

MAIN CHANGES IN THE SOCIAL SECURITY LEGISLATION 1 JULY 2016 – 30 JUNE 2017

NORWAY

I. GENERAL

A. Administration/Organisation

a) Changes made during the reference period

No changes have been made during the reference period.

b) Changes decided, planned or proposed for the following year

No changes have been proposed during the reference period.

c) Research (including evaluation), completed or initiated

No research or evaluation has been completed or initiated during the reference period.

B. Benefits

a) The basic amount (hereinafter “B.a.”), which is the main basis for payment and earning of pensions and several other benefits from the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme, was increased by 2.78 per cent, to NOK 92 576, with effect from 1 May 2016.

From 1 May 2017 the B.a. was further increased by 1.14 per cent, to NOK 93 634.

b) 5 April 2017, a Royal Proposition was made to replace the special provisions which automatically gives persons with refugee status full minimum benefits from the National Insurance Scheme, without any requirement regarding periods of insurance, as if they have lived in Norway their whole lives, with the Supplementary Allowance Scheme. This would require the introduction of a new benefit for disabled refugees under the age of 67 in the Supplementary Allowance Scheme. Supplementary Allowance is a means-tested scheme, outside of the National Insurance Scheme.

Refugees who have attained the age of 67 or who are disabled, would according to the Proposition receive Supplementary Allowance on a level comparable to that of the old-age pension or invalidity benefit which they are currently receiving through the National Insurance Scheme.

The Royal Proposition was for the most part turned down by Parliament. However, two proposed changes were supported by the majority.

- Repealing the current requirement of three years of insurance in order to be eligible for Supplementary Benefit (hjelpetønad). This will enter into force 1 January 2018.
- Introducing a requirement of five years of insurance in order to be eligible for Cash Benefits for Families with Small Children (kontantstøtte). This will enter into force 1 July 2017.

c) No research or evaluation has been completed or initiated during the reference period.

II. MEDICAL CARE

a) The ordinary ceiling for cost sharing by a patient (which includes payment for treatment, important drugs and transportation) has been slightly raised. The maximum cost sharing amount

(ceiling 1) for 2017 is NOK 2 205. After the ceiling has been reached, a card is issued, which gives the insured person entitlement to free treatments and benefits as mentioned, for the rest of the calendar year.

Cost sharing ceiling 2 includes expenses regarding certain health care services which are not included in ceiling 1, such as physical therapy, some forms of dental treatment and accommodation fees at rehabilitation centres and treatment abroad. Cost sharing ceiling 2 for 2017 is NOK 1 990.

b) No major news to report.

c) No major news to report.

III. SICKNESS BENEFIT

a) No major news to report.

b) The sickness benefit replacement rate for self-employed persons has been increased from 65 to 75 per cent of the income basis from the 17th day of sickness. This amendment will come into effect 1 October 2017. (For employees, the replacement rate will remain 100 per cent, up to a ceiling of 6 B.a.)

In addition, the period in which a person may receive work assessment allowance under Chapter 11 of the Norwegian National Insurance Act (a rehabilitation-type benefit typically granted to insured persons who have exhausted their sickness benefits), has been reduced from four to three years. Moreover, the extension period has been reduced from an unlimited number of years to two years. This amendment will come into effect 1 January 2018.

c) A trial period with extended rights to self-certified sickness absence (up to one year) in certain enterprises has been completed. The evaluation of the trial concludes that more expansive rights to self-certified sickness absence may increase the use of graded sickness absence, but that they do not have an effect on overall sickness absence rates.

Another trial, which involved a more rigorous enforcement of activity requirements for sick-listed workers on behalf of the Labour and Welfare Administration in selected counties, has also been completed. The evaluation of the trial concludes that the more rigorous enforcement may have contributed to a reduction in sickness absence rates in certain counties.

IV. UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT

a) With effect from 1 July 2016, the period in which the beneficiaries may receive unemployment benefits while setting up their own enterprises was extended from nine to twelve months.

b) No major news to report.

c) No major news to report.

V. OLD-AGE BENEFIT

a) No major news to report.

b) Reference is made to I B b)

c) No major news to report

d) See I B a).

VI. WORK ACCIDENT AND OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE BENEFIT

No major news to report.

VII. FAMILY BENEFIT

a) The period in which a recipient of family allowance may temporary stay abroad with continued right to the allowance, has been reduced from six to three months.

b) No major news to report.

c) No major news to report.

VIII. MATERNITY BENEFIT

Part VIII of the European Code on Social Security has neither been included in the Norwegian Ratification of the Code, nor in subsequent Notifications.

IX. INVALIDITY BENEFIT

a) No major news to report.

b) Reference is made to I B b).

c) In 2015, a Disability Benefit reform was introduced. The aim was to create a new, simpler disability scheme and to increase work incentives, eliminate threshold effects and prevent people from getting locked up in the disability system. So far there have been two evaluations of the effects of the changes in the incentives for the Disability Benefit recipients. Both use data from the first six month period after the reform.

One analysis, based on a selection of Disability Benefit recipients, concludes that the reform has had no effect on labour supply for this group.

Another evaluation, based on all Disability Benefit recipients, finds a 7.5 per cent increase in labour supply for recipients with a 100 per cent benefit.

Both reports conclude that measuring the effects of the reform after six months is early, and analysis based on newer data are initiated.

d) See I B a).

X. SURVIVORS' BENEFIT

a) No major news to report.

b) No major news to report.

c) As a part of the Norwegian pension reform, the benefits to survivors under the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme have been examined. On 2 February 2017, a report on the matter was delivered by an Expert Committee. The Committee suggests modifications of the survivors' benefits for survivors under the age of 67. It is suggested that the current scheme

should be replaced by a time limited benefit, given during an adjustment period, and with the requirement that the survivor is working, applying for work or undergoing education.

The Committee furthermore suggests to phase out the special provisions which today may give survivors favourable Old-Age Benefit and Invalidity Benefit.

The Committee suggests to improve the benefits for surviving children, mainly through strengthening the benefit for the children who have lost one of the parents and by increasing the benefit period until the child attains the age of 20, for all children who are still undergoing education.

d) See I B a).

XI. FINANCING

a) – c) No major news to report.