

# Political Systems Paper

## Why Norway can be considered a democracy?

According to the most recent democracy index that was published in 2021 by the Economist Intelligence Unit, Norway is a fully democratic country and it ranked at the top due to its high scores for "electoral process and pluralism, political participation and civil liberties" (Democracy Index 2021, 2022). Norway has a very high quality of democracy that falls under the top group on a global scale. Norway can be considered a democracy as the electoral processes in this country is free and fair. The process of "political party financing is mostly public with the requirements of strong reporting". Norway does not allow party advertisements on broadcast media channels such as TV or radio. However, political parties are allowed to put advertisements using digital media. In Norway, political liberties and civil rights get robust protection. Even though there have been a few cases of labor-market discrimination against some immigrant priests in Norway despite the same being illegal, the country holds string provisions against gender discrimination (SGI, 2020). The legal system in Norway is not just respected but at the same time, it is transparent and predictable. The cases of social stigma-related corruption are very rare in Norway.

In Norway, all civil rights are not just respected by the state institutions but protected as well. Personal liberties are also properly protected against any sort of abuse by any "state or non-state actors". Without a charge, an individual cannot be "detained for more than 24 hours" and the court decides "whether a suspect would be held in prison when the investigation" takes place. This is a serious consideration of civil rights that can be seen in only a few countries and Norway is one of them. All the political liberties in Norway are protected both in the "constitution" and in

the law. With the use of a constitutional amendment in 2004, “the right to free expression” was strengthened (SGI, 2020). Norway is a democratic country that has ratified all global conventions on civil and human rights. The national law of the country they have incorporated the “European Convention on Human Rights”. The right of free worship is also ensured in Norway. This country has both men and women with essentially equal education levels and the law of equality and equality in opportunity are firmly established (SGI, 2020). These are the core reasons that Norway continues to be on the top of the democracy index with high scores as a full democracy and continues to set the example for the countries with flawed democracy.

### **What do the political institutions look like in Norway?**

The constitution in Norway was adopted in the year 1814. According to this constitution, Norway is governed as a monarchy where the “power is divided” among three branches. “The branches are the legislative branch, the Storting or executive branch, the government, and a judicial branch or courts”. The king is the “head of the state” in Norway. The king in Norway is the unifying symbol of authority (Regjeringen.no, 2017). He is responsible for opening new sessions of Storting and he continues to preside over the meetings and decisions made by the Council of the state as he is in charge of approving those and taking the final decision. The head of the state in Norway, the king, is also responsible for “appointing the ministers” of the council of state, “presiding over the council of state”, hosting official visits by foreign heads of the state and visiting abroad, and taking decisions as the Commander in chief (“Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region”, 2022). Even though all these important executive powers are in the hands of the king, an executive branch exercises the same in the name of the king. The Prime minister is the “head of the government” in Norway. Party/parties that manage to get the “majority of the seats in the Storting or constitute” appropriate capability of governing,

from the Government in Norway. So, indirectly the electorates are responsible for selecting the government. Therefore, it can be said that a general election can bring changes to the current government and if a situation arises where the government has no confidence in Storting, changes can be brought without any general elections (Regjeringen.no, 2017). The legislative branch in Norway consists of the Stortinget incorporates functions like approving the national budget and enacting legislation. As for the relationship between the legislative and executive branches, it can be said that the Stortinget keeps an eye on the executive branch in terms of voting in confidence in the ruling government or setting up sessions that can question the ruling government (“Legislative Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, 2022”). The parliament is responsible for creating and amending the laws because Norway follows a "civil law system". The Courts of Justice in Norway regulate these laws and the highest is the Supreme Court which consists of 20 justices. Norway follows a direct elections system and they have different electoral divisions for the members of the parliaments (“Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2011”, 2022). “The principle of Norwegian electoral system is completely based on the principles of direct election and proportional representation in the multi-member electoral divisions” has been noted down by the government of Norway (Regjeringen.no, 2022). The court system in Norway works for providing reviews of the actions taken by the “executive branch”. “The legal system” in Norway is typically driven by the "Principles of Scandinavian civil-law system" and in this “law system”, there is no "general codification of private or public law" can be found. Instead, the laws and courts in Norway work truly based on comprehensive statutes that codify “core aspects of the criminal law system” and the “administration of justice” (Tønder, 2022). The judicial hierarchy in Norway focuses on the

“Supreme Court” the top followed by the “High court”. Most of the “criminal matters” are settled in the district courts often known as “Forhoersrett”.

### **What are some complaints about the political system/institutions in Norway?**

Even though Norway is recognized as a full democracy and it fits perfectly into all the criteria of being a democracy, some complaints about the political system in Norway could be identified. Norway legislation takes care of civil rights and political liberties, however, there were cases of labor market discrimination against priests who were immigrants. This sort of discrimination is completely illegal in Norway (SGI, 2020). Another interesting political issue in Norway was found to be climate change which was recognized as one of the top and most important political issues in recent times. According to another article by Milne (2021), rising political scandals could be identified as another issue with the political system in Norway. As mentioned in the article, the parliament of Norway is "embroiled" with rising expenses scandals that were the reasons behind the discontinuation of the job of Norway's second most powerful official party leader. It was also mentioned that an array of politicians from the major parties in Norway such as the labor party, the conservatives, the socialist left, and the populist progress, all have been suspected to be associated with the commuter flat scandal. It was also pointed out by Milne (2021), that Norwegian politics has been struck by an unusual number of scandals in the current times and the numbers are quite high which is very unlikely in Norway. Moreover, it was found that some lawmakers in Norway were associated with allegedly filing exaggerating expenses that were related to fake travel and the former president of Norway Erna Solberg also broke Covid-19 regulations. Another welfare scandal in Norway was identified that incorporated people who were entitled to certain advantages but were convicted in a wrong way and had their money is taken away (The Monarchy Today, 2022). Citizens in Norway have huge trust in their

politicians and political system; however, the scandals fueled the impression of having distinguished rules for the politicians. Therefore, it can be said that even after being the top full democracy, Norway is not free of political issues and several complaints had been found. Therefore, there are areas for improvement in the political system in Norway.

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