

Mandate for the Political Parties Act Commission

1. The background for the appointment of the Commission

Norway is one of the world's most democratic countries, and in international comparisons, the Norwegian political system ranks very highly in democratic quality across various dimensions. The representative system is robust, and political parties play a central role in Norwegian democracy at both the local and national levels. They act as an important link between the people and the authorities by raising and promoting issues, engaging in political discussions, developing policies, and recruiting and fielding candidates for election.

It is 20 years since the Political Parties Act was adopted, and significant changes have since taken place that affect how parties fulfil their roles, including how they organise their activities, conduct election campaigns, and how they are funded. New forms of private contributions have emerged over time, and there has been an increase in third-party or anonymous campaigns. Reporting in-kind support raises difficult considerations. Social media and technological developments have also led parties to conduct election campaigns differently than before, and the prohibition on political parties' television advertising no longer has the effect it once did. In Norway, public funding allocated to political parties is generous. Ahead of the 2025 parliamentary election, more money was spent on election campaigns than ever before, and the proportion of private contributions to the parties increased significantly.

It is crucial for our democracy that we have clear, comprehensible rules governing the funding of political parties. For the public to be able to trust that the parties have no hidden agendas or ties, there must be transparency regarding where they obtain their funding and other support. The Commission is tasked with conducting a comprehensive review of the Political Parties Act to enhance transparency in political party funding. The Commission's work shall ensure that political parties continue to enjoy favourable framework conditions and can fulfil their important role in our democracy, both at the national and local levels. Through its work, the Commission shall help ensure sound framework conditions for democracy in the coming years.

2. The Commission's mandate

The Commission is to draw up proposals for a regulatory framework that provides the parties with sound and predictable conditions in the years ahead, whilst ensuring that the public has access to information on the sources of the parties' funding and other forms of support.

The Commission shall assess the rules governing the registration of political parties, the funding of party activities, and the public disclosure of their income. As part of this effort, the Commission shall also assess whether the distinction between party and candidate support is adequately regulated and whether reporting requirements should be imposed on unregistered lists contesting elections. The Commission shall also assess whether there is a need to introduce forms of election campaign regulation, and consider whether a cap should

be introduced on the amount of private contributions parties may receive. The Commission shall consider whether it is desirable to regulate campaigns by third parties and anonymous actors.

The Commission shall account for the relationship between Norwegian legislation and obligations under international law. Furthermore, the Commission should examine international standards and legislative examples from other countries.

As part of the review, the Commission shall also examine the administrative arrangements for the disbursement of party funding and reporting, including supervisory and sanctioning powers and the right of appeal.

On 18 December 2023, the Political Parties Act Committee sent a letter to the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development setting out its assessments regarding the need for reform of the Political Parties Act. The Commission should review these submissions as part of its work. The Commission is free to consider issues beyond those specifically mentioned in the mandate. The topic has also been discussed in the Storting on several occasions.

The Commission is to conduct a comprehensive review of the party regulations, but may independently assess whether it is necessary to draft an entirely new Political Parties Act or whether it is more appropriate to propose amendments to the existing Act. The Commission shall also assess the relationship with other relevant acts.

3. Organisation of the Commission's work

In its work, the Commission shall ensure that relevant input from relevant stakeholders, including unregistered and local lists, is taken into account in a suitable manner.

The legislative proposal prepared by the Commission shall be well-structured and written in clear and accessible language.

The legislative commission will have its own secretariat, administratively attached to the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development. The legislative commission may, where necessary, seek expert support and input along the way, including from resource centres, centres of expertise, and relevant public bodies.

The Commission shall comply with the requirements of Instructions for the Preparation of Central Government Measures ("Instructions for Official Studies"), including assessing economic, administrative, and other significant short- and long-term consequences. The Commission shall submit its report to the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development by 1 June 2027.