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# EUDO CITIZENSHIP OBSERVATORY

## *COUNTRY REPORT: NORWAY*

Grete Brochmann

November 2009  
Revised May 2010



European University Institute, Florence  
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies  
EUDO Citizenship Observatory

***Report on Norway***

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EUDO Citizenship Observatory  
**Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies**  
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**Norway**  
**by**  
**Grete Brochmann**

## **1 Introduction**

The last Norwegian Nationality Act was implemented on 1 September 2006. Although citizenship law had been partially changed several times over recent decades, this new act represented the first major revision since 1950. A preparatory committee was appointed in 1999, with a somewhat dualistic mandate: it was to review the existing law, ‘building on the existing principles within Norwegian citizenship law’, yet at the same time was asked to consider a number of novel issues for possible inclusion or revision. The dual citizenship issue was the most striking of these, and caused the most disagreement, both in the committee itself and among the informed public. The issues of requirements as to language skills and knowledge of the polity and society also caused some discussion. Additionally, the committee was explicitly asked to consider the importance of citizenship legislation for the integration of foreigners and their participation in society.

The appointment of the committee came at a time when the general consensus was believed to favour a liberalisation of the Nationality Act. Norway had followed the general tendency among advanced welfare states to the effect that the most significant social and civil rights were extended to newcomers based on legal residency. Consequently, the spirit of the time indicated a devalued significance for the law itself, thus making it less important to keep exclusivity in the form of single citizenship. Importantly, the recent Swedish Preparatory Committee for a new Citizenship Law of 1999 had proposed dual citizenship as its new guideline,<sup>1</sup> backed by the 1997 European Convention on Nationality. Traditionally Norway has followed Swedish policy-making in particular with close interest. The Norwegian committee delivered its report in 2000. The fact that it took another six years until the legislative process was concluded suggests a complicated and controversial process, during which a notable change in terms of political consensus on immigration and integration may have played a part. By and large it is nevertheless correct to say that citizenship policies in Norway have not been among the more contentious public issues over the years. This last revision is no exception in this respect.

When the *Storting* (parliament) passed the law in 2005, it went against the committee recommendations as well as the majority of the consultative bodies on the question of dual citizenship as well as on the question of skill requirements: single citizenship was reinforced and new requirements were introduced. Additionally, a (voluntary) ceremony with an (obligatory) oath of allegiance was included in the last round of the process.

### **1.1 Citizenship and nationality in Norway**

The legal bond between an individual and the state is in Norway referred to as ‘*Statsborgerskap*’, close to the German term ‘*Staatsbürgerschaft*’. This term is used strictly as a legal status, with rights and duties attached. The term usually translates into English

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<sup>1</sup> SOU 1999: 34 *Svenskt medborgarskap. Slutbetänkande av 1997 års medborgarskapskommitté*. Stockholm: Kulturdepartementet.

‘citizenship’ or ‘nationality’, although these terms are less specific in usage. The Norwegian term *nasjonalitet* is often used more sociologically – meaning also ethnic or cultural background – but also occurs as a synonym to *statsborgerskap*.

More recently two more concepts are used in public discourse on citizenship in Norway: *Medborger*, denoting the non-formal aspects like affiliation, belonging, participation, as well as ‘being a good citizen’. The usage is however confused, consequently also appearing in the meaning of *statsborger*. *Samfunnsborger* is another term introduced as an umbrella over both *statsborger* and *medborger*, in order to have a generic concept close to the dual meaning of the English ‘citizen’.

## 2 Historical background

### 2.1 Citizenship legislation to 1950

The first law on the acquisition and loss of citizenship in Norway was passed in 1888. Until this point, the state had not had any law concerning whom to regard as citizens of the country. The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 (instigated by independence from 400 years of Danish colonial rule) did not have any definition of citizenship. It was nevertheless understood that ‘a member of the state’ was a person living stably in the country, supposedly for the rest of his or her life (NOU 2000: 32, p. 15). Citizenship in another country could be compatible with these rules, but the so-called *infødsrett* (native right) was a precondition for high-ranking government positions (appointed by the King). This native right was held only by persons born within the national territory (or alternatively born to Norwegian parents living abroad), who were not citizens of another country. After 1814, Norway was forced into a political Union with its neighbour Sweden as a consequence of the Napoleonic wars. This new union did not, however, affect the national rules on citizenship issues (Niemi 2003).

The issue that triggered the development of the first citizenship law of 1888 was a proposal to the Storting that foreign citizens living abroad, or not having lived in Norway for more than three years, should not appropriate real estate without the permission of the King. The felt need for this rule was subsequently attached to the citizenship issue: thus when the first Nationality Law was passed, it also contained the issue of license to own property.

The law of 1888 was based on acquisition of citizenship by descent as well as through application (*bevilling*), and dual citizenship was not allowed. The father’s nationality was decisive, and wives and children took the citizenship of the man. This Act was the law in force in 1905 when Norway got its full independence as a nation-state. From the late 1880s till the first revision of the Nationality Law in 1924, citizenship increasingly involved *social rights*. It gradually changed from a mere symbolic concept into a privilege (Nordhaug 2000). Even though the benefits were still not based on universality, this early version of the welfare state increasingly extended social benefits to its formal members.

The 1924 Law changed the predominant patrilineal descent principle slightly. From then on, a woman kept her Norwegian citizenship as long as she remained in the country. The 1920s represented the culmination of the great wave of emigrants from Norway to North America, and relations with emigrants with native rights became an issue. On the one hand, the authorities were not keen on encouraging people to return during old age in order to benefit from the welfare state. On the other hand, it was considered important to nourish the bonds between Norway and the United States through the migrants. In the end, no consequences came from the concerns about social spending, but a new rule on loss of citizenship was formulated: a person born abroad, not having ever lived in the country, would

lose his or her citizenship at the age of 22. But even here there were exceptions—the so called *bibeholdsbevillingen*.

The time of residence (*botid*) required for naturalisation through application was extended from three to five years in the Law of 1924, and persons born in the country to foreign parents could now automatically get citizenship at the age of 22, unless they were citizens of another country. Apart from these amendments, two central issues should be mentioned. Firstly, the importance of economic self-sufficiency: this principle was stressed strongly in the law proposal. The state should pay close attention to avoiding new citizens ‘becoming a burden on society’ (Ot. prp. nr. 30 (1916), p. 27). This new interest in economic independence reflects the increasing range of social rights developed during this period. Secondly, the significance of Nordic cooperation in generating new citizenship laws in the region should be highlighted. This cooperation had actually started in the late 1880s, yet at the beginning of the 1920s it gained importance. After a Swedish initiative, consultations were brought about with the aim of fully harmonising the naturalisation laws of the three Scandinavian countries. The countries went far in this direction, although after some conflicts over the rights of women.

In the first years following the Second World War the restrictive atmosphere of the pre-war era—represented by the Citizenship Law of 1924—prevailed. The number of rejected applications was quite high, partly due to the specific regulations aimed at punishing Norwegian women who had married German soldiers. In 1946 the Good Norwegian Citizen appeared to be a healthy, working person, a long-term resident, with solid personal finances and with an undisputable patriotic attitude from the years of the occupation (Nydal 1999). Only four years later, however, this specific post-war atmosphere had changed, and the provisions on the ‘expelled’ Norwegian women were revised. The share of rejected applications went down from 35 to 20 per cent between 1946 and 1950. A small step in the opposite direction was the attitude towards citizens of the Soviet Union or persons with communist sympathies, who had great problems being accepted.

Nordic cooperation was extended after the Second World War when a renewed interest in Scandinavian cooperation led to a revision of the citizenship legislation. This resulted in a common draft incorporated as national law in all three states during 1950 (Nordhaug 2000; NOU 2000: 32). This reinvigorated cooperation was part of the general post-war climate, where the Nordic region gained significance as a political unit internationally, and where a number of agreements secured equal treatment for Nordic citizens across the borders. The common labour market and the passport union were the most important of these. During this period it was even suggested on the political level that the three countries should form one common citizenship, but this was never followed up in the law making process. The revisions of the Norwegian Citizenship Law in 1950 in some ways broke new ground for the other liberalisations, and it could more generally be seen as an indicator of the new *zeitgeist*—a friendlier attitude towards foreigners.

## 2.2 The 1950 Law

The three most important amendments in the law of 1950 were in the fields of married women’s rights, the period of required domicile and the rights of fellow Nordic citizens. Previously, married women were functions of their husbands in relation to citizenship questions; changes in the status of the man automatically also affected the wife. With the 1950 law, women got an independent status. Furthermore, the required period of domicile was set to seven years, and fellow Nordic citizens got a privileged position: a shorter period of

domicile was required for naturalisation and the status could be achieved through notification. Recovery (*gjenervert*) of citizenship was made easier. 'Nordic' in this context meant Norway, Sweden and Denmark: as Finland and Iceland did not participate in the negotiations, it was decided that the special legislation for Nordic citizens should be agreed bilaterally between the different countries. Even though the motivation for the cooperation had been identical citizenship laws, in practice there was room for specificities in the national legislation. Full harmonisation was never realized.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1950 legislation, mandatory language skills were a central part of the preparatory work, but this criterion was not instituted in the actual draft. Nevertheless, in all three countries, questions concerning or assessing command of the national language were introduced in the official application forms during the following decades. The requirement thus became part of the legal body of regulations and guiding principles governing the *practice* of citizenship laws. Sweden abandoned this principle in the 1980s, due to problems of verification, and Norway followed its example. Later, Norway has reinstated this criterion in national legislation for the permanent residency of foreigners, in the most recent integration bill passed in 2005 (Brochmann & Seland 2010).

The Norwegian Nationality Act was amended several times after 1950, yet the changes were piecemeal, and no general revision was undertaken. Of the more important amendments, the following should be mentioned: In 1968 a right to become a citizen by notification was introduced, when the person had been living in Norway for at least ten years during childhood and adolescence. This new paragraph proved important later on for a number of immigrant youths with foreign citizenship. In 1979 Section 1 was amended to the effect that a child born in wedlock would inherit citizenship also from his or her mother. Furthermore, in 1999 adoptive children were given the same rights to citizenship as biological children. At the same time, children born out of wedlock were given equal rights: children born to parents where either the mother or the father is Norwegian will automatically achieve citizenship. The condition of economic self-support was taken out of the law in 1985, and the mandatory health certificate was removed in 1976. In 1992 the Ministry of Justice and the Police made a proposal to change the period of required domicile from seven to five years. Subsequently the process was stopped by the government. Referring to 'the importance of a strict practice as to the expulsion (*utvisning*) of criminal foreign citizens', as well as the newly-introduced legislation on four years collective protection of war refugees (a law passed as a result of the influx of refugees from the former Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s), 'counted for a continuation of the seven years required domicile' (NOU 2000: 32, p. 49). The exact same argument was used during the review process after the turn of the century, which proved to be decisive for the continuation of the seven years rule in the new law of 2006.

In Norway it is very rare for decisions in relation to citizenship law to come before the courts, but there have been occasions where the courts have made decisions related to citizenship questions when verifying other issues. Consequently, there is little precedent or case law of interest in this area. Even the Parliamentary Ombudsman has had very few cases (NOU 2000: 32, p. 65).

The gradual amendments were passed over the years without much interest or controversy. The changes have been in the form of 'modernisations' or, more accurately, liberalisations. For the first 20 years after the 1950 Act, the Norwegian attitude towards international migration by and large followed the general climate: open borders were seen as

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<sup>2</sup> Later on, Finland (in 1969) and Iceland (in 1999) joined the Nordic agreement as well.

the norm, and international exchanges through work were welcome in the post-war atmosphere. The so-called Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, wanted as few barriers as possible to let capital and goods be traded on a global basis. A precondition for aid under the Marshall Plan, of which Norway was one of the major beneficiaries, was that the receiving countries opened their border for goods and labour. The question of naturalisation was, however, not debated in relation to the larger migration issues. Labour migrants were expected to come and go according to the needs of the market. Besides, Norway never entered the group of major immigration countries during the twenty to thirty years after the 1950 revision. In fact, Norway turned into a net immigration country only in 1968 (Brochmann 2003). In 1969 the first White Paper (*Stortingsmelding*) on the entire labour market policy presented to the *Storting* showed a thoroughly positive attitude to international labour migration. It was stated that free immigration was established, and that this should serve as the norm also for the future (St. meld. nr. 45 (1968-1969)).

Only a few years after this optimistic and positive declaration—in 1975—the *Storting* passed a (temporary) strict regulation of labour immigration. This regulation, which was made permanent in 1981, has ever since laid the premises for the regulation of entry to Norway, and has implied that (until the EU expansion of 2004<sup>3</sup>) the large majority of immigrants to Norway would come from countries outside the OECD, basically through humanitarian channels. This pattern was an unforeseen consequence of the so-called ‘immigration stop’, as the motivation for the 1975 regulation was to curb unskilled labour from non-OECD countries. In fact immigration to Norway has never been larger than after the ‘stop’. By the turn of the century, the proportion of immigrants in the Norwegian population had reached an average level in a European context—6.6 percent (growing nine years later to 9.7 percent). The kind of migrants that have dominated—often people escaping a situation marked by *lack of rights*—has thoroughly changed the relevance and significance of the naturalisation law. From the beginning of the 1990s onwards a clear and strong increase in the number of applications has materialised, and the fluctuations sometimes follow specific influxes of immigration, arriving from conflict areas of the world—with a time lag of seven years or more.

In the decade from 1977 to 1987, the size of the annual naturalisation intake was between 2,000 and 3,000 (the total population of Norway was 4.5 million). From 1988 onwards the number increased, and steadily got steeper: 5,538 in 1993; 8,778 in 1994; and during the period between 1995 and 1997, the numbers were between 11,000 and 13,000 (in 1998 and 1999 there was a slight downturn). During the period 1977–1999 altogether 117,961 naturalisations took place. Among first generation immigrants arriving between 1977 and 1985, and who remained in the country, 35 percent became Norwegian citizens after 10 years.<sup>4</sup> Among persons from Morocco, the Philippines, Vietnam and Poland, 60 percent had become Norwegian citizens. At the turn of the century there was approximately the same rate of naturalisation in Norway as in the countries with larger immigration levels in Europe, such as Sweden, the Netherlands and France, and 92 percent of the naturalised citizens came from a non-Western country (the largest two groups in 1998 being Vietnamese and Pakistani; the following year former Yugoslavs, Vietnamese and Sri Lankans) (Vassenden 1997: 66). The pattern in terms of areas of origin, however, changed in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Until 1982 approximately 50 percent of the naturalized persons came from the

<sup>3</sup> Norway is not member of the EU, but part of the EEA agreement, which involve the same labour migration implications.

<sup>4</sup> The figures are collected from Statistics Norway ([www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no)).



Western world. The number of naturalized person from OECD countries has remained quite stable since 1982: between 600 and 800 annually.

These changes have clearly increased the importance of naturalisation policies in the period between 1950 and 2000, and would easily motivate a review of the law. All the piecemeal changes over the years also warranted a general re-examination. There are other important factors, on the other hand, that have served to *reduce* the significance of the law. The increased influence of international conventions and human rights policies have made the citizenship institution less unique as a method for the protection of individuals, as internationally-based rights provide persons with some basic security regardless of citizenship and residency. And besides, in some welfare states like Norway, civic and social rights are extended to legal residents through the principle of equal treatment. Consequently, the institution of citizenship proper has less value, relatively speaking. This fact could also be an argument for a comprehensive review of the law. The direct cause for reform was nevertheless the change in policy that was spurred by the 1997 European Convention on Nationality, which called for dual citizenship. This change was more quickly addressed by the Swedish authorities, a fact that reinforced the motivation to undertake a review in Norway. Another motivation was the fact that an increasing number of immigrants came from countries which do not release their citizens from their original citizenship.

### 2.3 The revision process from the turn of the century

‘Becoming a Norwegian citizen should not be an undeserved right, but an earned privilege’<sup>5</sup>, according to the rightist Progress Party of Norway, which also wanted a stronger emphasis on the ‘exclusiveness’ of citizenship. Through a public report, the party wanted to set the tone for the upcoming review process. This intervention actually stirred some discussion, and the mandate for the Preparatory Committee called for a discussion on basic matters such as dual citizenship, the required time of domicile and skill requirements.

The Preparatory Committee was appointed in February 1999 by a centrist minority coalition government (consisting of the Christian Democrats (*Kristelig Folkeparti*); The Liberal Party (*Venstre*) and the Centre Party (*Senterpartiet*)), lead by Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik. The Ministry of Justice and the Police was in charge of the administration. There are no indications that citizenship legislation as such was seen as a central issue when this government took office, and the same could be said for the second Bondevik Government (2001–2005), consisting of the Christian Democrats, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party (*Høyre*), which was in charge of the preparation of the law itself. Nevertheless, the whole law revision process turned out to be long and controversial (although not provoking much *public* debate), in many ways reflecting the major fault-line in international discourse on citizenship since the 1990s. The preparatory committee, reporting in 2000, was riven by dissent on several basic matters.<sup>6</sup> The majority wanted to pursue a basically liberal approach, for example by allowing dual citizenship, and keeping the law free from requirements as to language skills and knowledge of society. The minority—represented by one person, a professor of political science—emphasized the citizenship law as a central part of the historically-based polity: the democratic tradition and the welfare state equality approach of Norway, with important connections to the nation and the cultural heritage. This minority

<sup>5</sup> Author’s translation from the document *Grunnlag for revisjon av Lov om norsk riksborgarrett*, published by the Progress Party during the spring of 1999.

<sup>6</sup> NOU 2000:32 *Lov om erverv og tap av norsk statsborgerskap*

wanted to keep the single citizenship regime, and wanted to introduce requirements on language skills and societal knowledge for the acquisition of citizenship. None of the parties saw any reason for introducing an oath, as such a ritual was not seen as having any meaning within a modern citizenship regime.

As is customary, the Committee Report (NOU 2000: 32) was sent to a number of relevant organisations for comments (hearing), prior to processing in the Ministry. The reactions were, unsurprisingly, mostly related to the points of controversy, in particular the dual citizenship issue.

During the hearing, representatives of the state authorities stood out as supporters of the minority position of the Preparatory Committee. Various police authorities as well as the Ministry of Justice were concerned about their own working conditions in case of acceptance of dual citizenship. A frequently used example was the possibility of protecting Norwegian citizens visiting the country of their other citizenship (often women being subject to forced marriages or the like), referring to some well published cases in the media. The overwhelming majority of the non-governmental organisations supported the idea of dual citizenship, and many were sceptical towards skill requirements. In the later process in the parliamentary committee (where all parties in the *Storting* are represented), the Socialist Left Party (*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*) was the only party to vote for dual citizenship.

As to the procedure, criticism was raised to the effect that the hearings were marked by scarcity of time and resources. In 2003 the time-frame for the hearing was reduced from three months to six weeks. Only 27 out of 78 institutions and organisations gave their viewpoints in this round. (In the first round in 2001, 39 out of 78 contributed). Consequently the process was somewhat top-down, dominated by the government and the administration (Vassbotn 2006). Of the more curious matters that occurred during the hearing was the fact that some of the immigrant organisations actively suggested a ceremony with an oath to take place after naturalisation, in order to create an atmosphere of significance and solemnity around the event. *The Resource Centre for Pakistani Children* argued that in a society marked by increasing ethnic pluralism, it is important to set a standard for becoming Norwegian. One should, according to the organisation, use the opportunity to point out the basic values of society within the context of a stately ritual (Ot. prp. nr. 41 (2004-2005), p. 50).<sup>7</sup>

After this somewhat surprising call for reactions, the centre-coalition government of Kjell Magne Bondevik suggested to the parliament that a ceremony including an oath was to be instituted, and it even suggested that such an oath should use the Australian equivalent as a model: *'As an Australian citizen, I affirm my loyalty to Australia and its people, whose democratic beliefs I share, Whose rights and liberties I respect, And whose laws I uphold and obey'*.<sup>8</sup> Yet an important premise in the Norwegian context was the suggestion that the ceremony should be a *voluntary* act. This dual solution is interesting in a historical context. According to the first Norwegian Nationality Law of 1888, the achievement of citizenship depended on an oath pledged to the constitution. Later citizenship laws—of 1924 and 1950—also required a pledge of allegiance by the candidate. In 1976 however, the oath was removed from the law, on the ground that it implied extra work for the police and the courts; caused delays in the process, and besides, was considered superfluous by many. It is thus interesting to note that the atmosphere around the institution of citizenship had changed between 1976

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<sup>7</sup> Author's translation.

<sup>8</sup> The final text of the Norwegian oath is as follows (author's translation from Norwegian): 'As a citizen of Norway I promise loyalty to my country Norway and the Norwegian society. I support democracy and the Human Rights and will respect the laws of the country.'

and 2006 to an extent that justified the reintroduction of an oath as part of the naturalisation procedure.

In May 2005 the law was debated in the *Odelsting*—one of the chambers of the *Storting*. *Odelstinget* is the unit where a proposed law is given the final vote. It is also where the opposition parties can reveal their viewpoints in a more organized manner. The most vigorously debated issues were dual citizenship; the question of ceremony; and finally the content of the ceremony. After the vote in *Odelstinget*, the proposal is sent to *Lagtinget* (the other chamber) for acceptance or rejection.<sup>9</sup> This proposal was accepted on 8 June 2005 and subsequently sent to the King for assent (*Kongen i statsråd*), where it was finally endorsed on 10 June 2005 (and came into force on 1 September 2006).

The Bondevik Government barely managed to conclude the law revision process before it was succeeded by a Labour-left coalition government headed by Jens Stoltenberg in the autumn of 2005. Thus, during the spring of 2006, the new leadership set about implementing the new law, including an oath they had voted against in the parliament the preceding year.

### 3 The citizenship regime

#### 3.1 Main general modes of acquisition and loss of citizenship

As in many other countries, the general development from the 1950s to the turn of the century has placed foreigners domiciled in Norway gradually on a more equal footing with citizens proper in a series of areas. Most importantly, social citizenship is largely extended on the basis of legal residency. Additionally, Norway has been internationalized thoroughly through economic, cultural and political exchanges over the decades since the 1950s, a fact that has contributed to loosening the more distinct concepts of nationhood. The traditionally very homogeneous native population of Norway has been familiarized with peoples from other continents in their daily surroundings, particularly in the bigger cities (the immigrant population of Oslo in 2008 was 25 per cent of the total). Norwegian society has been marked by a growing degree of mobility, with people increasingly going abroad for studies, work or just to live. All these changes could account for a devaluation of the citizenship regime, and a consequent motivation for the liberalisation of the Nationality Law. There is no doubt that the principle of domicile has gained importance in Norway over these years, but the new Citizenship Law is an interesting example of a very mixed piece of legislation, in which continuity and transformation, ideology and pragmatism are notably intertwined.

Norwegian citizenship still bestows indisputable goods: it confers the unconditional right to live and work in Norway, and besides it represents a fundamental ticket to participation in society. It is a condition for the right to vote in general elections (immigrants in Norway may vote in local elections after three years of legal residency), and for the right to run for election as a member of Parliament. Some government positions as well as offices in courts, the foreign service, police and prison institutions are reserved for Norwegian citizens. Furthermore, citizenship provides a passport and protection by Norwegian authorities abroad. Ultimately, it also protects against being deported from the realm. On the duty side, paying tax as well as doing military service (for men) belongs to the formal requirements.

The law of 2006 represents liberalisation on some counts, but the revision on the most controversial issues represents a reinforcement of the existing law. As in the 1950 law, there

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<sup>9</sup> In June 2009, the dual chamber system consisting of *Odelsting* and *Lagting* was abolished.

are still three basic ways of acquiring Norwegian citizenship; by birth and adoption, by notification and by application. According to the main *ius sanguinis* principle, a child becomes a Norwegian citizen at birth if his or her father or mother is a Norwegian citizen (if the father dies before the child is born, it suffices that the father was Norwegian when he died). A child adopted by a Norwegian citizen becomes a citizen if the child is under the age of 18 at the time of adoption and if the adoption order is issued by Norwegian authorities pursuant to the Adoption Act.

Acquisition by notification is achieved on the following conditions: Danish, Finnish, Icelandic and Swedish nationals are entitled, upon notification, to become Norwegian nationals provided the person concerned has reached the age of 18, been resident in the realm for the last seven years and during that period has not been given a custodial sentence or special sanction as a result of a criminal act. The notifier must prove that he or she has been released from any other citizenship at the time of acquisition (at the latest). A certificate of good character issued by the police (showing no custodial sentence or special criminal sanctions the last seven years) must be enclosed. A person who has lost his or her Norwegian citizenship, and subsequently has been a citizen of another Nordic country, can recover Norwegian citizenship by notification, if he or she has taken residence in Norway, and can prove they are released from any other citizenship. And finally, the children (under the age of eighteen) of a person acquiring Norwegian citizenship, shall automatically achieve the same citizenship, provided the child is resident in Norway and is released from any other citizenship. Acquisition by notification by any non-Nordic citizens is not continued in the new Act.

Acquisition by application is the more complicated category. The main rule regarding acquisition by application is that any person has a *right*, upon application, to Norwegian citizenship if the applicant at the time the administrative decision is made: 1) has provided documentary evidence of, or otherwise clearly established, his or her identity; 2) has reached the age of twelve; 3) is and will remain a resident of Norway; 4) has spent a total of seven years in the realm in the last ten years, with residence or work permits of at least one year's duration; 5) satisfies the requirement regarding Norwegian language training; 6) has not been sentenced to a penalty or special criminal sanction, and 7) satisfies the requirement regarding release from another citizenship. On the other hand, the applicant is *not* entitled to Norwegian citizenship if this is contrary to the interests of national security or to foreign policy considerations. The application for citizenship must also be accompanied by a comprehensive certificate of good character issued by the police.

As to the language issue, the requirement is (for applications lodged after 1 September 2008) that applicants between the ages of 18 and 55 must have completed 300 hours of approved Norwegian language training or be able to document that they have adequate knowledge of Norwegian or Sami.

Furthermore, a person who has been sentenced to a penalty or a special criminal sanction is not entitled to Norwegian citizenship until a waiting period prescribed by regulations made by the King has elapsed. The duration of the waiting period shall depend on the sanction imposed.

The requirement regarding release from any other citizenship pertains to cases where the applicant does not automatically lose any other citizenship as a result of being granted Norwegian citizenship. In that case, the applicant must be released from any other citizenship before the application may be granted. If this is not possible, the applicant must, within one year of naturalisation, document that he or she has been released from any other citizenship.

Some other conditions must be mentioned: a person who is married to or is a registered partner of or cohabitant with a Norwegian citizen can be naturalized if he or she has spent at least three years in the country during the last ten years, with residence or work permits of at least one year duration; Nordic citizens can apply after two years of residency in Norway; citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA) can apply after three years, if the initial residence permit was granted for five years; former Norwegian nationals can reclaim their citizenship after two years residency with a work or residence permit of at least one year's duration; stateless persons may apply after three years residency also with a work or residence permit of at least one year's duration.

According to figures from the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration, the annual number of persons who has retrieved their Norwegian citizenship after some years with another citizenship was eleven in 2005, 27 in 2006 and only five in 2007.

The revision to the effect that persons qualifying for citizenship according to all the above mentioned criteria have the *right* to achieve this status removes administrative discretion in the final decision, and is thus seen as a liberalisation as compared to the state of the law since 1950.

During the period from the start of the revision process till the implementation of the new law in 2006, the popularity of Norwegian citizenship among immigrants increased significantly. A survey undertaken by Statistics Norway in 2005–2006 revealed that on average 69 per cent among immigrant groups *do* have Norwegian citizenship.<sup>10</sup> The highest share was found among people of Vietnamese background, at 91 per cent. Sri Lankans and Pakistanis represent the groups with the second largest share, close to 80 per cent. All three groups have a large share of people with long term residency. The groups with the lowest share, i.e. people from Iraq and Somalia are characterized by a relatively short stay in Norway. After seven to eight years of residency in Norway, roughly 40 per cent of the immigrant population has Norwegian citizenship; after nine to eleven years the percentage increases to 80 per cent; and beyond eleven years 90.97 per cent of persons born in Norway to immigrant parents are naturalized. The most prevalent way of gaining citizenship is through naturalisation (85 per cent). Only 11 per cent of those surveyed received citizenship at birth (Vatne Pettersen 2009).

As to the very brief period since the implementation of the new law, the number of successful applications has notably gone down from 14,500 applications in 2007 to 9,800 in 2008. The number of applications was approximately the same (15,300 in 2007 and 15,400 in 2008). The proportion of applications refused was highest among Iraqi residents. Close to 50 per cent of these applicants were turned down (compared to 36 per cent in 2007). The same tendency was prevalent regarding people from Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran and Russia. The authorities suspect that the reason is the introduction of a new law, involving some transitional uncertainties, apart from the fact that the 2006 revision has made the law more complicated to deal with in some matters. The main reason for the increased rejections is said to be the difficulty of confirming the identity of the applicants. Besides, it is believed that citizenship applications in 2008 did not get the same priority within the administration as previously. Notwithstanding this, the latest statistics show that three out of five approved applications in 2008 concerned women (UDI—Norwegian Directorate of Immigration 2008).

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<sup>10</sup> 10 groups participated in the survey, by country background: Chile, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Serbia/Montenegro and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Traditionally there have been three ways of *losing* Norwegian citizenship. Firstly, by acquiring another citizenship; since Norwegian citizenship law has been based on a single citizenship principle, this has been the logical consequence. Secondly, one could lose citizenship if one was not a resident of Norway. This rule was based on the idea that persons living continuously abroad would lose attachment to Norway and Norwegian society, and that he or she therefore should naturally be released from their citizenship. The rule was seen as the complement of the acquisition requirement of stable residency for foreigners wanting to naturalise in Norway. Lastly, it was possible to apply for release from Norwegian citizenship.

As Norwegian citizenship legislation is based on the principle of single citizenship, a logical consequence is that a person who acquires another citizenship by application or explicit consent shall lose his or her Norwegian citizenship (Chapter 5, section 23). This also pertains to children under the age of eighteen who automatically acquire another citizenship when one of their parents who shares parental responsibility acquires another citizenship. However, such loss shall not occur if the other parent is a Norwegian citizen, or if the child is married or a registered partner.

As to the loss of citizenship in case of absence from the realm, a person who acquired Norwegian citizenship at birth, but who has not resided in Norway for a total of two years or in Norway and other Nordic countries for a total of seven years, shall lose his or her Norwegian citizenship upon reaching the age of 22. There are however, exceptions to this rule. A person may, upon application, be given the right to retain their citizenship provided that the applicant has sufficient ties with Norway. An application for such retention must be lodged before the person concerned reaches the age of 22. Children of the applicant will lose their citizenship automatically with their parent, unless the other parent is still a Norwegian citizen, or if the child himself or herself satisfies the conditions for retaining citizenship. Besides, the state may not revoke the citizenship of a person who would become stateless as a result.

As concerns loss by application, a Norwegian citizen who is resident outside Norway and has another citizenship may be released from his or her Norwegian citizenship by applying for release. The applicant may be released from Norwegian citizenship if he or she is resident outside Norway, and this is necessary for the acquisition of another citizenship. In such case a time limit shall be set for when another citizenship must be acquired. If another citizenship has not been acquired before the time limit expires, the applicant shall be regarded as still having Norwegian citizenship. Regardless of place of residence, the applicant may not be released from his or her Norwegian citizenship if the applicant as a consequence will become stateless.

With the revision of 2005, rules pertaining to *revocation* were actually made more restrictive. The consolidated single citizenship policy, and the explicit intention of enforcing this with more persistence, had as a consequence a more active policy on ensuring the actual annulment of the former citizenship within the time limit of one year. The Ministry made a remark in the law proposal that there was reason to believe that at least 50 per cent of the naturalized citizens in Norway did not make any move to be released from their former citizenship (Ot. prp. nr 41 (2004-2005), p. 175). This was considered such a large proportion that it warranted a new and more active approach. So, in the words of the Law, 'Norwegian nationality shall be revoked if the requirement of release from another nationality has not been fulfilled' (Chapter 5, section 26). However, there are exceptions to this main rule: if the applicant does not automatically lose any other citizenship as a result of being granted Norwegian citizenship, the applicant must be released from this other citizenship before the

application may be granted. If this is not possible, the applicant must, within one year of being granted Norwegian citizenship, document that he or she has been released from the other citizenship(s). If the release from any other citizenship is impossible before reaching a certain age, the applicant must within one year after reaching this age document that he or she has been released from any other citizenship. And finally, an exemption may be granted from the requirement regarding release if release is deemed to be legally or practically impossible or for other reasons seems to be unreasonable. The question of revocation of a grant of citizenship that is based on incorrect or incomplete information may only be carried out if the applicant has furnished the incorrect information against his or her better judgment or has suppressed circumstances of substantial importance for the decision.

The number of revocations is currently small in Norway. The number of persons who annually have been released from Norwegian citizenship by application was six in 2005 and only four in 2006 and 2007. The number of persons from whom Norwegian authorities actively revoked citizenship was seven in 2005; 15 in 2006 and 24 in 2007. This last category seems to be on the increase as a consequence of the new law: the figure for slightly more than half of 2008 was 27.

Despite the fact that single citizenship has been the basic principle in Norwegian citizenship legislation, quite a number of the naturalised immigrants state that they hold another citizenship as well. On average, 36 per cent of the respondents in the survey from Statistics Norway (Vatne Pettersen 2009) not born with Norwegian citizenship state that they have kept another citizenship after naturalisation. As spelled out in the law, there are legal possibilities to retain original citizenship under specific circumstances. Consequently, there is variation among the citizenship groups, as the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) may grant exemptions from the requirement of annulment of the former citizenship. This has been applied to persons from Bosnia-Herzegovina (82 per cent having retained former citizenship), from Turkey (76 per cent), Iran (66 per cent), Iraq (49 per cent) and Serbia and Montenegro (41 per cent). (Shares for all other groups are under 10 per cent.) After the new Nationality Act of 2006, however, among these countries, only Iran qualifies for exemptions. So far, dual citizenship is more common among people who applied for citizenship than those who received it at birth (Vatne Pettersen 2009). To what degree this will impact on the prevalence of dual citizenship in the future is so far unknown. The survey also revealed that 56 per cent of the respondents who had not applied for naturalisation would have applied if they could retain their original citizenship.

The survey undertaken by Statistics Norway also asked a group of immigrants without Norwegian citizenship whether they had applied, in order to disclose how many had been turned down and how many were waiting for the result. Altogether 25 per cent of the respondents had applied, of which the highest share of people had their background in Iran, Serbia and Montenegro. There is a large variation among the various national groups as to the inclination to apply for citizenship after seven years of residency. The share is highest among people with backgrounds in Iraq (74 per cent) and Somalia (72 per cent), the two groups with the lowest share of Norwegian nationals and shortest mean length of residence in Norway (Vatne Pettersen 2009). It seems that people from these countries start the process as soon as they formally qualify for the procedure, a fact that most probably reflects the relative attraction of Norwegian citizenship for specific groups: Iraqi and Somali refugees are probably the two groups with the least security attached to their original citizenship, at the same time being groups which may have suffered from being highly controversial in the Norwegian public sphere.

In the survey, people were actually asked why they wanted to become Norwegian nationals. The appeal of having full rights (and obligations) was the most significant reason: 46 per cent made this statement. The second most important reason was the practical value of having a Norwegian passport (16 per cent). Only 4 per cent of the respondents declared that they 'felt like a Norwegian person, and that they wanted to make that plain'. A large share, 20 per cent, said they did not know why they wanted to naturalize. Of the small group (9 per cent) who did not want to apply for Norwegian citizenship, practical reasons were slightly more prevalent, whereas the 'feeling of being Norwegian' was the least significant (Vatne Pettersen 2009). Altogether, Norwegian citizenship must be seen as attractive. As revealed, 70 per cent of the respondents had already naturalized, and adding the ones who had applied or were in the process of applying, the total was 94 per cent.

### **3.2 Ethnic kin minorities in neighbouring countries**

Apart from a small group of the so-called Kola Norwegians, there are no ethnic kin minorities of relevance living in neighbouring countries. The Kola Norwegians are descendants of Norwegian nationals who emigrated to Murmansk or Arkhangel County in Russia from the second half of the nineteenth century until the Russian border was closed in the late 1920s, and who have been granted a residence or work permit because they have a specific connection with Norway. The Kola Norwegians are privileged as to rules for naturalisation in the sense that they only must have resided in the realm in the last two years, and had residence or work permits of at least one year's duration. Residence during one or more application periods shall be included when calculating the two-year period. The Kola-Norwegian population is however very small, Statistics Norway indicating (with high uncertainty) only approximately 100 persons today.

### **3.3 Gender dimension**

As is revealed in the text of the law above, there is no gender inequality entrenched in the new law. Children are now automatically granted Norwegian citizenship at birth, provided one of the parents is a Norwegian national. According to the Law of 1950, a child was not automatically given citizenship via his or her father if the parents were not married.

### **3.4 The Nordic connection on the wane**

One of the most noteworthy aspects of the revision process leading to the current citizenship regime in Norway was the absence of consultations with fellow Nordic countries. This fact actually reflected a transformation over time to more individualistic law-making in the Nordic region. Earlier signified by close cooperation, something close to parallel legislation has emerged in the citizenship area, as was discussed above. 1979 marked the end of the formal consultation procedure as to the minor updating of the laws, but the major revisions in both Sweden and Norway as well as the Danish Bill of Amendment around the turn of the century provide a confirmation of a new line of individual amendments in the Nordic states. Contact has taken place on the revisions, yet the motivation for a coordinated policy-making no longer seems to be present. Considering the homogeneity of the region in terms of culture, social structure and polity, the actual discrepancy in current citizenship regulation is remarkable.

It is possible to interpret this move away from coordinated policy-making among the Nordic countries as an upgrading of citizenship law in the respective countries. National



interests are apparently conceived as so important in the area that no one wants to be subordinated to a possible Nordic norm. In other words, the weight of national sovereignty has been reinforced, or otherwise, national vested interests have increased in line with a more differentiated immigration policy-making within the Nordic area over the last decades. Norway has placed itself somewhat in ‘the middle’ of Denmark and Sweden when it comes to the central criteria for acquisition of citizenship, e.g. the question of dual citizenship, the required length of residency, and the requirements as to language skills and knowledge of society. As we will see, this ‘middle position’ also signifies the major justifications for the new legislation of 2006.

#### 4 Current political debates

As the most recent law is only three years old, there are no current further reform plans in the pipeline. However, an *evaluation* of the functioning of the 2006 Law is coming up in the near future. This is a new invention in the Norwegian context. Apart from assessing the actual functioning of the Law, the motivation for such an evaluation is said to be the lack of thorough reflection on what citizenship law is supposed to *be* in a modern multicultural context, and a possible stimulus for public discussion on the regime. As reflected earlier in this article, citizenship law-making in Norway has so far not stirred much public interest, and the reform processes have been void of much of the emotional engagement that marks the rest of the immigration/integration sphere of politics.

There was however, some discussion during the revision process on the question of dual citizenship. As revealed earlier, the large majority of the NGOs asked for comments on the law proposal were in favour of dual citizenship. The most prevalent line of argument was that it is more modern and practical in a globalised world to allow for more than one citizenship, and besides that it is more immigrant-friendly to let people choose, and thereby facilitate their possibility of retaining loyalty and practical connections to their country of descent. It has basically been an attitude on the political left, as well as among the NGOs dealing with multicultural issues that as few claims as possible should be imposed on newcomers in the integration process. For a long time, this attitude was dominant amongst the public, due in part to support in the major press. The great exception was the Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*), which actually capitalised on attitudes in the population going against the more lenient approach. The rest of the parties had avoidance symptoms during most of the 1980s and 1990s, when not hammering the Progress Party for being ‘indecent’. The Progress Party on the other hand accused large parts of the political sphere of conducting *snillisme*—literally ‘kindism’; being kind to a fault—and thereby showing disrespect to the Norwegian majority and its traditions, and actually pursuing the opposite of the historically consensus-based policy of equal treatment. This schism actually applied to most issues related to integration policy into the 1990s. Interestingly enough, citizenship legislation has been affected by this schism only to a minor extent, being a ‘sleeping issue’ among more contentious ones. This was possibly because most of the material rights extended to newcomers were secured before naturalisation, but it probably also took some time for parties, let alone the general population, to realize that the immigrant population represented potential voters, with potential influence on institutional arrangements affecting society at large. The local elections in 1999 for the first time exposed the potential political power of the minorities to the general public. This fact did not, however, trigger any major engagement in the revision process of the Nationality Law begun the same year.

The Preparatory Committee itself, on the other hand, dealt with the major controversy in its midst: what should it take to become a Norwegian citizen; what should the Nationality Law itself reflect in terms of cherished traditions and nationhood; and not least what *kind of nationhood* should be prescribed? Were it not for the minority of the committee, Professor Alf Inge Jansen from Bergen, who delivered (rather late in the process, it was claimed) comprehensive justifications for his dissent, the outcome of the whole process might have been different. Professor Jansen argued the principle that one should regenerate the connection between polity and society. The national community was described first and foremost as a *political* community, yet the difficulty of differentiating between political and cultural community was underlined: as a source of solidarity and identity, the idea of citizenship communicates with nation and ethnicity, it was argued (NOU 2000: 32, p. 61). The dissent was a meticulous historical review, emphasizing the significance of the welfare state for the building of trust and traditions of equal treatment. He saw the institution of citizenship as part of this tradition in the polity, and wanted a discussion of the consequences to be drawn in terms of role-expectations for citizens (NOU 2000: 32, p. 62). Dual citizenship was not to be accepted, as a reform to this effect would weaken the equality dimension, and infringe the traditions of the Norwegian polity. The minority also argued for both language and knowledge requirements as a condition for naturalisation.

The majority of the Committee did not go into Professor Jansen's principled discussion. What comes out in the text is therefore a rather limited argument for the suggested liberalisations, with formulations strikingly close to the equivalent Swedish Committee report of 1999. The argument boils down to what is considered inevitable in an internationalised world as well as more practical justifications.

As there was no public engagement, nor any major party cleavages involved in this controversy, the resultant process was left fairly open for the second Bondevik Government (2001–2005) to handle. Meanwhile, the public was gradually more interested in questions of social cohesion, the duty side of the social contract and problems of integrating newcomers. As stated, the law-making process was drawn out, and more pressing policy issues in the field of integration were presented to the *Storting* in the form of a White Paper on Diversity and Inclusion<sup>11</sup>—a ‘value-statement’, as it was called by the Government—and a new Law on an introductory program for newly arrived refugees and their families.<sup>12</sup> Both documents were preparing new ground, ideologically and practically, for the upcoming Nationality Law. The White paper is the first of the kind to try to define what it takes for both the majority and the minorities to make a diverse society function. The *credo* of the Paper is that policies should facilitate free choice for individuals: pro-pluralism, pro-individual choice, yet only to the degree that society does not suffer. There are certain rules and norms that everybody in society needs to follow. The rules of the game are defined as ‘the Norwegian laws and regulations’, and ‘something more’. It is claimed to be necessary to ‘protect the respect for the value basis of society’; ‘certain principles are confirmed’; ‘something has to be common good’ etc. Here the Government places itself in the middle of the major multicultural schism: between freedom of choice and governance and the right to choose cultural affiliation, and the need of society to have well functioning members. It is The Good State that communicates: tolerance, participation, inclusion, anti-discrimination, dialogue and pluralism are frequently used words. At the same time, the Government stuck its neck out by asserting the necessity for newcomers to accept and subscribe to the basic values, the ‘glue’ of Norwegian society, without really defining its content. Controversial themes were not discussed. For example, is

<sup>11</sup> Stortingsmelding nr. 49 (2003–2004) *Mangfold gjennom inkludering og deltakelse*.

<sup>12</sup> *Lov om introduksjonsordning og norskopplæring for nyankomne innvandrere (introduksjonsloven)* (2003: 80).

the Christian-dominated school subject on religion and philosophy to be regarded as part of the 'glue'? And what about love, marriage, non-discrimination against homosexuals and common gymnastics for boys and girls in the schools?

The Introductory Law (implemented 1 September 2004) is relevant in this context as it introduces the right to language training (which classes also act as courses on the social and political system), coupled with work training and labour market preparation. The law is path breaking as an integration instrument in the Norwegian setting, as it is mandatory, i.e. to get a salary (which is higher than the social benefits these categories used to depend on) one has to show up and participate. This law also functioned as a preparation for the subsequent language skill requirement for naturalisation. Some of the new perspectives of the new Citizenship Law were announced already in the White Paper on inclusion and participation. The Government wanted to encourage 'persons who are born in Norway or who have been settled in the country for a long period, and who qualify, to apply for citizenship' (St. meld. nr. 49 (2003–2004), p. 60–61). Even if foreign citizens have had the right to vote in local elections since 1983, the government wanted as many as possible to gain full citizenship in order to be able to vote in governmental elections and 'participate more fully in society'. The premise for this wish was an interpretation of the institution of naturalisation (symbolically and *de facto*) as an approval of the basic values of society, generally defined as *democracy*, *human rights* and *gender equality*. The government wanted to see the institution of citizenship as a formalisation of the tacit social contract existing between the citizen and the state, and it was emphasised that in a multicultural setting, this contract is even more important, as the members have different origins, varying values and religions and cultural belongings than in more homogeneous societies.

Four years after the conclusion of the Citizenship Law Committee in 2004 the Bondevik Government presented its draft law to the parliament, interestingly enough using the *minority* position of the committee as its basis on important issues: the Government wanted a clearer emphasis on the basic values of Norwegian society, and it did not want *dual citizenship*, but rather requirements for naturalisation in terms of language skills, and besides, it wanted to introduce a ceremony with an oath after the completion of the process. Much of the motivation for this governmental proposition also followed the minority of the committee in the sense that an 'upgrade' or revitalisation of the institution of citizenship was on the agenda.

The Citizenship Law as well as the White Paper on inclusion and participation signals a duality we recognize in other European states as well. The interests of the nation state as well as the national community are to be taken care of, at the same time as the groups of newcomers are played down: individuals are more important than cultures when it comes to extension of rights. The Bondevik Government placed itself at the centre of the ethnos-demos axis by wanting both tolerant plurality *and* a national community. The voluntariness of the new ceremony/oath ritual may be a reflection of this duality. The authorities are to make demands on newcomers, yet they are too diffident to make them mandatory.

One may ask why the Norwegian authorities wanted to expose themselves to such an unwieldy terrain. The voluntary character of the ceremony, thus the lack of binding commitment, implies that there are few tangible benefits involved, yet a number of possible pitfalls. Textual analysts were ready to act, either judging the content to be overly nationalistic or completely insignificant. Besides, the matter was *serious*, with no room for the irony and distancing which usually mark this area in public discourse. The preparations were interesting as such. A fast-working editorial committee was appointed to prepare the oath. The

committee was also asked to prepare a book on Norway's history, polity, way of life etc., which was to be given as a gift to each individual during the ceremony. A closed meeting was called later in the process, with experts, representatives of important immigrant organisations and other reference persons, to respond to the suggestions. The background documents for the meeting were withheld from the public. So, despite the fact that the ceremony was planned to be voluntary, its content was considered so sensitive as to necessitate a careful process where ideas and procedures had to be aired and anchored with potentially vocal and critical voices. The authorities evidently judged national symbolism as still being a field of high tension.

It is nevertheless interesting to note, a few years later, that the ceremonies are taking place all over the country once or twice a year without much fuss in the public, yet with enthusiastic support from the new citizens involved.<sup>13</sup>

## 5 Conclusions

The hybrid composition of the new citizenship law in many ways reflects a high degree of continuity in Norwegian citizenship legislation, mixed with important updates as to the new contextual conditions relating to increased mobility and internationalisation and to the composition of the immigrant population. The mandate for the Preparatory Committee of the latest Law included an assessment of the relevance of the citizenship regime for the *integration* of immigrants. The Law proposal from the Government (Ot. prp. nr 41 (2004–2005), p. 24) summed up the whole process in this regard, stating that there is no research evidence whatsoever pertaining to the connection between naturalisation and integration. The Swedish approach to the effect of using the institution as a means to stimulate the integration process was thereby rejected. On the other hand, the Government conceded that naturalised citizens had a higher propensity to participate in local elections than the rest of the immigrant population. Consequently, the *de facto* conclusion was that the requirements for seven years of residence, revocation of the former citizenship, language skills, and knowledge of polity and society, was striking the right balance.

As to the question of whether the Law represents a liberalising trend, or the opposite—whether it tightens the conditions for naturalisation—the answer remains ambiguous. The second Bondevik Government came to power only days after the terrorist attack of 11 Sept 2001. Yet there are few indications that the security atmosphere played any prominent role in the law process, and there was no discussion on security connections attached to the naturalisation of newcomers (Vassbotn 2006). On the liberal side, there were some important changes: the minimum age for application was lowered from eighteen to twelve, in order to give children an independent status as applicants for citizenship. A more liberal policy was also instituted as to the required time of residence: it was still seven years (as in the 1950 Law) but the number of years set as a frame of reference was now ten. This more flexible way of assessing the number of years of residence was a reflection of the fact that people are more mobile. People go abroad more frequently for work, studies and the like even though they consider Norway their residential base. This more open rule should thus facilitate naturalisation for permanent residents. Furthermore, there is no longer a requirement that the applicant has no child maintenance debt. Most important on the liberal side, however, is the introduction of the *right* to citizenship provided the conditions are met. Hereby the discretion of the administration is removed, strengthening the rule of law.

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<sup>13</sup> The content of the ceremonies is as such an interesting object for analysis, yet too far-reaching for the scope of this article (see Hagelund, Kavli and Reegård 2009).

On the restrictive side, there is no doubt that the enforced revocation policy must be interpreted as a restrictive turn. Thus the reinforced legislation on single citizenship is a clear communication to the Norwegian population as well as to the international community that Norwegian citizenship is supposed to be exclusive. The oath (even though it takes place in a voluntary context), reaffirms the message to the naturalized individuals that there is a *duty* side to their new status: they have to show loyalty to their new country, abide by the laws and respect democracy and human rights. The language/knowledge requirement is definitely also a more demanding change; it imposes stricter claims on the individual, and for non-refugees this also has an economic side: new residents preparing for naturalisation have to pay for language training themselves.

Altogether, one may say that the new Law communicates that community and loyalty have a stronger weight than before the revision. On the other hand, it may be argued that the naturalised individuals are better prepared for status as a citizen on this basis. At least the government wanted to create better preconditions for participation, thereby indirectly paving the way for integration. Above all, the Law, through its combined principled and pragmatic approach, represents a message to newcomers that they are formalising the historically engendered social contract of the welfare state in Norway: a contract in which they are supposed to join the basic values of society: democracy and 'the common political rules'. If they do so, they are very welcome.

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