

PROGRESS PARTY (FREMSKRITTSPARTIET, FRP)

IMPACT: The Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*, FRP) is a far-right anti-Muslim political party in Norway. Established in 1973, FRP joined government coalitions with the conservative party in 2013 and 2017, but left the governing coalition in January 2020.

- **The Progress Party was established in 1973 as Anders Lange’s Party for a Strong Reduction of Taxes, Social Contributions, and Public Intervention (Anders Langes Parti til sterk nedsettelse av skatter, avgifter og offentlige inngrep) and adopted its current name in 1977.** The FRP won 5 percent of the vote and four seats in parliament in its first election in 1973. The party’s platform advocates for tax reductions, privatization, reducing the welfare state, and decreasing immigration. The FRP describes itself as a “libertarian party that believes in freedom for the individual, lower taxes, prosperity and a limited government that empowers people.”
- **The Progress Party has been a “major force” in Norwegian politics since the late 1980s, advocating limitations on both immigration and the welfare state. In the 1997, 2005, and 2009 elections, the party emerged as the second largest party in parliament, behind the Norwegian Labor Party (Det Norske Arbeiderparti, DNA).** The lack of a “total boycott policy” (also called cordon sanitaire—which would be a refusal by all political parties to cooperate with the FRP) against the Progress Party allowed for the formation of coalition governments and the party became “increasingly well integrated into the political system,” says political scientist Johan Bjerkem. **In 2001 and 2013, the Progress Party was the third largest party in parliament.** Following the elections in September 2013, in which the Labor Party won the most seats, Conservative leader Erna Solberg (Høyre) formed a minority coalition government with the Progress Party with a total of ninety-six seats. No third party joined the coalition because of the Progress Party’s far-right rhetoric and policy ideas, preventing the coalition from forming a majority government.
- In contrast to other far-right parties in Norway, the Progress Party has exerted political power locally, regionally, and nationally. **In Oslo, the capital city of Norway, the party has held local office for a total of ten years, including two mayoral terms.** Following the outcome of the September 2017 national election, the Progress Party became part of a coalition with the Conservatives. **In January 2020, the Progress Party quit the coalition over a cabinet decision to repatriate a woman suspected of belonging to Da’esh (the Islamic State) so that one of her children could receive medical treatment.** According to party leader and finance minister Siv Jensen, there had been “too many compromises.” Jensen only supported the young child’s return to Norway and rejected the mother’s return.
- **Mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik is a former member of the Progress Party. Breivik joined the party in 1997 at the age of eighteen, but quit in 2007.** Following the July 2011 mass shootings and bombing in which Breivik killed 77 people—mostly youth—and injured 151, the Progress Party performed poorly in the September 2011 local elections. Its national electoral support fell from 17.5 percent in 2007 to 11.4 percent. The Progress Party has since made attempts to distance itself from Breivik.
- The Progress Party has long mobilized against Muslims. **In April 2009, long-time party leader Siv Jensen said: “The reality is that a kind of stealth Islamisation of this society is being allowed [...] We are going to have to stop this.”** According to political scientists Katrine Fangen and Mari Vaage, Jensen’s use of the term “stealth Islamisation” is “inspired by” American anti-Muslim blogger Robert

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Spencer, author of the 2008 *Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs*. When the Progress Party entered into coalition negotiations in September 2013, **Oslo party head Christian Tybring-Gjedde said: “Creeping or not, it is Islamization that I totally renounce [...] If it is the phrase ‘creeping islamisation’ that they do not like, we can call it ‘adaptation to Islamic culture based on Sharia law.’ Maybe those are words that will make it more acceptable for the Christian Democrats to talk to us.”** During the campaign for the national elections in September 2017, **an electronic billboard in Oslo’s Central train station showed a party ad calling for a burqa and niqab ban in public spaces. The same month, a post by the party on its Facebook page stated, “Burka and niqab do not belong in Norway.”**

- **In August 2010, FRP MP Christian Tybring-Gjedde and FRP MP Kent Andersen wrote in op-ed on what they described as the threat and “cultural invasion” posed by immigrants from “cultures and lack of cultures,”** claiming that “cultural Norwegians are fleeing several Oslo neighborhoods and leaving enclaves where Muslim naiveté, dogmatism and intolerance find increasingly fertile ground.” **They also described “multiculturalism” as “stabbing our own [Norwegian] culture in the back.”** In May 2011, Tybring-Gjedde declared at an FRP national meeting: “Islam cannot stand the values of freedom, and Islamic power increases from day to day” and “In Groruddalen, blonde girls are bullied and dye their hair dark, children are threatened with beatings because they have salami sausage on the bread slice in the food package.” **Tybring-Gjedde also described Muslim immigrant children as “aggressive,” claiming, “There is no doubt that immigrant boys are more aggressive than Norwegians - it is in the culture.”** In January 2011, Kent Andersen implied that Islam is not a religion and compared Nazism to Islam, asking readers to consider whether “moderate Muslims” exist in the same way he argued “moderate Nazis” never existed.
- **Sylvi Listhaug, FRP MP and deputy party leader as of April 2018 has been described in Jacobin as the “Norwegian Trump.”** In March 2018 Listhaug was dismissed as the Minister of Justice, Public Security and Immigration following an inflammatory Facebook post referencing the Utøya July 22 movie. **In October 2016, ahead of the government’s national integration conference, Listhaug posted, “I think those who come to Norway must adapt to our society. Here we eat pork, drink alcohol and show our face.”** During her election campaign in August 2017, Listhaug “directly challenged an imam at a seminar held...by a Muslim group in Sarpsborg, proposing a “blacklist’ against those spreading hatred and messages that ‘are not compatible with our values and lifestyle.” **In a radio interview following her remarks, Listhaug claimed that the leader of the Christian Democrats, Knut Arild Hareide, was “licking the backs of imams, instead of confronting folks with extreme attitudes.”** In April 2016, Listhaug traveled to the Mediterranean coast of Lesbos “to see things from the perspective of migrants who risk their lives crossing the sea to Europe.” She did so by floating in the sea while wearing a survival suit. In December 2015, shortly after becoming the newly created Minister of Immigration and Integration, Listhaug proposed “tough” and “punitive” measures that would “mak[e] life more difficult for asylum seekers.” **Prior to her appointment, Listhaug described Norway’s refugee and asylum laws as a “tyranny of kindness that is blowing over Norwegian society like a nightmare.”**
- **While the Progress Party’s anti-Muslim policies and rhetoric have been widely criticized, politicians and academics note that they have become normalized in Norway.** Labour Party MP Khalid Mahmood said as early as April 2009, “It is not

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any longer immigrants who are targeted, but simply Muslims [...] We are portrayed as uncivilised people living double lives - orderly and behaved when in public, but at home fundamentalists suppressing and physically abusing women,” adding, “Muslims are the Jews of our times, stigmatised, generalised and presented as a threat to society.” At the same time, the positions of the Progress Party have become more and more mainstream and normalized in Norwegian society. [According to](#) Professor Knut Heidar of Oslo University’s Department of Political Science, “the policies which [Progress] were proposing 10 years ago are now being accepted by all the parties, including Labor, in terms of integration, that immigrants should learn Norwegian and so on.” A 2017 [survey](#) by the Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies found that more than 34 percent of society have prejudices against Muslims. Forty-two percent of respondents agreed with the statement, “Muslims do not want to integrate into Norwegian society.”

- Analysts and local party members themselves have also observed a [widening gap](#) between the party’s grassroots and parliamentary factions. Local Progress Party activists and politicians are much more radical than their parliamentary colleagues. **As detailed in Fair Observer, many local Progress Party activists and leaders have been involved with Stop the Islamization of Norway (SIAN) – an anti-Muslim movement that has been in conflict with the law.**
- **The Progress Party has also entrenched anti-Muslim and anti-immigration policies in state institutions.** When the FRP was in power, it [funded](#) institutions like the foundation [Human Rights Service \(HRS\)](#). [According to](#) scholar Sindre Bangstad, HRS “has remained loyal to the Progress Party ever since.” **HRS has pushed the ‘Eurabia’ theory that claims that Muslims and the European Union elites have conspired to Islamize Europe. HRS director Hege Storhaug campaigned over similarities between Nazism and Islam.** Storhaug declared “civilisational war against Muslims” in her self-published book, which was [covered widely](#) by the Norwegian media. As Bangstad [reports](#), the HRS has “obtained the right to nominate board members to the Immigration Appeals Board, which adjudicates on asylum applications in Norway.”
- **Since Norway is not a member of the European Union, the Progress Party does not cooperate with other far-right parties in any formal way.** The Progress Party has also distanced itself from comparisons to other far-right parties in Europe. In September 2013, the party’s deputy leader, Ketil Solvik-Olsen, [said](#): “It is unreasonable to compare the Progress Party with the Danish People’s Party, the Sweden Democrats and the True Finns,” which are all seen as staunch far-right parties. [According to a report](#) by the Atlantic, the party “has further worked to moderate its message and its rhetoric during its four years in government,” similar to other far-right parties. However, **the Progress Party draws on the same anti-Muslim conspiracy theories and pushes for anti-Muslim positions similar to other far-right parties throughout Europe.**