

Postdoctoral Careers in Europe: Norway





Introduction

Whether you are in the final stages of your doctorate or have just finished, you will probably be planning your next career move. One of the questions you will be asking yourself is whether to stay in your native country or embark on an academic career abroad. If you decide on the latter, Europe will almost certainly be on your shortlist of possible destinations. This eBook is for postdocs interested in starting or continuing their academic career in Norway.

Norway has been named one of the most beautiful countries on earth. But there's more to this remote Northern European nation than stunning fjords and glaciers. Foreign academics will find an ultra-modern country with an inclusive higher education system, unique research opportunities and high quality of life.

In this eBook, you will find out about the Norwegian higher education system, and gain valuable insights into funding options, career advancement, the job market in Norway and practical ways to get a foot in the door.

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Research and Funding

Norway is committed to investment in research in order to develop its strong knowledge-based economy. The country's geographical location, a stone's throw from the Arctic, offers unique opportunities in marine research, environmental sciences, energy and health, and attracts scientists from all over the world. The Norwegian government also invests heavily in medicine, materials science, biotechnology and communication research programmes. [The Research Council of Norway](#), an agency of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research, is responsible for awarding funding to universities and individual research programmes as well as advising on research policy. The council is divided into four divisions: Science; Energy and Environment; Society and Health; Innovation.

Career Progression

Norway has no tenure-track system and doctoral candidates can apply for Associate Professor/Senior Lecturer posts without having completed a postdoc or 'habilitation' phase. There are three intertwined career paths in Norway, similar to the British academic model: research, teaching or both. The posts of Lecturer/Assistant Professor and Senior Lecturer can be teaching only or follow a more research-oriented path. Associate Professor posts are heavily weighted in favour of research but also have teaching and supervision duties.

Although the absence of a tenure-track system can seem attractive, the main barrier to career progression is that permanent positions are scarce - a job is considered for life in Norway. Most postdocs will find themselves carrying out many short-term or temporary posts before being able to apply for permanent roles. All academics are considered to be government employees or civil servants, and most posts comprise around 40% teaching, 40% research and 20% admin. There are around 11,000 academic staff currently employed in Norway, and roughly half are employed in non-tenured positions, usually as postdoc researchers or PhD students.

The Higher Education System

Norway has [eight universities, nine specialised institutions, 25 university colleges, two national academies of art and a number of private higher education institutions](#). The highest-ranking institutions are the University of Oslo and the University of Bergen. Higher education is fully funded by the state, and Norway was one of the first countries in Europe to adhere to the Bologna Process, implementing a two-tier system, which comprises three-year undergraduate degrees and two-year Master's degrees. There is also a huge range of courses across all disciplines taught entirely in English.

Norway is now one of the few European states to have hung onto a system of 'free education for all.' Nordic neighbours Sweden and Denmark continue to provide free tuition for domestic and EU students only, so Norway stands alone in offering free higher education to all students, regardless of nationality. A PhD in Norway takes around three years to complete and is fully funded – the majority of doctoral students receive a monthly salary. Overall responsibility for higher education rests with the [Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research](#), which offers a wide range of scholarships and grants to help mitigate the country's high living costs.



Salaries

Academic rank determines salaries in Norway, and fixed pay scales are set by unions, government and universities.

Average academic salaries in Norway (gross monthly salary):

- Postdoc researcher: €3,440
- Lecturer/Assistant Professor: €3,950
- Associate Professor/Senior Lecturer: €4,600
- Professor: €5,560

Living and Working in Norway

Norway has some of the highest living costs in the world, some 30% higher than the US and 25% higher than the UK. However, the country also has the fourth-highest per capita income in the world and one of the highest standards of living with free, top-quality healthcare, and generous working conditions. So those considering a move there may be willing to overlook paying 60 NOK (€6.25) for a small beer!

Find out more about living and working in Norway by visiting our country profiles page [here](#).

The Job Market

The job market in Norway, although small, is very open to hiring international academics, and this is further strengthened by the prevalent use of English as a working language. Academia in Norway has been viewed as rather homogenous in nature, but diversification among staff, researchers and students (12,000 of whom are non-Norwegian) has increased drastically in recent years. The formation of the [Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education](#), which seeks to increase international partnership and collaborative schemes offered by the Norwegian Research Council, has widened the options for early career researchers. Most vacancies exist in the fields of environmental and marine sciences, agriculture, engineering, oil, IT and medicine in both universities and industry. Networking is key, and if you have few or no connections in Norway, you may find it difficult to penetrate the job market. You can browse academic vacancies at [jobs.ac.uk](#).



Job Application Process

A cover letter, resume/CV, application form and publication list are the usual requirements for an academic job in Norway. Unless otherwise stated, it is acceptable to write your application in English. Resumes do not differ significantly from most countries, but Norwegians appreciate brevity, so keep your resume to two pages and your cover letter to one.

One quirk of the hiring process is that every application is individually evaluated by a specially formed committee. Each candidate then receives a 'report' detailing how their application stands up against other candidates and may even include the names and dates of birth of the members of the evaluating committee. This may seem strange to foreign applicants, and somewhat crushing if you have not received an invitation to interview. However, the system shows the openness of the Norwegian application procedure and allows for constructive feedback. The outcome of your application can take some time so don't be put off if you haven't heard about your prospects for a couple of weeks or more. If you are short-listed, you will be invited for an interview and may be asked to give a sample lecture to students.

Application tips: During your application and interview, avoid being over-familiar and boastful. Like their Swedish neighbours, Norwegians like to stick to the facts and frown upon showy behaviour, which would not fit with their commitment to teamwork.



Work Permit

All EU/EEA nationals are permitted to live and work in Norway without a permit but must register after a period of three months. Those from outside the EU/EEA generally need to have an employment contract in place before taking up residence. For more information, consult [the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration \(UDI\)](#).

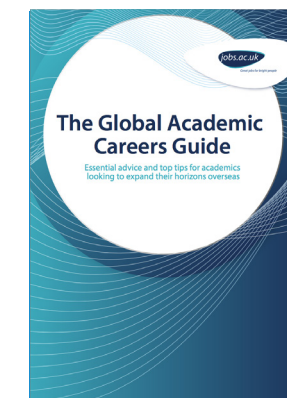
About this ebook

'Postdoctoral Careers in Norway' has been compiled by jobs.ac.uk as part of the 'Postdoctoral Careers in Europe' series, helping you take your first step into the European academic world.

Europe is one of the most popular destinations for freshly-minted doctorates. Ancient and prestigious universities, excellent funding opportunities and diverse research networks attract thousands of international students, postdocs and academics to Europe each year. Add to this the prevalent use of English as a working language and a commitment to international cooperation in research which is unparalleled worldwide, Europe has much to offer aspiring academics.

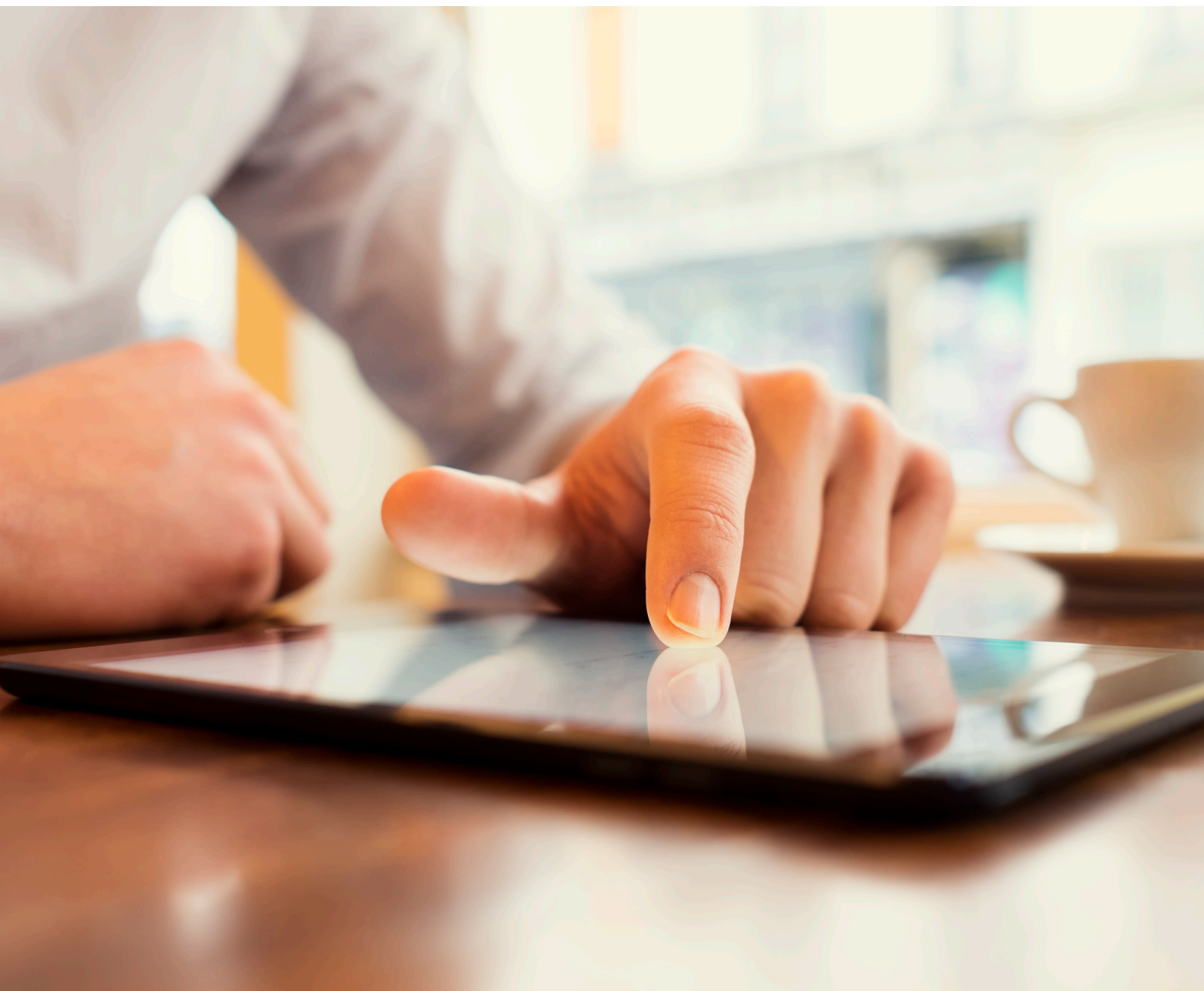
There is a strong tradition of cross-border collaboration, providing a unique research perspective, as well as offering ample opportunities to work with colleagues across the continent. Whether you choose a job in a European university, research institute or company, you will experience fantastic research facilities, generous funding and progressive working conditions.

Recommended reading:



The Global Academic Careers Guide

Essential advice and top tips for academics looking to expand their horizons overseas. This ebook will tell you more about the scale of the new global market, help you consider the pros and cons of seeking employment outside your nation of origin, and give you important information that will improve your success rate if you do decide to give working abroad a try.



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