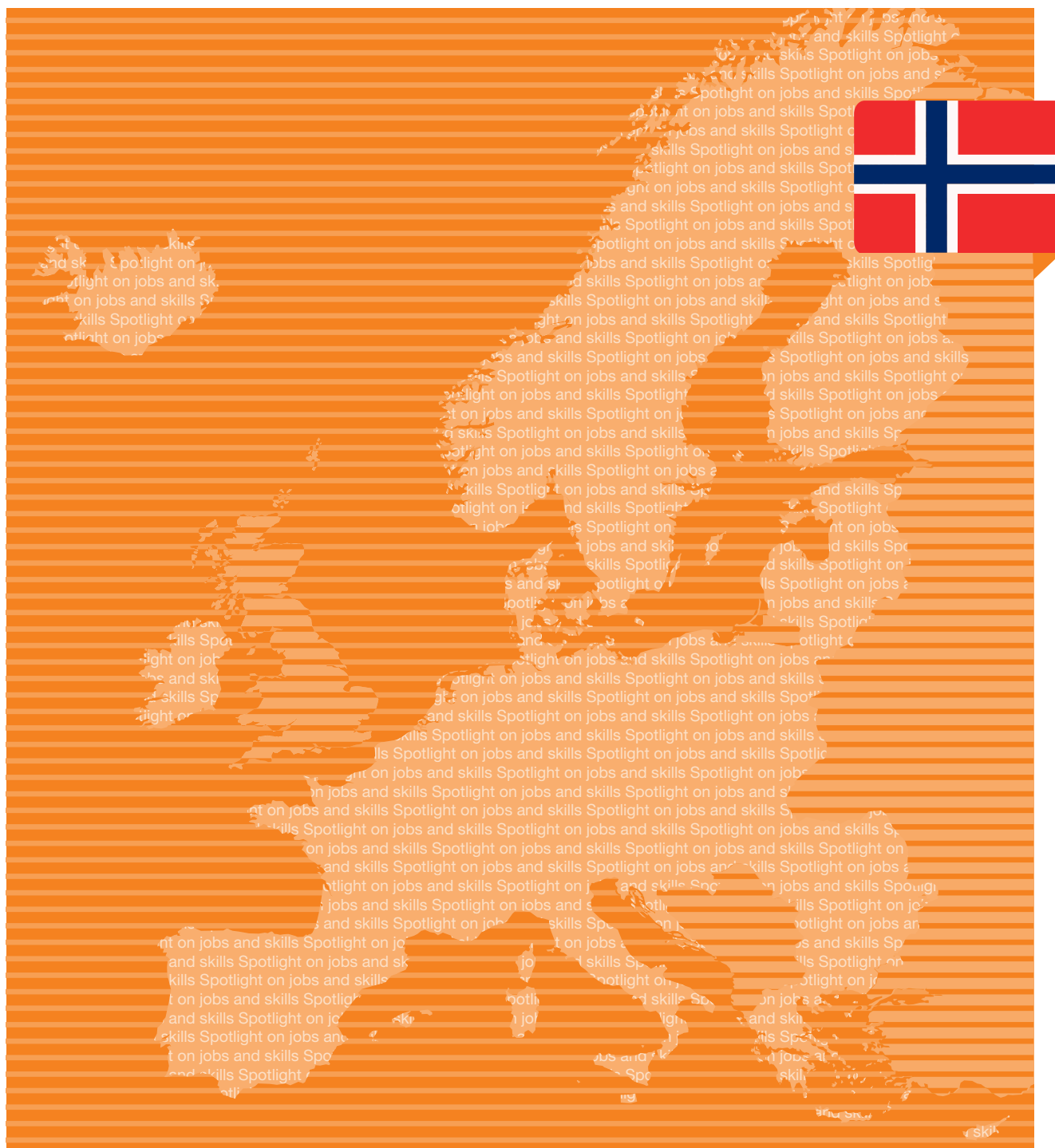




SPOTLIGHT ON JOBS AND SKILLS NORWAY

2026

Introduction

Drawing on its rich country-level skills intelligence, Cedefop develops its Spotlights on jobs and skills for EU-27 Member States, Iceland and Norway. The Spotlights provide insights into the current labour market landscape, future trends, and skills anticipation in each country. The analysis is based on Cedefop's skills intelligence online tool, its skills forecast, the European Skills Index (ESI), online job advertisements, sectoral and occupational skills intelligence, and country-specific skills anticipation reports.

Recent employment developments

Norway's unemployment rate has consistently remained below the EU average in recent years. In 2020 and 2023, unemployment was 4 %, compared with the EU average of 7 % and 6 % respectively. Youth unemployment among those aged 15–24 remained relatively stable, at 11 % in both 2020 and 2023. Unemployment among adults aged 25–49 decreased from 4 % to 3 %, and the rate for those aged 50–64 was around 2 % in both years. In 2023, unemployment rates were the same for women and men, at 4 % each.

Norway's labour market has shown consistent growth over the past decade. Between 2017 and 2022, employment increased by +7 % compared with +1 % in the EU, and from 2022 to 2023 employment growth continued at a moderate pace. Between 2018 and 2023, the employed population in Norway grew by 8 %, outpacing the EU average of +4 %.

In 2023, the employed population in the country was distributed across a broad range of sectors ⁽¹⁾. Sectoral employment shares were highest in health and social care (20 % compared with 11 % in the EU), wholesale and retail trade (12 % versus 13 %), and education (8 %, in line with the EU). The employment shares were lowest in energy supply and in water and waste treatment, each below

1 % ([Figure 1](#)). The strategically important energy sector does not generate substantial employment because of high labour productivity and efficiency, and the use of advanced technology.

Professionals were the largest occupational group, accounting for 29 % of total employment in 2023. The top three sectors employing professionals are non-marketed services (60 %), business services (29 %), and the primary sector and utilities (13 %). In non-marketed services, professionals are mostly employed in the public sector and defence (47 % of workers in the sector), and in health and social care (42 %). In business services, professionals are employed in ICT services (63 %) and professional services (47 %).

The employed population is predominantly high- or medium-qualified. In 2023, just under half of workers had a high-level qualification (47 % compared with 38 % in the EU-27), around one-third had a medium-level qualification (35 % compared with 46 % in the EU-27), and 17 % had no or a low-level qualification (16 % in the EU-27). Men accounted for 53 % of the employed population in 2023. The age structure of the workforce shows a strong concentration in the 25–49 age group, which accounts for 54 % of total employment (57 % in the EU-27). The employment share of workers aged 50–64 was 28 % (31 % in the EU-27), while young people aged 15–24 made up 13 % (8 % in the EU-27). The share of workers aged 65+ remained low, at 5 % (3 % in the EU-27).

In 2023, the share of young people (aged 15–24) not in employment, education or training (NEET) was 6 % and was equal for women and men. This is far below the EU NEET rate, which was around 9 % for both genders.

Recent skills and learning developments

According to [Cedefop's European Skills Index](#) (ESI), Norway's ESI score remained unchanged between 2017 and 2024. Despite this, the performance of Norway's skills system deteriorated. The country

⁽¹⁾ To learn more about the classification of sectors, occupations, and qualification levels discussed in this report, see Annex 2 of [Cedefop skills forecast methodological framework](#) (April 2023).

ranked 17th out of 31 countries in 2024, falling from seventh place. At the ESI pillar level, Norway ranked ninth in skills development, 10th in skills activation, and 18th in skills matching. The highest-ranking indicators are the share of individuals with high digital skills (second), and the long-term unemployment rate (third). ESI indicators on the share of the population with upper secondary attainment and above (rank 25th) and the activity rate of adults aged 25–54 (24th) signal areas for improvement. From 2017 to 2024, the ESI indicators showing the most notable improvements were the pre-primary pupil-to-teacher ratio ⁽²⁾ (ranking 12th in 2024) and the long-term unemployment ratio (ranking third in 2024). By contrast, the most significant performance declines were recorded in reading, maths and science scores, which fell from 504.5 to 474.4, and in the share of early leavers from training, which rose from 3 % to 5 % (Figure 2). Ongoing national reforms and policy measures aim to address these challenges.

In 2023, 51 % of the population had above-basic digital skills, well above the EU average of 27 %. The share of above-basic digital skills was higher among the employed population and among those aged 25–34, at 56 % and 66 % respectively, compared with EU averages of 33 % and 39 %.

A total of 24 % of the [employed population participated in learning](#) in 2023, well above the EU average of 14 %. Learning participation was higher among women (26 %) than men (22 %). Among adults aged 25–49, 27 % participated in learning compared with 18 % of those aged 50–64.

Future employment trends

Looking ahead, employment in the country is expected to grow by around 0.5 % a year between 2022 and 2035, in line with the EU average employment trend over the same period.

[Cedefop's Skills Forecast](#) projections show that, between 2022 and 2035, employment is expected to grow fastest in information and communication

(+49 %), administrative and support service activities (+24 %), and in real estate, professional, scientific and technical activities (+21 %). Notable employment growth is also expected in accommodation and food service activities (+13 %), financial and insurance activities (+13 %), and electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (+10 %). More moderate employment increases are forecast in water supply and waste management (+6 %), manufacturing (+5 %), and wholesale and retail trade (+5 %). Employment is projected to decline in transportation and storage (-13 %), arts, recreation and other service activities (-10 %), and agriculture, forestry and fishing (-8 %).

By 2035, professionals are expected to account for the largest employment share, representing 35 % of the workforce. Underlining the importance of high qualification levels. Employment is projected to grow for professionals (+34 %), legislators, senior officials and managers (+13 %). Moderate employment expansion is forecast for service workers and shop and market sales workers (+7 %). By contrast, employment is expected to decline among skilled agricultural and fishery workers (-50 %), clerks (-40 %), plant and machine operators and assemblers (-13 %), craft and related trades workers (-8 %), and technicians and associate professionals (-4 %).

The high-qualified labour force is projected to grow by 2 % a year, in line with the EU average trend. By contrast, the medium- and low-qualified labour force is expected to decline by 1 % a year. Female participation is forecast to grow slightly faster than male participation, broadly in line with EU trends of around +1 %. Ageing will affect the composition of the labour force, with the strongest growth projected for those aged 65+ (5 %, compared with the EU average of 6 %). The age groups 60–64 (+2 %) and 40–44 (+1 %) will also grow.

⁽²⁾ In 2024, 37 % of staff in kindergartens were qualified pre-primary teachers (13.5 children per qualified teacher). Data available at [Ansatte i udir.no](#).

Future skills and learning trends

Between 2022 and 2035, the labour market is projected to continue shifting towards higher-skilled employment. By 2035, high-skilled non-manual occupations are expected to account for almost two-thirds of total employment. Employment in these occupations will increase by 19 %, and 68 % of total job openings will be for high-skilled non-manual jobs. With employment declining by 4 %, skilled non-manual occupations will represent 24 % of employment. As employment in skilled manual occupations shrinks by 15 %, these occupations will make up 14 % of the workforce in 2035. Employment in elementary occupations will decline by 7 % and account for just 3 % of total employment in 2025. These trends highlight Norway's growing need for high-skilled roles and the declining market share of lower- and mid-skilled occupations.

[Norway's high-tech occupations](#) are projected to grow by +3 % between 2030 and 2035, below the EU-27 average increase of almost 7 %. This expansion is uneven across sectors, with particularly strong growth in finance and insurance (+17 %), agriculture, forestry and fishing (+16 %), and ICT services (+14 %). At the other end of the spectrum, employment in high-tech roles is projected to decline sharply in education and in health and social care (both -26 %). Employment in the [high-tech economy](#) is expected to grow in high-tech manufacturing (+5 % compared with +2 % in the EU on average), and in knowledge-intensive services (+16 % compared with +9 % in the EU on average). This reflects the expected employment growth in high-skilled non-manual occupations.

professionals, shortages are linked to high employment growth rates and high replacement demand, which create substantial pressure to fill the growing number of vacancies. Employers recruiting legal, social, cultural and related associate professionals, and business and administration professionals are expected to face the greatest hiring difficulties.

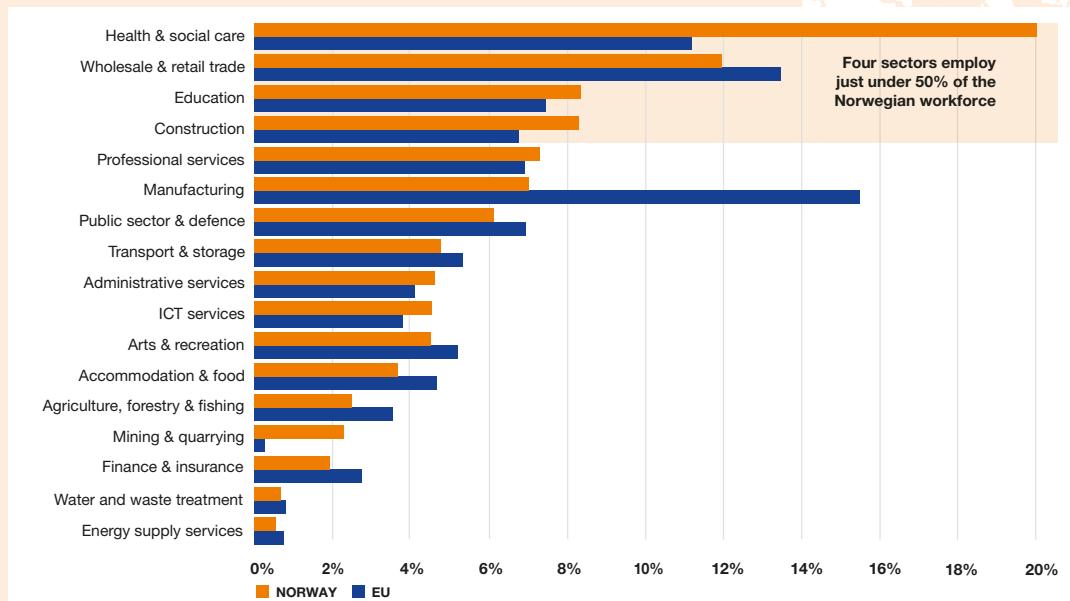
Expected skill shortages

[Cedefop's Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#) shows that employers will face the most pressing labour shortages when recruiting for high-skilled and elementary occupations ([Figure 3](#)). Shortages in elementary occupations are driven by high replacement demand and supply-demand imbalances. For



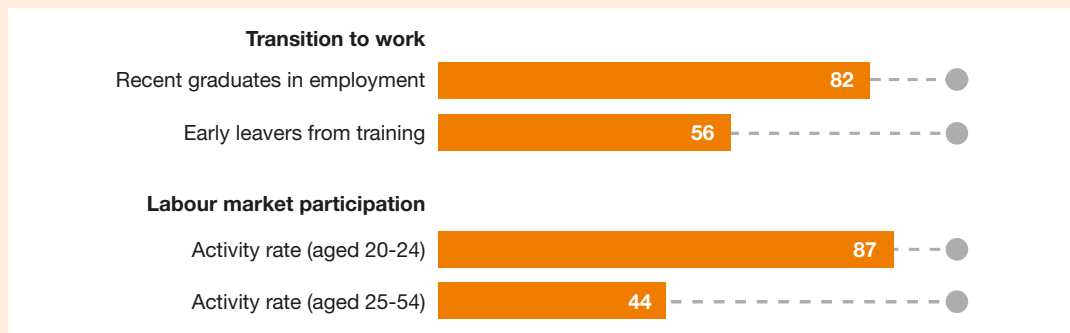
Jobs and skills in figures

Distribution of employment across sectors in Norway and the EU, 2023 (%)



Source: [Cedefop Skills Intelligence tool](#).

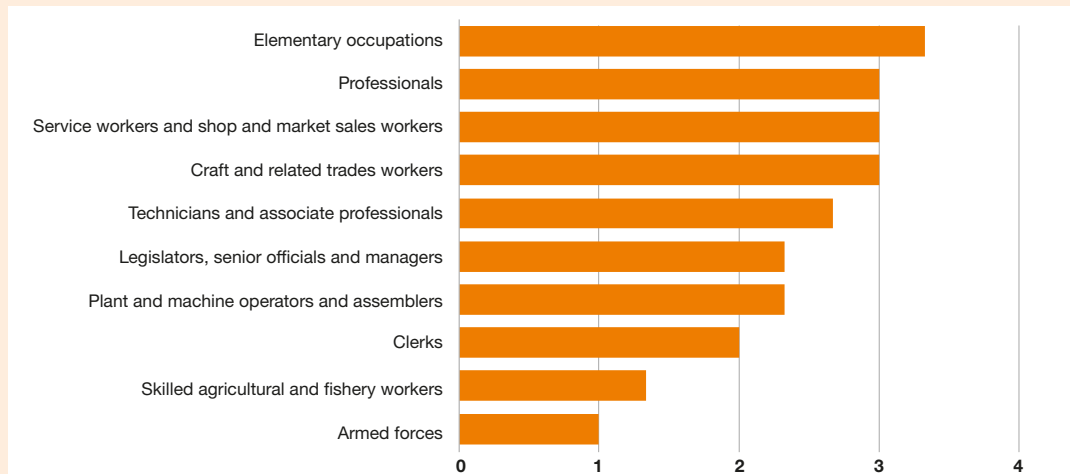
ESI skills activation pillar in Norway, 2024



NB: The ESI measures countries' 'distance to the ideal' performance, i.e. the highest achieved by any country over a period of seven years. The ideal performance is scaled to 100, with national scores computed and compared to that. Example: a score of 65 suggests that the country has reached 65 % of the ideal performance, with 35 % (100-65) room for improvement.

Source: [Cedefop European Skills Index \(ESI\)](#).

Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index, 2022-35, Norway



NB: The Labour and Skills Shortage Index is the simple average of the quartiles in each of the three pillars: (1) employment growth; (2) replacement demand; (3) supply/demand imbalance (FIOD). A score of 4 indicates a higher level of shortage, and 1 no shortage. The outcome of the pillars is based on the relative evaluation in quantiles of the occupation (here for all EU-27).

Source: [Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#).



Further information

- Cedefop. (2023). [Skills anticipation in Norway](#). Data insights series.
- Cedefop. (2024). [Evolution of European skills systems: performance 2015 to 2022](#). Publications Office of the European Union.
- Cedefop. (2025). [Vocational education and training policy briefs 2024 – Norway](#). National VET policy developments 2023-24
- Haukås, M. (2024). [Implementing European priorities in VET: making national VET agile, flexible, innovative, attractive, inclusive and quality-assured: Norway](#). Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives.
- NIFU Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education. (2025). [NHOs Kompetansebarometer 2025: Strategisk arbeid med kompetanseheving](#). [NHO's Competence Barometer 2025: a strategic approach to workforce skills development].
- Statistics Norway. (2024). [Framskrivning av tilbud av og etterspørsel etter utdanning mot 2050](#). [Projections of the supply and demand for education through 2050].

[Cedefop Skills intelligence tool](#)[Cedefop Skills forecast](#)[Cedefop Skills OVATE](#)[Cedefop European Skills Index](#)[Cedefop Labour and Skills Shortage Index](#)

This Spotlight was drafted by Cedefop's Skills intelligence and foresight team.

Cedefop would like to thank Torjus Abusland from the Directorate for Higher Education and Skills (ReferNet Norway) for his valuable feedback. This Spotlight was validated by the National Representative of the ReferNet Norway team, Else Kathrine Nesmoen.

**CEDEFOP**European Centre for the Development
of Vocational Training

Europe 123, 570 01 Thessaloniki (Pylaia), Greece
Postal: Cedefop service post, 570 01 Thermi, Greece
Tel. +30 2310490111, Fax +30 2310490020, Email: info@cedefop.europa.eu



Copyright © European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
(Cedefop), 2026 Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International

visit our portal www.cedefop.europa.eu



Publications Office
of the European Union
Law | Data | Publications