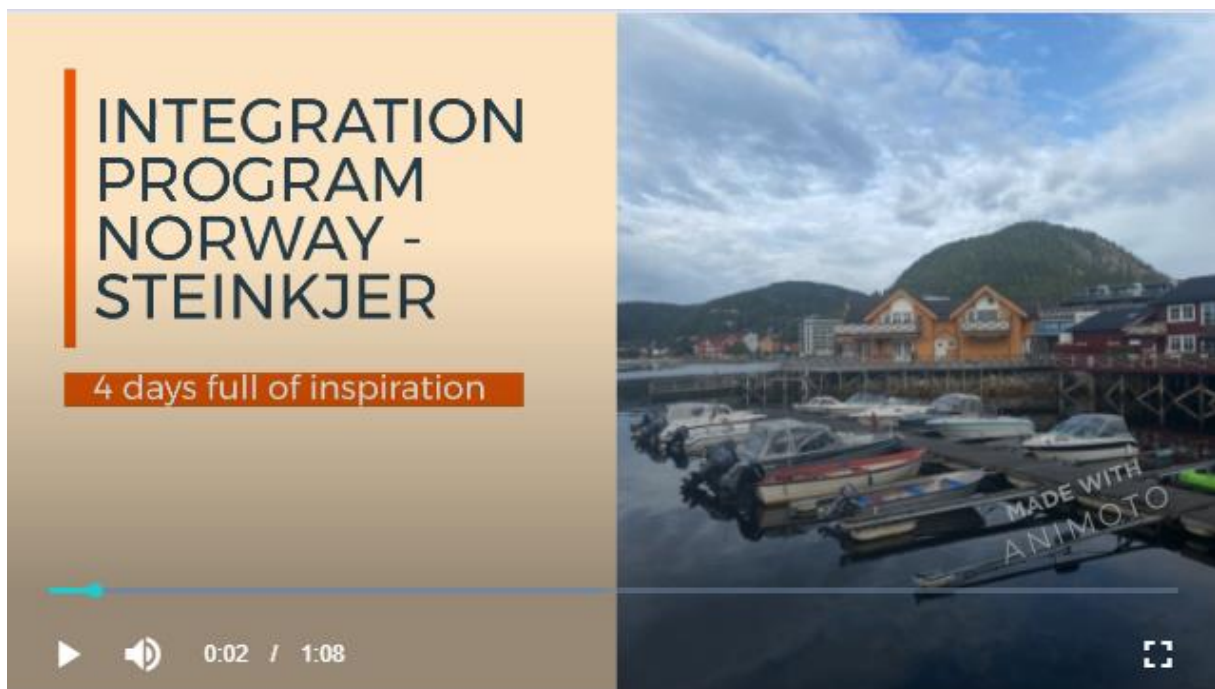


24-10-2023

# Inspiration from Norway

In September, a delegation of COA employees explored the Norwegian integration program for asylum seekers. They returned from Norway inspired, with new ideas to implement in the Dutch context.



*Click on the image for a short video clip of the study visit to Norway made by Chie-Lieke Muskens.*

From September 11 to 15, 2023, a COA delegation paid a study visit to Steinkjer in Norway. The aim of the trip was to take a closer look at the intensive integration program for asylum seekers. Steinkjer is one of two municipalities in Norway that offers such a program.

The COA delegation consisted of four people: policy advisor participation and integration Judith Berns, case manager participation Chie-Lieke Muskens, case manager Sarah van de Meent and Marcel van der Heijden, project leader of the International Knowledge Platform. All in a different way, in policy and execution, their work at COA is related to the Dutch integration program.

## **Visiting the integration program**

For a week they visited locations where the integration program was given, took part in some lessons, and spoke with the organisers, teachers, participants, language coaches and with involved officials from the municipality. Furthermore, there were conversations with the Norwegian Directorates of Immigration (UDI) and Integration & Diversity (IMDi). They also

visited four reception locations in Steinkjer and Namsos, which were run by Hero, a commercial company that also deals with reception and guidance of asylum seekers.

### **Full-time integration classes**

What is special about this integration program is that it offers a full-time teaching program to adult asylum seekers who have a good chance of getting a residency permit. They mainly come from Syria, Eritrea, Yemen and Turkey. The curriculum consists of Norwegian language, culture and society, and preparation for work. Ideally, once participants have achieved a basic level of Norwegian, they combine their lessons with an internship, allowing them to use the language in the workplace. But in practice it proves difficult to obtain a work permit for this.



### **Internship**

A central role is reserved for Ewelina Bernat, who coordinates the integration program on behalf of the municipality of Steinkjer. She was in the Netherlands in June for an internship, which was organized by the International Knowledge Platform. Inspired by Ewelina's interesting stories about the integration program in Steinkjer, this is when the idea of this study visit to Norway originated. This visit to Norway was organized by the International Knowledge Platform and co-funded by AMIF.

### **Do you want to know more?**

Feel free to contact us through our e-mail address: [internationalknowledgeplatform@coa.nl](mailto:internationalknowledgeplatform@coa.nl)  
And keep an eye on our website for more knowledge sharing on asylum reception.