

National Report Norway ILAG Cologne 2025

1. Country details.

Norway's 2025 population amounts to 5 600 000.

OECD's relative poverty line lies at 50 percent of the median household income, which in 2008 meant NOK 196 000 and 200 000 poor. EU's poverty line lies at 60 percent of the median household income, which in 2008 meant NOK 235 200 and 600 000 poor.

The 2023 mean household income was NOK 756 500 after tax or € 65 000 which means an OECD poverty line of € 39 000,¹ and an EU line of € 34 500.² I have not found any fresh statistics that show how many Norwegian households (or people) that live beyond the two poverty limits.

Norway had 11 350 practicing lawyers in 2022.³

2. Legal Aid Organisation / Authority.

No specialized, superior and independent legal aid organisation exists in Norway – except for consumer legal aid organized by the Norwegian Consumer Council, which I do not include. The head authority for Norway's judicare system is the Ministry of Justice's Civil Department, which is responsible for legal aid legislation and regulations including reform proposals and budgeting. The Ministry's role dates back to autocracy.

Decisions on legal aid applications are distributed on several instances, the Central Civil Law Administration, 19 county administrations, and all courts and selected tribunals in cases that they handle. Lawyers might also grant legal advice when a client qualifies, and they want to deliver the advice themselves. They bill the county afterwards.

According to the Norwegian Legal Aid Act (NLAA) delivery of civil and administrative legal aid is a monopoly for all registered lawyers and licenced legal helpers with a master's degree in law. No special approval is needed. They might accept and handle civil and administrative legal aid cases whenever they like. They also are free to refuse legal aid commissions.

Central and local government also might establish public legal aid offices. At present one such public legal aid office, established more than a century ago, still operates in Oslo. Norway had more of them between 1900 and 1960.

NLAA allows the Ministry of Justice to licence legal aid delivery from other organisations either by singular approval or by issuing regulations. Norway has four student clinics connected to the law schools and several non-profit organizations that deliver non-commercial legal advice according to this exemption from the lawyers' legal aid monopoly.

The Norwegian criminal procedure code provides for legal aid to offenders and victims, and also for civil claims against the charged forwarded in the criminal case. Most such claims concern compensation. If the victim does not qualify for a victim's

¹ Exchange rate per 12.05.2025: € 1 = NOK 11,59. I use this exchange rate throughout the report. The exchange rate varies significantly over the years.

² [Income and wealth for households – SSB](#).

³ [Advokatforeningens bransjestatistikk | Advokatforeningen](#). Antall advokater over tid.

lawyer, the prosecutor has a duty to forward such claims. Defenders and victims' lawyers are practicing lawyers.

The Norwegian Advocates Association has no formal role in legal aid administration. Lawyers' licences are issued by a governmental tribunal independent of the Advocates Association and membership is voluntary. The lawyer's ethical code, however, applies to all licenced lawyers and legal helpers.

3. Paying providers of legal advice and services

The Ministry of Justice has issued a regulation on legal aid payments that comprehends all lawyers in private practice. The basis is an hourly fee adjusted regularly. Most fees are set according to a detailed and complex list of multipliers of the basis fee according to the case type and usually independent of the real time use. The multiplier for defenders in an ordinary criminal case is 6 times the basis fee when the court time does not exceed 2 hours, and 8 times the basis fee if court time does not exceed 3,5 hours.⁴ Preparations are included. Long lasting cases outside the multiplier system are paid per hour according to the basis fee. Overall, legal aid cases pay far less than market commissions and the payment level has been subject to significant criticism and even boycotts from the Advocates Association.

Legal aid from the public law office in Oslo is delivered by lawyers on part time contracts according to the public wage regulation, and often in combination with their private practices. Their contracts oblige them to use the agreed time on delivering legal aid from the office.

Collaborators at Norway's four student clinics work part time. Their work is partly paid from different sources, partly nonpaid. The Ministry of Justice has a separate grant for special legal aid projects that contributes most of the pay. The budget item also supports other non-profit organizations that deliver non-commercial legal advice.

4. Budget and Spend.

The Ministry of Justice's 2024 budget for criminal legal aid amounts to NOK 1 366 567 000 (€118 523 000) and for 2025 to NOK 1 651 497 000 (€ 143 235 000). The budget item covers fees, travel costs and food allowances to defenders and victims in criminal cases, and costs for translation and expert evidence.

The Ministry's 2025 budget for civil and administrative legal aid amounts to NOK 963 395 000 (€ 83 555 500), and for 2024 NOK 908 566 000 (€ 80 404 000). The budget item covers costs for lawyer fees, expert evidence and lay judges.

The budget for 2025 also includes NOK 80 852 000 (€ 7 012 000) for separate legal aid projects outside the dominant judicare model, and for 2024 NOK 69 295 000 (€ 6 010 000).

The budget does not separate costs on legal advice and legal aid in court cases, neither does it specify costs on administrative cases, cases concerning children or asylum cases – although estimates probably could be made.

⁴ Forskrift om salær fra det offentlige til advokater m. fl. etter faste satser (stykkprissatser) ved fri rettshjelp i straffesaker 12.12. 2008 nr. 1442 § 7.

The budget is demand driven. Applications that qualify cannot be denied due to budgetary reasons.

5. Scope, Caseload and Eligibility.

Norway restricts civil legal advice to 17 narrowly defined case types; 12 case types for legal aid in court and 4 types for selected tribunal cases. The Ministry's justification for the selection of case types is that they consist of legal problems that from an objective point of view means the most to people. Legally a few of the case types overlap, making it possible to carry on to the courts if legal advice fails to achieve an acceptable outcome. All other types of cases – that appear vast – are outside coverage. NLAA, however, opens for some discretionary exceptions both from the case type criteria and the poverty criterion.

Criminal legal on the contrary is quite liberal. Roughly a defender is obligatory in all criminal cases including misdemeanours during main hearings. The most important exception in numbers is drunk driving. If the suspect confesses to the charge, he or she might accept simplified procedures in which guilt is decided according to the charge and only the punishment might be disputed. Then the penalty claim must be over 6 months unconditional imprisonment to qualify for a defender paid by legal aid. An arrest followed by a petition for custody to the court also triggers the right to an obligatory defender paid by legal aid. Most criminal cases are handled by the simplified procedure.

Norway also grants victims of serious crimes a lawyer paid by legal aid that also forwards the victims civil claims against the charged as an addendum to the criminal charge.

Unhappily the Norwegian statistics on legal aid appear incomplete. Somewhat exaggerated: The Ministry of Justice counts the use of money, not on the numbers of users or cases. Since the legal aid decisions have been distributed on several instances, precise statistics also demand resources.

For 2020 Norway reported the following numbers of legal aid cases to the Council of Europe's Commission for the Efficiency of Justice. To my evaluation, these figures are the most reliable and updated ones on Norwegian legal aid.

Norway. Number of legal aid grants 2020⁵

	Advice	Court cases	Total
Civil and administrative	11 060	5 425	16 485
Criminal	0	47 154	47 154
Total	11 060	52 579	63 621

According to CEPEJ, Norway pays the highest amount per legal aid case among the members of the European Council that have provided information.⁶

Parliament recently changed the poverty criteria used for civil and administrative legal aid. The maximum limitation now has become five times the basic yearly adjusted amount of the Norwegian National Insurance scheme. The

⁵ CEPEJ Evaluation of the judicial systems (2020-2022) <https://rm.coe.int/norway-2024-2022-/1680b1f6e4> p. 9.

⁶ [PREMS 116124GBR CEPEJ fiche pays 2022-24 E V6.pdf](#)

Ministry of Justice estimates coverage to substantially increase from ca. 16 percent of the population to 33 percent. Entitled with an economic capacity of more than one basic amount must pay progressive percentage contributions up to 70 percent of the legal aid costs. The change had not been put into force by May 14, 2025.

If a party fully loses a civil trial, the party usually must cover the counterpart's costs. As a main rule, legal aid does not cover such inter partes costs.

No poverty criteria or contributions applies to the entitlement to defenders and victim's lawyers in criminal cases. If convicted, however, charged with means might be ordered to pay parts of the trial costs.

6. Quality Assurance:

All lawyers in Norway are qualified to deliver legal as long as they fulfil the general requirements for a lawyer's licence. Similarly legal helpers must be licenced to deliver civil and administrative legal advice. For both categories the lawyer's ethical code applies, and clients might complain over breaches to disciplinary boards that have the power to sanction them.

Lawyers are obliged to participate in 80 hours of approved training activities over 3-year periods as long as they are practicing. However, special courses for legal aid lawyers hardly exist. Students at law school clinics have their own training programs and complaint systems.

7. Public Legal Education:

As described above, the Norwegian parliament has passed a significant expansion of the existing poverty criteria. According to NLAA lawyers are obliged to inform clients that might qualify for legal aid about the change when it comes into force. Except for that, no special information campaigns on legal aid have been planned so far or recently carried out. However, when operational, the legal aid authorities will publicize the changes on Internet.

No nationwide research on legal needs have been carried out in Norway, but several studies the legal needs of smaller groups have been conducted. Except for a study from 2019 of the legal needs of long-term prison inmates, the rest dates more than 20 years back.

8. Alternative Sources of Legal Aid Services.

In addition to the instances mentioned above, the City Mission of the protestant church runs a legal aid service of significant volume for people with drug and alcohol problems labelled Gatejuristen (The Street Lawyer). The service uses volunteers for delivery and covers other costs from the Ministry of Justice's grant for special legal aid projects.

Home insurance in Norway has a part on legal costs that cannot be opted out. The case must concern a legal conflict, only selected case types qualify, and cost limits apply.

Norwegian consumer legal aid appears liberal, with free advice and a separate conflict solution system that comprehends all consumers. If deemed necessary, the consumer authorities also will support consumers in litigation before the courts and forward class actions on consumer issues.

Trade unions and many other membership organizations offer legal services as part of membership. The service usually is limited to issues within the organization's field of work.

Development of digital legal aid and conflict solution has not come far in Norway except for consumer legal services. Norway's legal sources (constitution, statutes, regulations, court decisions, etc.) have been digitalized for several years, but access presupposes payment.

9. Holistic legal services:

The idea of interdisciplinary teams that include legal services to clients has received some attention in Norway. However, such services do not function on a permanent basis at present.

10. UN SDG Standard 16.3

Not answered.

11. Other

ID - Juristen (The Identity Jurist) was a legal aid project run by collaborators from law school clinics in Oslo, the Street Lawyer and the public law office in Oslo. The project period ended in 2024. They helped victims of digital ID-fraud, theft and other digital harassment to stop the activity, report criminal behaviour to the police and regain losses both from the perpetrator and from banks, insurance and other financial instances that might have helped in averting such activities. They used innovative legal methods in increasing the awareness of instances involved and produced instructive to-do-lists for victims of such acts. The legal aid offer was part of a research project on public safety and digital identities.

A project established 3 years ago named Rettssenteret (The Law Centre) wants to develop an alternative and addition to the judicare model that dominates legal aid delivery to day. Its ambition is to develop features as outreach to disadvantaged groups among youth and elderly, an efficient first line with outreach, digital legal aid aimed at young people, a national telephone service and legal aid as part of mediation service. Several measures previously used by student law clinics and the Street Lawyer should be further developed and supplemented with other methods like the use of intermediaries with local community background, use of social media, and a home page with legal information customized to the target groups, etc

The Centre has a small staff and proportionately many volunteers. The ambition is to develop the use of unpaid volunteers as a permanent part of legal aid and offer them a stimulating work environment and experiences that they might use in career building. The Centre receives funding from the Ministry of Justice's budget for separate legal aid projects but has run into some financial problems at present.