



ADVICE & TIPS – NORWAY



Norway is not an EU member, but the country has opted to sign the European Economic Area agreement (1 January 1994), which allows freedom of movement for labour. During the last century Norway has evolved from being a mainly agrarian society to a high-tech country that belongs to the premier league of the world economy. There is a great lack of skilled workers in Norway, and unemployment has fallen to less than two percent. Especially healthcare and shipping are trying to attract foreign workers.

A good way of gaining access to the Norwegian labour market is through the Thursday edition of the daily paper Aftenposten. Another option is using the network of public employment services. These arbeidskontorer can be of great help when trying to find a job in Norway.

The Norwegian job market is expanding, although this may be affected by the economic downturn that began in 2008. Norwegian workers generally have an edge, but foreign workers can be competitive, especially if they are able to develop a network of Norwegian contacts.

- *Typical problems encountered:* Networking and personal recommendations lead to many jobs in Norway, so it may be difficult for graduates without Norwegian connections, and/or whose qualifications are from institutions not well-known in Norway, to penetrate the job market.
- *How to improve your chances:* Consider taking on casual work in Norway while you learn Norwegian and build a network of contacts.
- *Language requirements:* English is taught in school, and is the major second language spoken in Norway. For some jobs, English may be sufficient and most Norwegian businesspeople are fluent in English, but knowing Norwegian will be a distinct advantage. You can find information about learning Norwegian both in Norway and in the UK, at Study in Norway, or you could apply for a postgraduate study course that includes a compulsory first year learning Norwegian. Distance learning programmes are available from Eurotalk Interactive

The Application Letter

In general a letter of application should create enough interest to make the potential employer want to look at your application in more detail and hopefully invite you for an interview. Your application letter, however, should not provide too much information about experience and qualifications; this will be provided in your CV.

Norwegian application letters tend to be short, factual and direct, using words to describe yourself like easygoing, calm, honest or other personal characteristics. Irrespective of whether you know the name, the beginning of the letter is always anonymous ("Dear sir/madam"). In the application letter you write why you are applying, always mention your address, name and telephone number. If you know to whom you have to direct the letter, you mention his or her name in the address of the company, if you do not have this information you mention the department (in the address section) to which you are

applying. References can be mentioned both in the letter and in the CV. It is advised to send copies of diplomas, translated in Norwegian or at least in English.

The Curriculum Vitae

The CV is usually in reversed chronological order (most recent activities first). At the maximum it is two pages long. The CV starts with your personal details, including name, address, date of birth (note that the day, the month and the year are written densely together, without blank spaces or dots in between), your telephone number (with international access code) and your civil status. In this section you can also include your hobbies/special interests, or you mention your hobbies at the end of your CV. You continue with your education, including the results, your practical experience, your language skills and the references (if you have not yet given your references in the covering letter). Under 'work experience' you mention the companies for which you have worked. Make sure that the people you mention as references are aware of it and that they have agreed to say something positive about you (if a reference is checked it looks rather silly if the person can not remember you!).

It's becoming more popular to apply for a job via the internet. Be aware of the fact that an electronic CV does not always look the same as the standard one.

The Application Procedure

Application interviews are a standard element of the selection procedure for jobs at all skill levels in Norway. Assessment centres are becoming more common. A recruiter wants to have a full picture of the person he or she is going to select. Be prepared for questions about yourself and on your strong points and your weaknesses. But also on your mid- and long-term aims ("what do you want to have achieved in five years time?"). Questions on religion, politics or cultural aspects are not allowed. Make sure you are on time (meaning arrive in the building at least 10 minutes before the interview commences). Pay a lot of attention to your appearance, which should be rather formal; women are advised to wear skirts (not too short) and men need to wear a suit for their application interview. Bring copies of diplomas and testimonials to the interview.

During public sector interviews a trade union representative, working within that particular organisation, will be present to ensure that everything goes according to the rules.

On-line applications are nowadays common. In fact, a lot of job agencies, but also employers who publish their vacancies on-line provide the opportunity to complete the job application form on-line.

Where can I work?

- Major industries: oil and gas, fishing, shipping.
- Shortage occupations: engineers, consultants (finance and management), PR professionals, sales professionals.
- Major companies: Statoil, Norsk Hydro, Telenor, Aker, Orkla, Aker Kvaener, Total E&P Norge, ExxonMobil, Yara International, Esso.

What's it like working in Norway?

- Average working hours: usually 8am to 4pm, Monday to Friday, but may vary between sectors, with some starting at 7am and others at 9am. Working over 40 hours per week is regarded as overtime and is usually paid at almost time-and-a-half.
- Holidays: average holiday entitlement is 21-25 days per year.
- Average graduate starting salary: NOK 300,000
- Tax rates: the basic rate of income tax is 28%, subject to certain allowances.
- Working practices and customs: similar to the UK, e.g. with an emphasis on prior arranged meetings, punctuality, handshake-style greetings and a direct style of negotiation. Business dress tends to be rather casual. Business is usually conducted in Norwegian with the exception of multinational corporations and the oil industry, which often use English.