



Information for ENNHRI Regarding the Norwegian Government Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

1. NIMs Work During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Based on the authorities' recommendations to limit the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Norway, the Norwegian National Human Rights Institution (NIM) has temporarily closed our offices and all staff are working from home.

The NIM team will continue to work with protecting and promoting human rights in Norway. In addition to NIMs regular work, we will be monitoring legislative and other measures adopted in Norway in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to assess whether they are consistent with human rights, the rule of law and the principles of transparency, dignity and equality. This includes ensuring that the interventions involved in crisis measures are well-founded, proportionate and necessary.

2. Global Comparison of Government Responses to COVID-19

On 25 March 2020, the University of Oxford launched the first freely accessible tool to track and compare policy responses of governments tackling the COVID-19 outbreak around the world. The [Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker](#) collates live data on 11 indicators of government responses worldwide and aggregates the scores into a common 'Stringency Index'. Some of these indicators, such as school and workplace closures and restrictions on internal movement etc., may be relevant to ENNHRI's work in analysing the human rights implications of measures taken in Member States. Relatively speaking, Norway has some of the strictest measures in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 and is ranked in the highest level of the stringency index.

Map of government responses to COVID-19

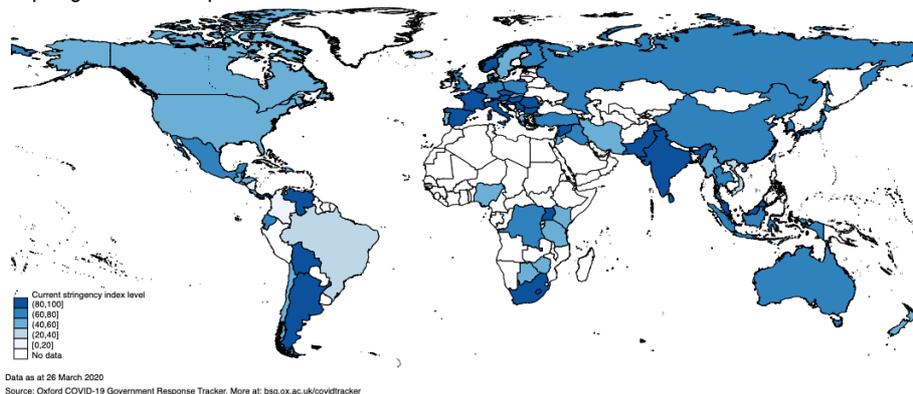


Figure 1: World map indicating stringency as of 26 March, University of Oxford

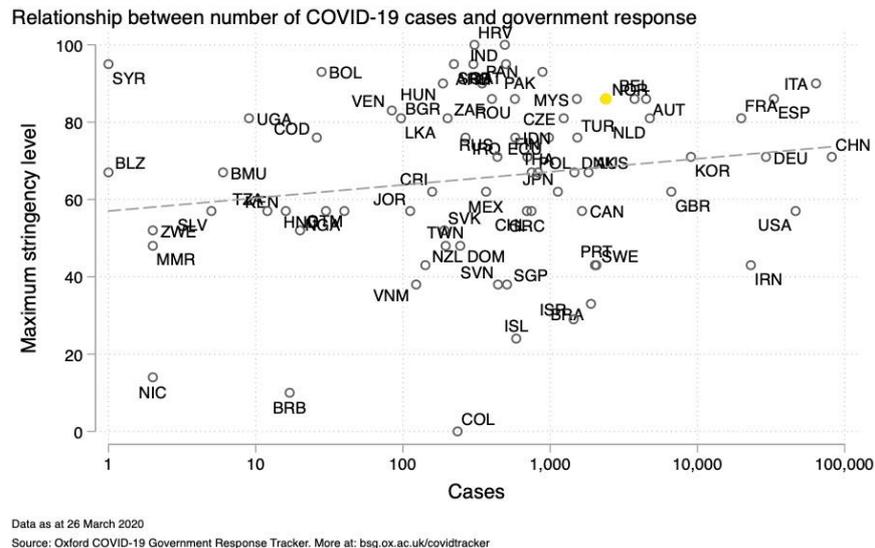


Figure 2: Relationship between number of COVID-19 cases and government response as of 26 March, University of Oxford

3. The Corona Act and Temporary Regulations

On 21 March, the Norwegian Parliament unanimously adopted emergency legislation to assist in responding to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The purpose of the [Corona Act](#) is to provide the Government with “sufficient flexibility to take necessary and reasonable measures to minimise disruptions in normal social functions in connection with the outbreak of COVID-19, and to remedy the negative consequences for the population, business and industry, the public sector and society at large”.

The Act stipulates that the Government can, through the adoption of temporary regulations, supplement or derogate from over 60 laws as far as is necessary to safeguard the purpose of the Act. On 24 March, the Parliament also amended their Rules of Procedure to ensure such regulations can be dealt with swiftly and effectively. Regulations can be repealed if parliamentary representatives, who together represent at least one third of the Parliament’s members, state in writing that they do not support all or part of the regulations.

The Corona Act also stipulates in Section 2 that any temporary regulations adopted must not contravene the Constitution, the Human Rights Act and Norway’s obligations under international law.

NIM made [a submission](#) to the Parliamentary Committee on Special Issues Concerning the Corona Crisis with two suggestions for amendments to the Corona Act. The first suggestion was to clarify the purpose of the Act in Section 1 to ensure that measures are limited to what is strictly necessary. The second suggestion was to add a requirement in

Section 5 of the Act to ensure that assessments made by the Government as the basis for preparing temporary regulations are made publicly available.

NIM has also made, and will continue to make, hearing submissions regarding temporary regulations made pursuant to the Corona Act. The [first submission](#) made by NIM in this regard concerned measures to strengthen the efficiency of the judicial system, with NIM recommending that steps are taken to ensure the use of remote audio/video technology in litigation is consistent with the right to a fair trial. The [second submission](#) concerned the enforcement of penalties in the criminal justice system, with NIM recommending that steps are taken to ensure that restrictions on prisoner visitation are consistent with the right to respect for family life and to ensure that the use of electronic monitoring (house arrest) is consistent with the State's duty to protect citizens from violence. NIM will continue to make such submissions, and will post them on our web-site.

4. Measures taken by the Norwegian Authorities

The following table outlines the measures taken by the Norwegian Government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as of 31 March 2020, organised by categories of affected rights. All measures below are in place until 13 April 2020 or until further notice. Information is based on official government sources, NGO reports and news reports.

More information in English about the measures taken in Norway in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic can be found on the websites of the [Norwegian Government](#), the [Norwegian Institute of Public Health](#) and the [Health Directorate](#).

Type of Measure	Required or Recommended	Details
Measures Affecting Rights to Work and Education		
School Closures	Required	Closure of all kindergartens, schools, universities except for primary school children of parents who work in critical social functions, including the health and care sector and for children with disabilities and special needs.
Workplace Closures - General	Recommended	Working from home recommended for all.
Workplace Closures - Specific Industries	Required	Workplaces that provide the following services must close: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – hairdressing services, skin care, massage and body care, tattooing, piercing, swimming pools, water parks, etc.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physio and manual therapists, chiropractors, opticians, chiropodists, speech therapists, psychologists, complementary and alternative medicine or treatment. (with exceptions for patients requiring rehabilitation and treatment after acute serious illness or to maintain important function) - Other service providers outside the specialist health care that are not considered necessary and involve physical contact of more than 15 minutes. - All businesses in the hospitality industry, including restaurants, bars, pubs and nightclubs, except cafes and eateries where food is distributed - these may remain open if they ensure visitors keep at least 1 metre distance from each other at all times. Retail trade remains open.
Extra support and resourcing for the Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)	N/A	Parliament has allocated an extra 200 million NOK to NAV. Extra measures are in place to ensure NAV can process applications for unemployment benefits. NAV employees are also defined as socially critical personnel, which means they can still attend work and their children can attend school.
Increased support for laid-off workers, unemployed and employers	N/A	Staff who are laid-off are guaranteed their full salary for 20 days, the period which the employer must pay has been reduced from 15 to 2 days so that the state then takes over, benefits for laid-off and unemployed have been increased, the lower income limit for entitlement to unemployment benefit has been lowered and the three day waiting period has been repealed.
Parents' right to carers leave for sick children doubled	N/A	The number of days is doubled both for parents who have an ordinary quota of ten days and for parents who have extended the quota. The new rules apply for the calendar year 2020. Freelancers and self-employed persons are also entitled to the same. It is possible to transfer days of care money between two parents.
Early access to student loans and extra loans available	N/A	Students will be paid their scholarships and loans for the remainder of the semester in April. Those who have lost income due to the corona crisis are given the opportunity to take out an extra loan of 26,000 NOK.

Measures Affecting Freedom of Assembly		
Restrictions on Gathering in Public	Recommended	When outdoors, people are advised not to be more than five people in the same group (not including immediate family or members of the same household). When indoors and in the workplace, people are advised to stay at least two metres apart (not including immediate family or members of the same household). In public, people are advised to keep a distance of at least one metre from others.
Public Event Cancellations	Required	Complete ban on all cultural events, sports events and organised sports activities, both indoors and outdoors.
Measures Affecting Freedom of Movement		
Restrictions on Internal Movement	Recommended	All non-essential travel within Norway should be avoided.
	Recommended	People without coronavirus symptoms but who have been in close contact with a confirmed case or have been abroad during the last 14 days can leave their home but are recommended to avoid close contact with others (home-quarantine).
	Required	People who are suspected or confirmed to have coronavirus but do not require hospital admission must stay at home and must get help from others to carry out necessary errands (home-isolation).
	Required	Trips to holiday cabins (hytter) located outside of one's home municipality are prohibited. Cabin trips are punishable by fines up to NOK 15,000 or prison for 10 days.
	Required	All people from southern Norway arriving in Lofoten, Vesterålen, Tromsø, and the regions inside the Arctic Circle, must go directly into quarantine.
Restrictions on International Travel	Recommended	Norwegians are advised against all non-essential travel to all countries.

	Required	Anyone who has travelled abroad since 27 February is required to self-quarantine for two weeks upon arrival in Norway.
	Required	Healthcare professionals working with patient treatment are prohibited from travelling abroad for both business and leisure. Costs will be compensated.
	Required	The Government have closed the border (land, sea and air) to all foreign nationals who lack a Norwegian residence permit and all visa applications have been rejected.
Public Transport Closures	Recommended	All non-essential travel should be avoided. However, public transport will continue to operate so that people with critical social functions can get to and from work.
Measures Affecting Victims of Domestic Violence and Abuse		
Crisis shelters (krisesentre) offering services over the phone	N/A	Most shelters are operating at reduced capacity and have closed for regular day access. They are instead offering support and legal assistance over the phone. Those in urgent need of protected housing are being prioritised. Crisis shelter employees are also defined as socially critical personnel, which means they can still attend work and their children can attend school.
Family protection offices (familievernkontorer) offering services over the phone	N/A	After initially closing completely, family protection offices are now offering services over the phone from 26 March. Despite operating at reduced capacity, therapists and mediators are now providing telephone consultations. Exemptions from the obligation to attend mediation can also be granted.
Increased resources for the National Hotline for Children and Youth	N/A	The National Hotline for Children and Youth subjected to violence, abuse and neglect is now open 24/7 and has put on extra staff after seeing a significant increase in inquiries since the coronavirus outbreak.
Measures Affecting the Elderly and Persons with Disabilities		
Reduced access to aged care facilities	Recommended	The Health Directorate recommends that aged care facilities ban regular visits. If visits cannot be avoided, the facility must first be contacted by telephone so that

		necessary infection control measures can be implemented.
The Health Directorate has published a recommendation to municipalities re caring for home-based elderly persons and persons with disabilities	Recommended	The Health Directorate says municipalities must take responsibility for safeguarding vulnerable home-based service recipients who, due to impaired cognitive and/or physical disabilities, are not able to seek the necessary help and care themselves. This includes having an overview of vulnerable home-based service recipients and their relatives, maintaining contact, designing special support measures and having a plan in case of illness of relatives or carers.
Some municipalities are waiving the requirement to pre-approve the use of close relatives as personal assistants	N/A	Ordinarily, an agreement with the municipality is required for the use of close relatives as assistants for persons with disabilities. This is now exempt in some municipalities.
Personal assistants for persons with disabilities categorised as socially critical personnel	N/A	Personal assistants are categorised as socially critical personnel, which means they can still attend work and their children can attend school. However, there is some concern over what will happen if assistants become quarantined and there aren't enough temporary workers available, particularly for those who are depend on assistance in everyday life.
Public transport workers unable to assist persons with disabilities due to social distancing	N/A	Public transport is still operating nationwide. However, various safety measures have been implemented to protect employees, for example drivers' seats on buses are cordoned off with tape. In most cases, a driver will be able to help lay out a wheelchair access ramp, but they will not be able to assist with fastening a chair etc., which would require they get closer to the customer than allowed.