

Post-election analysis Red-green election victory Norway

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Red-green election victory

The 2025 election campaign is over, the voters have decided and given Norway a new red-green majority. For the first time since 1993, a single-party government has been re-elected.

The incumbent Labour Party government will continue as it is today. To signal continuity and stability, it is highly likely that Prime Minister Støre will choose to retain most of his ministers, at least for the time being.

Executive summary:

- The Labour government continues with a red-green majority but will be dependent on all the parties on its side of the spectrum.
- The government must therefore negotiate state budgets with the Red Party, the Socialist Left Party, the Green Party, and the Centre Party, but is in principle freer on other issues.
- The state budgets will function as a kind of "mini" government platform through the so-called verbal proposals – political decisions without immediate budgetary consequences. In particular, the Socialist Left and the Red Party (and possibly the Greens) will try to anchor the government to the left through these verbal proposals.

01 The Government's work

The name of the government will not change, and it will not need to negotiate a new political platform or make changes to its ministers. Since 2001, government platforms have been widely used; now, the government (formed solely by the Labour Party) will rely on its party program as the political "platform" for primary policy. This means that cooperation between the governing Labour Party and its parliamentary partners will be less extensive than what we have seen in recent terms.

There is little reason to believe that Prime Minister Støre will carry out a major cabinet reshuffle as a result of this election outcome. Emphasis will instead be placed on stability and continuity, meaning that the current ministers are likely to remain in their departments.

02 A new Parliamentary situation

A pure Labour government means greater predictability regarding what will come from the government. On the other hand, there will be more unpredictability in how Parliament handles government proposals. The spring of 2025 was in this respect a preview of the maneuvering Labour, governing alone, will be forced to engage in (case by case and budget by budget). The spring session showed us new, alternative majorities across party blocs on various issues. A government may sometimes vote in favour of proposals it actually opposes, simply to avoid being defeated. So can that strategy hold in the long run?

Labour must now build its primary parliamentary foundation with four parties. The situation is becoming even more fragmented, and the work in Parliament will be more demanding. The Red Party and the Socialist Left will attempt to anchor Labour to the left, while the Centre Party has no interest in such a shift. Given this dynamic, and the Centre Party's swing position, Labour may gain the political flexibility it seeks to pursue majorities across blocs on individual issues outside the budgets.

The country is also getting one of its "youngest" Parliaments in a long time. Many new representatives will be entering Parliament as active members for the very first time. In the Labour Party, about half of the group taking their seats on October 1 will be newcomers. Even though Labour's policies remain firm and consistent with the government's line, it matters greatly who will be the ones to present, front, and negotiate policy in Parliament.

03 The state budget

The government's first real test will come in the wake of the budget proposal and the negotiations surrounding the state budget for 2026. Without a formal cooperation agreement, any budget agreement will effectively serve as the first form of formal arrangement between the renewed red-green majority.

Labour's main challenge will be the political distance, particularly between the Red Party, the Greens, and the Centre Party. The latter is expected to play the role of the only true swing party on the red-green side. With a significantly reduced parliamentary group, questions may over time be raised about the Centre Party's strategic direction. A free-floating swing position would be preferable to taking responsibility for all the compromises that would have to be negotiated in a cooperation agreement with four other red-green parties.

A budget agreement will therefore become a kind of playbook for the government to follow when it, together with the parliamentary majority, negotiates the state budget and the revised budget over the next four years.

Several of the parties may be more inclined to make concessions in the first budget round, given the fresh election result and voters' expectations that the red-green side will deliver together. But over time this could become increasingly challenging, due to the significant political differences that exist within the red-green bloc.

04 Our assessments

Several paths to 85

- The most obvious outcome of the election is that the red-green parties hold a majority of 88 mandates. Power therefore, at least initially, lies on this side of politics.
- The Centre Party is positioned in the political center and is thus the most likely to cross the aisle. The political distance between, for example, the Red Party and the Centre Party is considerable – greater in some cases than the distance to the Christian Democrats, and in other cases even to the Progress Party.
- The other majority, with 87 mandates, consists of the Progress Party, the Conservatives, the Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party.

Labour governs alone, but does not rule alone

- In Norway, we practice negative parliamentarism. This means that a government does not need active, explicit support in parliament; rather, it can only be removed through a vote of no confidence or by tying a key issue to a vote of confidence.
- All parties the government will need to cooperate with have set demands or ultimatums for continued support. However, under negative parliamentarism, the government must either be actively voted out or put its survival at stake if it fails to secure a majority on central policies. It is unlikely that the majority parties will want to bring down the Labour government – at least so early in the term.
- There will be no cooperation agreement. Any formalized agreement would have to include the entire majority, not just parts of it.
- It is therefore highly likely that the coming four years will be characterized by parliamentary governance, where important processes and majorities are built exclusively in the Storting.

Non-budget-related issues brought into the negotiations

- In recent years, it has become common practice to bring non-budget-related issues into the budget negotiations.
- This negotiation tactic will, in all likelihood, continue during this autumn's budget process, and in subsequent rounds. However, here the Centre Party will be on the opposite side from the Greens and the Socialist Left. It will be very difficult for the Centre Party to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the Red Party and the Greens on core policy matters.

Disagreements on matters of principle run not only between blocs – but also within them

- With the Liberal Party below the electoral threshold, it may become easier to form alternative majorities on specific issues between the Conservatives, the Progress Party, the Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party.
- This will be particularly evident in questions related to "identity politics."

Spillover effects and gradual narrowing

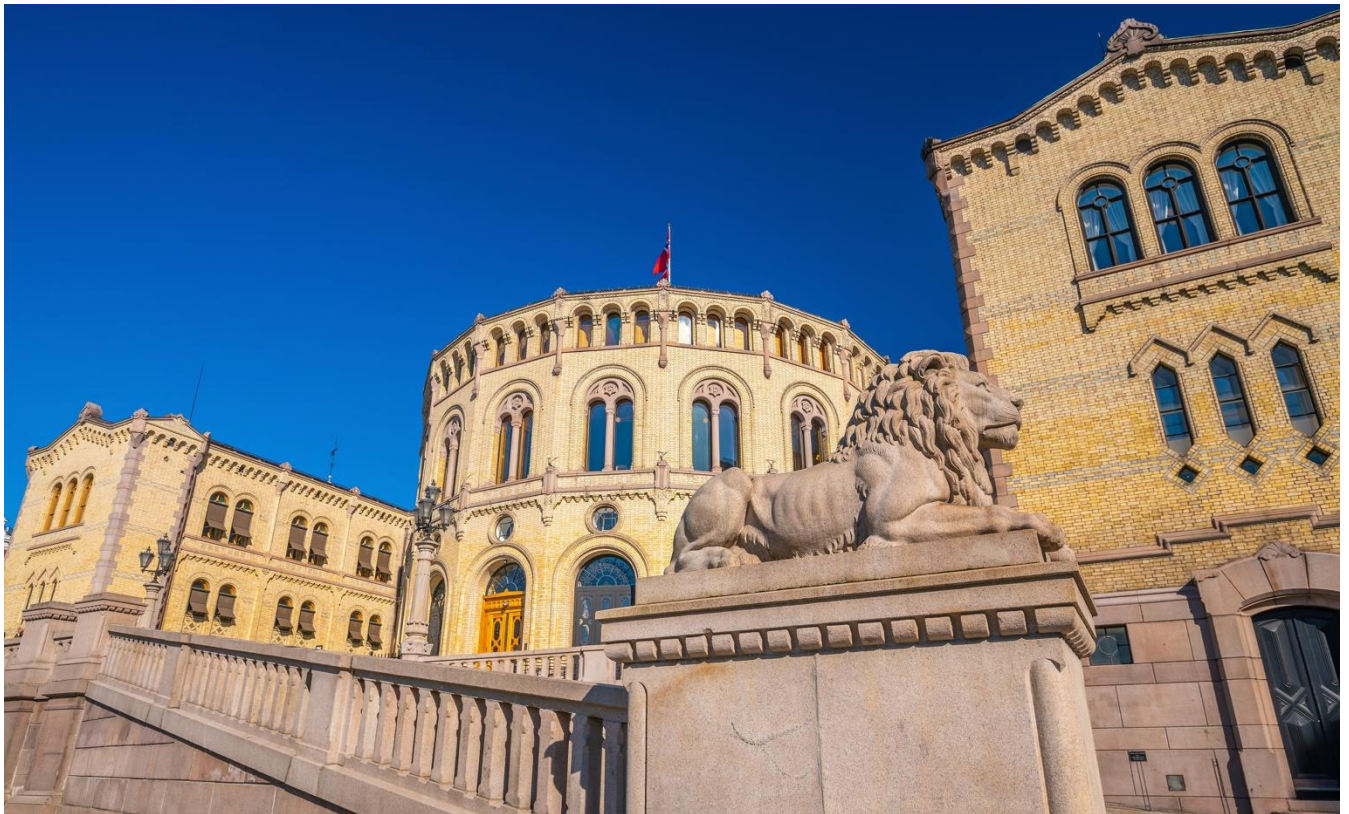
- As mentioned, an increasing number of non-budget-related issues have been brought into budget negotiations. Over time, several concessions have been won this way. Parties such as the Socialist Left, among others, therefore have a "legitimate" expectation that this will continue in the coming period.
- Given that many parties, with at times significant political differences between them, must come together, there will be demands for prioritization, also among the parties in Parliament. The question is which parties will prioritize what.
- It is reasonable to assume that the Centre Party will take on the role of the only real swing party on the red-green side. How this plays out will also depend on what the party's parliamentary group ultimately looks like.

No "principles " guarantee predictability for business

- The Labour Party bases its "principles" for safe governance as follows: Continued Norwegian NATO membership – The EEA Agreement remains – The country shall have a responsible monetary policy and sound economic management. Everything else can, in practice, be negotiated.
- Then it is interesting to follow what the Labour Party means by "sound economic management" – and whether this will involve a tentative freeze on taxes and duties, as well as predictable framework conditions – or if it only concerns public spending and the macroeconomy.

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Thank you

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