

# Election in Norway returns Labour to power, as far-right Progress Party doubles vote share

Jordan Shilton  
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Norway's governing Labour Party (AP) emerged as the largest party in Monday's general election, taking 28.0 percent of the vote and 53 seats in the 169-seat parliament (Storting). Although the bloc of "left" parties secured a total of 88 seats—a majority needed to re-elect AP's Jonas Gahr Støre as Prime Minister—the biggest gain in the vote was achieved by the far-right Progress Party (FRP), which doubled its support to around 24 percent.

Støre will now enter talks with the other members of the "red" bloc on forming a coalition government or at least securing support from the outside for a minority AP government. The four smaller parties are the rural-based Centre Party (SP), the Socialist Left (SV), the Red Party, and Environmental Party the Greens (MDG). While differences exist among these parties—particularly on the continued exploitation of Norway's oil resources, which MDG and SV formally oppose—they all agree on investing huge sums to strengthen Norway's position as a military staging ground for war and supporting the far-right Ukrainian regime in the US/NATO-backed war on Russia.

Last year, all nine parties in the Storting united to pass a 12-year military spending plan that will effectively double the military budget with an additional 600 billion kroner (about €50 billion) in additional investments. One of those, the purchase of five frigates at a cost of 136 billion kroner, was announced by Støre during the last weeks of the election campaign. It went hand in hand with the government's release of a new Arctic strategy entitled "Norway in the North," which called for a stepped up military presence on the part of Norway and NATO to confront Russia and China.

The parties also unanimously approved a major increase in funding to the far-right Ukrainian regime earlier this year, bringing the total financial support from Oslo to Kiev during 2025 to 85 billion kroner. Since all of the military spending is being funded while the Norwegian government maintains its pledge to spend no more than 3 percent of its Government Pension Fund Global (GPF), better known as the Oil Fund, each year, the parties backing the explosion in war spending do so at the expense of public services and social programmes. The GPF has an estimated value of €1.7 trillion, making it the world's largest sovereign wealth fund.

The Norwegian political establishment's unanimous support for NATO militarism and war will mean, whatever the differences that may emerge over the composition of the new government, increased attacks on the living conditions and rights of the working class. Over the past three years, energy prices spiked dramatically due to the European imperialists' support for war with Russia, which saw them massively reduce low-cost Russian gas imports. Norway substantially increased natural gas exports throughout Europe, and demand for its hydro power rose sharply as its energy grid was integrated ever more closely into supply chains across the continent.

With domestic energy prices at a record high in December 2024, Labour's popularity slumped to just 14 percent in the polls. In January, the SP left the government coalition, criticising Labour for giving up national control over Norway's energy policy to the European Union. This stoking of nationalism played directly into the hands of the FRP, whose gains across many of Norway's regions came at the expense of the SP. The SP lost more than half of its more than 13 percent support at the 2021 election, securing just 5.6 percent this time around.

Støre responded to the energy price crisis by persuading former NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to return to national politics as Finance Minister. He also introduced a "Norway price" for home energy bills, capping the cost at 0.4 kroner per kilowatt hour. The price takes effect on 1 October, less than a month after Monday's vote, and played a major role in the revival of Labour's fortunes.

Norway's Trade Union Confederation (LO), which has over a million members in a country with a population of just over 5 million, lauded Monday's election result. "Our social model is based on freedom, equality, and solidarity," declared LO leader Kine Asper Vistnes. "It has proven itself well equipped to handle crises and transitions. Now we must take care of it."

The so-called Norwegian or "Scandinavian model" has in fact long passed into history. In its heyday in the post-war period, it rested on an extremely transitory set of global economic and geopolitical factors that allowed governments in the Nordic region to make substantial concessions to the working class while maintaining close ties to American imperialism. The restabilisation of world capitalism by

Washington in the aftermath of World War II, during which the Norwegian bourgeoisie proved itself more than willing to collaborate with the Nazi occupation of the country, created a brief window of perhaps 25 to 30 years in which national reformist programmes gained a new lease of life, allowing levels of social inequality across the Nordic region to decline significantly and the welfare state to expand. But since the 1980s, this process has been in steady reverse. Privatisations, handouts to the wealthy, and strict spending controls have seen the gap between rich and poor increase across Norway, Sweden, and Denmark.

For Vistnes to hold up the present political conditions in Norway as a powerful advertisement for the “Norwegian model” provides in fact one of the most devastating refutations to all of those political forces around the world who claim that capitalism can be “humanised” by means of pressure for “reforms” from below, and the advice of well-placed and well-paid union bureaucrats. The country is a frontline state in NATO’s war aimed at subjugating Russia to the status of a semi-colony, and the entire political establishment has mortgaged the future on building up the military in alliance with American and European imperialism. Although in comparative terms many Norwegian workers still enjoy better-paid jobs and stronger protections than their colleagues across Europe, these rights are under constant attack. Moreover, the hundreds of billions to be invested in war will, one way or another, be extracted from the workers and the public services on which they depend.

In addition, Norway’s traditional political setup is decomposing. Norwegian workers do not live in some kind of national bubble, but increasingly confront the same fundamental political problems posed to the working class internationally. Notwithstanding Labour’s victory, its level of support is nowhere near the more than 35 percent it regularly achieved in elections into the 1980s. What’s more, the official right-wing parties are collapsing in the face of the growth of the far right, which enjoys significant financial support from sections of big business. Høyre, the traditional conservative party, finished a distant third Monday with just 14.6 percent of the vote, while the liberal Venstre fell below the 4 percent barrier needed to secure the status of a parliamentary group and will only be represented by three deputies in parliament.

FRP leader Sylvi Listhaug, who calls for the elimination of taxes on the wealthy, a state crackdown on “criminals” and an intensification of Norway’s already restrictive immigration policy, will be the leader of the opposition over the next four years. In neighbouring Sweden, the right-wing government relies for its majority on the support of the far-right Sweden Democrats, whose origins are in the country’s neo-Nazi movement.

In his victory speech, Støre offered an olive branch to the right-wing parties, including Listhaug’s FRP. After noting that he had spoken to both Høyre leader Erna Solberg and Listhaug,

and accepted their congratulations on his victory, Støre added, “In Norway we have political opponents, but we don’t have enemies.” It has been suggested that if agreement with the smaller “red bloc” parties proves impossible, Støre could rely on the support of the right-wing parties in parliament to pass some of his measures.

The parties to the “left” of AP, above all SV and Red, seek to justify their readiness to back Støre as Prime Minister with the threat of Listhaug coming to power. In her election night speech following Red’s slight increase in support from 4.7 percent to 5.3 percent, leader Marie Sneve Martinussen stressed that her party was ready to work with Støre to bring about “practical change.”

Both Red, which was founded as the successor organisation to the Maoist Workers Communist Party of Norway in 2007, and SV, an alliance established in the 1970s by a faction of the Stalinist Communist Party and a split-off from AP, sought to capitalise on widespread horror over the genocide in Gaza during their election campaigns. They both called for the Oil Fund to divest from Israeli companies and for Oslo, which became one of the first European countries to recognise a Palestinian state, to “do more for Palestine.” They also called for increases to taxation on the rich to reduce inequality and help fund public services. While Red’s support increased marginally, SV fell from over 7 percent in the 2021 election to 5.6 percent this time around.

The idea that a new edition of the Støre government, whatever its final composition, will do anything to reverse the trend of growing social inequality and Norway’s ever more direct integration into the aggressive war plans of the imperialist powers is pure fantasy. With Stoltenberg set to continue as Finance Minister, having rejected a position as head of the Munich Security Conference, the new government will deepen Oslo’s collaboration in the war on Russia and enforce further spending restraint.

Although some of the most right-wing sections of the business elite expressed their frustration at the election outcome, the relatively relaxed attitude of the main sections of the establishment was summed up in comments by Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO) head Ole Erik Almlid. He told NRK, “I am sure that ways can be found to cooperate well with both the Storting and government in the future.”

Asked “Can the NHO cooperate just as well with a Støre government or a Solberg/Listhaug government?”, he replied, “We always cooperate well with the sitting Storting and government, and we’ve shown that in various areas.”



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