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# country report

Nordic Countries Project  
Norway



## First conservative-lead majority government since 1985

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### Christian Democrats join the centre-right coalition in Norway

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Norway's right-wing government on Thursday January 17<sup>th</sup> reached a deal to bring the country's small Christian-Democratic party into its ruling coalition to form a parliamentary majority. It is the first time since 1985 that Norway has a majority non-socialist government.

On Thursday January 17<sup>th</sup>, the four non-socialist parties in parliament presented a new government platform, the *Granavolden Platform*, having reached agreement on a political basis. On Tuesday January 22<sup>nd</sup>, the four parties announced the new government, the first non-socialist majority government in Norway since 1985.

The government now consists of the Conservative Party (45 seats in parliament), the Progress Party (27 seats in parliament), the Liberal Party (8 seats in parliament) and the Christian Democrats (8 seats in Parliament). Together, the four parties hold 88 seats in parliament, three more than the majority threshold of 85 seats.

### The long way to a majority

The process to include the Christian Democrats in the government coalition has been lengthy and systematic. Prior to the inclusion of the Christian Democrats, the four parties had negotiated and agreed on six state budgets from 2014-2019. As such, all four parties had extensive experience in cooperating in budgetary issues. Particularly the Progress Party and Conservative Party have extensive experience in cooperating, having held office together since October 2013. In January 2018, the Liberal Party also entered government, after the adaptation of the *Jeløya Platform* the same month.

In 2018, after a disappointing 2017 election result, Christian Democratic Party leader *Knut Arild Hareide* announced that the Christian Democrats should enter government, after 13 years in opposition. At the time, Hareide did not disclose which or what sort of government he wanted his party to enter.

In late September 2018, as Hareide presented his new book and personal vision for the Christian Democrats, he announced that he would seek to enter government with the Labour Party (49 seats in parliament) and the Center (agrarian) Party (19 seats in parliament), supported by the Socialist Left Party (11 seats in parliament). Hareide's decision sent the Christian Democrats into a difficult process throughout October, during which all regional chapters of the party would vote on whether they preferred a non-socialist government coalition or a coalition with the Labor Party and Center Party, supported by the Socialist Left. On November 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Christian Democrats convened a national party convention, and the question was sent to a vote. Of a total of 190 delegates, 98 voted to enter the current non-socialist government. 90 voted in favor of the other alternative, while 2 delegates abstained from voting.

In the aftermath of the national congress, informal talks were arranged between the four parties, laying a foundation for government platform negotiations in January. On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, the four parties convened at *Granavolden* north of Oslo. The new platform was presented on

January 17<sup>th</sup>. Knut Arild Hareide stepped down as Christian Democratic Party leader the same evening.

### The abortion law as a political gambit

Reacting to the announcement of Hareide and the turbulences that it caused within the Christian Democratic Party, Erna Solberg intervened offering to discuss tightening abortion rules.<sup>1</sup> Her idea was to amend paragraph 2c in Norway's Abortion Act - also known as the Downs Paragraph, by reference to Downs Syndrome, a genetic disorder. The paragraph allows abortion even after 12 weeks if the child was to be "seriously ill" without further defining those illnesses in the law and leaving it up for interpretation of the medical panel in each case. Solberg's proposal was widely seen as an act to win the support of the Christian Democrats, potentially securing Solberg a majority in parliament until the next election in 2021.<sup>2</sup> At the same time it drew thousands of Norwegians to demonstrations in cities around the country protesting against restricting women's access to abortion and misusing women's rights as a political negotiation card.

The move to tighten abortion laws in Norway, one of Europe's most liberal societies, goes against a wider trend in the region.

### Further new policies in the expanded government platform

The discussions over the abortion law turned out to be the most publicly discussed point of negotiations for building a majority government. The government parties have agreed to aggravate the law in prohibiting selective reduction of fetuses and no longer funding NIPT testing.

Alongside the change of abortion law the expanded government platform presents a range of new policies like stricter immigration policies (meaning a variety of tightened regulations without withdrawing from common approaches on a European level but rather connecting Norway stronger to the European efforts for a common European system)<sup>3</sup>, increased funding for the defense sector, increased funding for elementary schools, reduced road tolls and reduced taxes.

Minister	Name	Party
Prime Minister	Ms. Erna Solberg	Conservative Party (leader)
Minister of Agriculture and Food	Ms. Olaug Vervik Bollestad	Christian Democrats
Minister of Children and Equality	Mr. Kjell Ingolf Ropstad	Christian Democrats
Minister of Climate and Environment	Mr. Ola Elvestuen	Liberal Party
Minister of Culture	Ms. Trine Skei Grande	Liberal Party (leader)
Minister of Defence	Mr. Frank Bakke-Jensen	Conservative Party
Minister of Education	Mr. Jan Tore Sanner	Conservative Party
Minister of Research and Higher Education	Ms. Iselin Nybø	Liberal Party
Minister of Finance	Ms. Siv Jensen	Progress Party

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Minister of Foreign Affairs	Ms. Ine Eriksen Søreide	Conservative Party
Minister of International Development	Mr. Dag Inge Ulstein	Christian Democrats
Minister of Health and Care Services	Mr. Bent Høie	Conservative Party
Minister for the Elderly	Ms. Åse Michaelsen	Progress Party
Minister of Justice and Immigration	Mr. Tor Mikkal Wara	Progress Party
Minister of Public Security	Ms. Ingvil Smines Tybring-Gjedde	Progress Party
Minister of Labour and Social Affairs	Ms. Anniken Hauglie	Conservative Party
Minister of Local Government and Modernisation	Ms. Monica Mæland	Conservative Party
Minister of Digitization	Mr. Nikolai Astrup	Conservative Party
Minister of Petroleum and Energy	Mr. Kjell-Børge Freiberg	Progress Party
Minister of Trade and Industry	Mr. Torbjørn Røe Isaksen	Conservative Party
Minister of Fisheries	Mr. Harald T. Nesvik	Progress Party
Minister of Transport and Communications	Mr. Jon Georg Dale	Progress Party

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.thelocal.no/20190118/norways-government-expands-coalition-with-christian-democrats>

<sup>2</sup> <https://euobserver.com/news/143242>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.venstre.no/assets/krf-v-h-frp-politisk-plattform-2019.pdf>

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