

COMMISSION ON ENGLISH PRISONS TODAY



Norway

Norway is the northernmost European country on the western part of the Scandinavian peninsula. The country covers approximately 325,000 square kilometres and has a population of approximately 4.5 million people. The capital and largest city is Oslo. Norway is a resource-rich country with a very high standard of living; it is near the top of the list in terms of literacy, educational attainment, life expectancy, and per capita GDP.

Norway is a constitutional monarchy. The King, Harald V, exercises executive powers mainly through the Cabinet, which is headed by the Prime Minister, Jens Stoltenberg. The Cabinet depends on the support of the Norwegian Parliament, the Storting. Norway has twice rejected treaties of accession to the European Union, but it is a member of the European Free Trade Association. The currency is the Norwegian Krone; one pound is equal to approximately 10.15 kroner.



Criminal Justice System

The Norwegian Ministry of Justice and the Police is the governmental agency in charge of the maintenance and development of the basic guarantees of the rule of law. Its overriding objective is to ensure the security of society and of individual citizens. The Minister of Justice, Knut Storberget, is the head of the Ministry and its political leader. Each of the seven departments within the Ministry is led by a Director General. Priority areas of the Ministry of Justice include reducing crime, security and the rule of law, openness and democracy, executing the tasks of the Criminal Justice System, and providing service to the public.

Correctional Services Department

The Correctional Services Department administers the Norwegian Correctional Services and forms policies, laws, regulations, and central guidelines. It is part of the Ministry of Justice and the Police, and is headed by Director General Kristin Bølgren Bronebakk. The Norwegian Correctional Services' mission is to carry out remand and penal sanctions in a way that takes into consideration the security of all citizens and attempts to prevent recidivism by enabling the offenders, through their own initiatives, to change their behaviour. The Correctional Services make remand places available to the police and deliver sentences that have been imposed.

There are six regional-level branches of the agency. Each region is responsible for the delivery of sentences within its boundaries and is charged with ensuring the coherent use of resources and effective cooperation with other regions. The regional branches supervise and allocate resources to the local units within their boundaries. There are numerous local prisons and probation offices in each region. They are responsible for day-to-day operations at local level. The main tasks of the local units include the delivery of community sanctions, prison sentences, preventive detention and remands to custody, and the preparation of social security reports.

Facts and Figures¹

Head of the Ministry of Justice: Knut Storberget

Director General, Correctional Services Department: Kristin Bølgen Bronebakk

Number of establishments/institutions: 50 (as of 2007)

Prison population total: 3,533 (as of 30.6.2007, including pre-trial detainees, remand prisoners, and 133 prisoners serving their sentence in treatment centres or hospitals)

Prison population rate: 75 people out of 100,000 (as of 30.6.2007)

Pre-trial detainees/remand prisoners: 19.8% of prison population (as of 30.6.2007)

Female prisoners: 5.5% of prison population (as of 30.6.2007)

Juvenile prisoners: 0.3% of prison population (as of 30.6.2007, prisoners under 18)

Foreign prisoners: 19.5% of prison population (as of 30.6.2007)

Official capacity of prison system: 3,511 (as of 30.6.2007, excluding places in treatment centres)

Occupancy level: 96.8% (as of 30.6.2007, excluding prisoners in treatment centres)

Recent prison population trend:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Prison Population Total</u>	<u>Prison Population Rate</u>
1992	2477	58%
1995	2398	55%
1998	2519	57%
2001	2666	59%
2004	2975	65%

KROM – The Norwegian Association for Penal Reform

KROM – The Norwegian Association for Penal Reform – was founded in 1968 by a group of intellectuals and socially oriented practitioners in Norway who thought that prisons were inhumane and did not work. The organization originally emphasized prison reform with a change toward treatment. Over the years, however, the emphasis shifted to the abolition of prisons. KROM is notable for being among the first to bring prisoners themselves into the organization as active participants. KROM organizes prisoners, ex-prisoners and non-prisoners in penal reform work, and has served as a model for similar organizational activities in several other countries.

^{1 1} International Centre for Prison Studies World Prison Brief

Activity level has varied since KROM's inception in 1968, but the organization has remained active over the past 40 years. KROM organizes an annual three-day conference in penal policy, as well as holding multiple public meetings and educational seminars every year. The organization publishes a newsletter, KROM-NEWS, and some members have written newspaper articles and books on topics such as penal reform and prison abolition.

Bastøy Prison

Bastøy prison is a minimum security prison located on Bastoy Island, about 75 kilometers south of Oslo. The facility is located on a 2.6 square kilometer island and hosts 115 inmates. Øyvind Alnæs, governor of the prison, leads a staff of 69 prison employees. Of this staff, only five employees remain on the island overnight.

Once a prison colony for young boys, the facility now is trying to become "the first ecological prison in the world". Inmates are housed in wooden cottages and work the prison farm. During their free time, inmates have access to horseback riding, fishing, tennis, and cross-country skiing.