

Committee will Investigate Foreign Adoptions

The Norwegian Government has today appointed the Committee that will investigate foreign adoptions. Professor Camilla Bernt from the University of Bergen will lead the work.

– The Government takes very seriously the fact that several adoptees have come forward and described very serious circumstances in their adoptions. When we now start this investigation, the result must provide thorough and good answers. This is especially important for the adoptees and their families. I want to bring to light what has happened, and whether the system for foreign adoption has been good enough, says Minister of Children and Families Kjersti Toppe (The Centre Party).

The starting point for the investigation is information that has come to light in other countries and information in the media about very serious circumstances in foreign adoptions from individual countries to Norway. The overall purpose is to obtain answers to whether there have been illegal or unethical circumstances in connection with foreign adoptions to Norway.

The time limit for the Committee is up to 2 years from its inception, and the Committee will deliver one or more interim reports on the circumstances in individual countries or other topics that are suitable. A reference group for the Committee will also be set up.

– We have put in place a well-composed Committee with five highly competent participants. They have a good combination of professional expertise and experience to solve the important task of investigating international adoptions, says Toppe.

The Committee will take a closer look at regulations and practice in adoptions to Norway. They will also look at whether considerations of legal protection and human rights obligations, including the best interests of the child, have been safeguarded.

In the investigation work, the Minister of Children and Families is also concerned with ensuring better follow-up of all adoptees, especially those who seek help and want more answers. The Minister has given the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) more funds and tasks, in order to strengthen the follow-up of adoptees.

– The Government has prioritised funds for post-adoption measures in 2023. In August, a competence service for adoptees and their families will be in operation, and from September, a service for assistance in searching for biological origins will be in place.

About the Committee

The Committee will be chaired by Professor Camilla Bernt, from the Faculty of Law at the University of Bergen.

The Committee also includes the following members:

Torunn Elise Kvisberg, Appellate Court Judge, Lillehammer

Rudolf Christoffersen, Public Prosecutor, Bergen / The Hague

Anne Balke Staver, Researcher at NIBR, OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University

Ketil Eide, Professor of Sociology at the University of South-Eastern Norway, Porsgrunn

The following is a more detailed description of the specialist expertise and experience of the Committee:

Camilla Bernt, Law Professor at the University of Bergen

Bernt is a legal professional and obtained a doctorate on the use of mediation. Her areas of expertise are civil procedure, law of minors and good administrative practice. She is head of the research group for Civil Procedure and Conflict Resolution at the University of Bergen. She works particularly with procedural law issues in child law cases and child protection cases. Her expertise in good administrative practice will be particularly relevant as chair of this Committee, since the Committee will look in particular at how adoptions have been practised, and what system has existed for control and supervision of foreign adoptions. She was Secretary of the County Social Welfare Boards Committee, which presented NOU 2005: 9 Resource Use and Legal Protection in the County Social Welfare Boards.

Torunn Kvisberg, Appellate Court Judge at Eidsivating Court of Appeal

Kvisberg is a legal professional and wrote a doctorate in Law of Minors on the topic of international custody cases and international child abduction. She has previously been a professor at The Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences and District Court Judge in Sør-Gudbrandsdal District Court, as well as having worked in the legal department of the Ministry of Justice. She has participated in the Adoption Act Committee (NOU 2014: 9), the Children Act Committee (NOU 2020: 14) and the Criminal Procedure Committee (NOU 2016: 24). Kvisberg has been a liaison judge in Norway for child abduction cases, and part of the network for judges in child abduction cases of the Hague Conference. Kvisberg also participated as an expert from Norway in the work of the Hague Conference on the Guide to Good Practice under the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention.

Rudolf Christoffersen, Public Prosecutor at Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane Public Prosecutor's Office

Christoffersen is a trained nurse and legal professional. He has additional education in Multicultural Understanding. He has been Norway's representative in GRETA, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Christoffersen has prosecuted a number of human trafficking cases and is a widely employed speaker on human trafficking both in Norway and abroad. He is in the Legislative Committee on negative social control, which will report on legal issues in cases concerning negative social control, honour-related violence, forced marriage, genital mutilation and psychological violence. Christoffersen worked at Eurojust European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation in The Hague from 2015 to 2017. From 1 September and the coming three years, he will be the Foreign Ministry's special envoy as Liaison Public Prosecutor at Eurojust in The Hague.

Anne Balke Staver, Researcher at NIBR, OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University

Staver is a political scientist, with a doctorate from the University of Toronto in Comparative Public Policy. Her doctorate examined the development of stricter provisions for family immigration in Denmark, Norway and the UK. Staver researches income requirements in immigration and integration policy from the 1980s and onwards, as well as European asylum policy and reception of refugees, and teaches in International Migration and Migration Policy. She is particularly interested in the relations between human rights, knowledge and politics, and how this affects policy change over time. Staver has work experience from The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration and the Norwegian Police Immigration Unit, as well as the secretariat of The Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC) in Geneva.

Ketil Eide, Professor at the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, University of South-Eastern Norway

Eide is a sociologist and has a PhD in the field of International Migration and Ethnic Relations, with the title "Ambiguous Children. About Child Migrants in a Historical Comparative Perspective". Here, he compared how immigration policy has developed over time, and how Norway accepted unaccompanied minor migrants, with a development from voluntary acceptance to a bureaucratic and thoroughly regulated system. Eide is an active researcher in national, Nordic and European research projects concerning childhood and adolescence, migration, mental health and child protection. Eide is also a trained social worker.