) and the latest Nordic strategy "A Good Life in a Sustainable Nordic Region" (2013), confirms that a policy for sustainable development must be based on the principles of equitable distribution, international solidarity, the precautionary principle, the polluter-pays principle, and the principle of common commitment.

In Norway, there is an increased awareness around the value of ecosystem services and their connection with sustainability. Adequate knowledge about the state of ecosystems and their ability to deliver services (and how human activities affect this ability) is a necessary precondition for good nature management.