

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

IPPF Norway/Sex og Politikk is a non-profit and non-partisan membership organization working to advance and protect sexual and reproductive health and rights in Norway and globally. Sex og Politikk was founded in 1969 and is the Norwegian member association of International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

No UPR recommendations to Norway explicitly mention comprehensive sexuality education, third legal gender, abortion or sex worker rights.

STRENGTHEN COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

National framework

Access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in school is stated as a priority by the Norwegian government and considered an important measure to prevent violence as well as ensuring the right to health and non-discrimination. In 2020 the national curriculum was revised, strengthening the inclusion of CSE. However, despite wide support efforts are lacking for improved implementation despite evidence and demand for more CSE.

Current situation

- 45 percent of young girls report having experienced sexual violations (2023 national data collection scheme on youth, Ungdata).
- All forms of sexual violence among youth have doubled since 2015 (Ungdata).
- Educators, teachers as well as experts all underscore the need for strengthened CSE in schools.
- Official report (NOU 2024:4) states that too little has been done by the Norwegian government to prevent sexual violence.
- The report concludes with a **strong recommendation to increase access to sexuality education in schools as a main preventative measure.**

ENSURE ACCESS TO SAFE ABORTION

National framework

Norway has an almost 50-year-old abortion law providing abortion on demand until week 12. The law is based on a discriminating view of women as less capable of making ethical decisions, leading to the provision of an abortion board for abortions after week 12. All abortions in Norway is legally bound to take place at dedicated hospitals.

Current situation

- In 2022, the World Health Organization (WHO) updated its guidelines on abortion, emphasizing the need to remove all barriers to women's access to safe abortion.
- WHO States that legal barriers to abortion are a health risk as well as fuelling stigma.
- 95 percent of all abortions are on demand, before week 12.
- **People accessing legal abortion in rural areas are facing obstacles due to long distances and costly travels to the nearest hospital.**
- In August 2024 the Government presented a revised abortion law extending abortion on demand until week 18, but still not providing access to services at primary health care level.

STRENGTHEN THE RIGHTS OF SEX WORKERS

National framework

The purchase of sexual services from consenting adults is currently prohibited under § 316 of the Criminal Code. High levels of violence and abuse against people selling sex are well documented in Norway. UN organizations as well as key international human rights organizations have advocated the full decriminalization of all aspects of sex work.

Current situation

Sex workers in Norway face several issues due to the practice of this law;

- **Higher risk of violence and abuse, due to their isolation and marginalized status.**
- High risk of eviction, police surveillance, loss of livelihood and/or deportation.
- Less ability to screen clients, work organized or otherwise take measures to ensure their safety.
- Less human trafficking for prostitution purposes has been uncovered and prosecuted since the introduction of § 316.
- The Criminal Code Council recommends decriminalisation of § 316.

LEGALIZE THE THIRD GENDER

National framework

In Norway non-binary persons lack legal recognition. In 2023 the then Minister of Culture and Gender Equality initiated an investigation of a third legal gender with the purpose of improving the living conditions and legal protection for non-binary persons. The investigation recommended to legalize a third legal gender option.

Current situation

Non-binary people in Norway experience:

- Worse living conditions and quality of life than others, including other queer people.
- Are more exposed to exclusion, discrimination, and violence than others, including others queer people.
- Feel that public services are unaware of gender diversity. This is a barrier to using public services, including healthcare.
- Lack of access to gender confirmation treatment in Norway.

Research shows that **legal recognition can improve living conditions and quality of life for non-binary persons**. It can provide security and validation of their own identity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On strengthening comprehensive sexuality education

- Enhance access to comprehensive sexuality education by providing teacher training, quality-assured resources, and ensuring non-discriminatory access in all official languages and for all pupils, including those with disabilities.

On ensuring access to safe abortion

- Within ongoing abortion reform, ensure services are available at primary health level across the country.

On strengthening the rights of sex workers

- Decriminalize the purchase of sexual services and Repeal § 316 of the Criminal Code.

On legalizing the third gender

- Legalize a third legal gender in order to ensure the rights of non-binary people