

2 [Vedleggsnr. resett]

Vedlegg 2.

Executive Summary

2.1 Overview

The Committee for the Investigation of Inter-country Adoption to Norway was appointed by the Norwegian Government on 20 June 2023. Its work commenced at the end of 2023, and the final report was submitted on 22 June 2026.

The report, *Soundness, Risk, and Trust: An Investigation of Inter-country Adoption to Norway*,³²³⁵ consists of four parts.

Part 1 contains Chapter 1: Appointment, mandate, and work; Chapter 2: Executive Summary; and Chapter 3: Methodology.

Part 2 contains descriptive chapters that provide the framework and perspectives for the report, including Chapter 4 on risk factors in inter-country adoption, Chapter 5 on sources of law and key legal principles, Chapter 6 on the organisation of the adoption system, past and present, Chapter 7 on the adoption organisations (accredited adoption service providers), and Chapter 8 on key policy guidelines in the field of adoption.

Part 3 comprises Chapters 9–21, containing the Committee's investigation of the twelve priority countries specified in its mandate, listed in alphabetical order: Bangladesh (9), Brazil (10), Chile (11), Colombia (12), Costa Rica (13), Ecuador (14), Ethiopia (15), Indonesia (16), China (17), Sri Lanka (18), South Korea (19) and Vietnam (20), as well as some comments on findings from other countries of origin, and a few individual findings that are not linked to specific countries due to the risk of identifying individual adoptees and their families (21).

Part 4 contains the Committee's assessments of both specific and broader themes within its mandate. Chapter 22 provides a brief introduction to the chapters in Part 4. In Chapter 23, the Committee assesses the significance of the 1993 Hague Convention for adoptions to Norway. Chapter 24 assesses how the system of adoption organisations has functioned. In Chapter 25, the Committee assesses the Norwegian authorities' work relating to the authorisation of adoption organisations to operate in specific countries of origin, and the supervision of those organisations. In Chapter 26, the Committee assesses the adoption authorities' handling of applications for approval of prospective adoptive parents. Chapter 27 assesses the authorities' work on the registration of adoptions and adoption orders. In Chapter 28, the Committee examines adoptions not arranged by an adoption organisation. Chapter 29 outlines the opportunities for adoptees to access documents in the adoption case, as well as to search for their origins. In Chapter 30, the Committee assesses how the need for post-adoption measures has been met.

Chapter 31 contains the Committee's overall conclusions, and in Chapter 32 the Committee sets out its recommendations for the future.

³²³⁵The term *forsvarlighet* is rendered here as *soundness*. *Forsvarlighet* in the Norwegian title does not have a precise equivalent in English. It denotes a legal, professional and ethical standard that sets requirements for the quality, appropriateness and acceptability of an act, decision or service. Depending on context it may e.g. be rendered as *soundness*, *sound practice*, *adequacy*, *due diligence*, or *responsible practice*.

2.2 Part 1 Introduction

Chapter 1 describes the Committee's appointment, mandate, and work. It is explained that the mandate is extensive and complex, and that it has been necessary to set certain limits to the scope. In the mandate, the Committee was asked to 'examine the adoption system in relation to all countries of origin from which Norway has adopted children' and to review 'a selection of cases from each country'. In addition, the Committee was to 'as a minimum prioritise a more thorough investigation of' twelve countries, see section 1. It soon became apparent that it would be unrealistic to carry out sound and reliable investigations into all the countries from which Norway has had adoptions. The Committee asked the Ministry of Children and Families to limit the country investigations to primarily cover the twelve priority countries in the Committee's mandate. The Ministry responded by clarifying that the Committee should 'review the adoption system from as many countries as possible with which Norway has cooperated', and that the Committee had to justify its priorities and limitations 'inter alia on the basis of assessments of risk in the adoption systems in the various countries'.

Chapter 3 sets out the Committee's methods. This investigation has required the use of several different, complementary methods, including archive searches, interviews, country visits, reviews of individual adoption cases, and news and literature searches on various issues. The Committee has also received and gathered input from organisations, individuals, and the Committee's reference group.

The main part of the Committee's work has consisted of mapping the field of adoption and gathering information, as well as analysing and assessing the facts.

The Committee has carried out country visits to four countries of origin: Colombia, Chile, Ethiopia, and South Korea. The Committee held meetings with authorities, original families, individuals associated with the adoption organisations, researchers, and various organisations.

Furthermore, the Committee has reviewed archive material from public and private actors in the field of adoption, and conducted interviews with more than 80 people. This includes, among others, adult and minor adoptees, adoptive parents, individuals associated with adoption organisations, and former and current employees of Norwegian adoption authorities. The Committee has received input through the reference group, through enquiries from individuals and organisations, and through meetings.

The Committee's investigations have been subject to certain practical and legal constraints. Some archives have been incomplete, some relevant individuals have not been available for interview, and the Committee has not had the authority to conduct investigations in foreign public archives.

2.3 Part 2 Perspectives and framework

In *Chapter 4*, the Committee provides an overview of key risk factors in inter-country adoptions. These factors have, in various ways and to varying degrees, influenced the regulation of inter-country adoption in the countries of origin, in international regulations, and in Norwegian legislation and practice. The Committee addresses here the lack of effective control mechanisms and other conditions in countries of origin, financial incentives for adoption, competition for available children in countries of origin, corruption, war and states of crisis in countries of origin, poverty, as well as cultural factors and oppressed groups. Finally, the issue of human trafficking in the context of adoption is addressed.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of key sources of law and principles relating to inter-country adoption that are of general significance to the Committee's assessments in both Parts 3 and 4. Regula-

tions concerning more specific issues and various parts of the adoption process are presented in the relevant chapters.

In *Chapter 6*, the Committee outlines the historical development of the Norwegian adoption system, with particular emphasis on national developments within Norway, as well as the legal and institutional frameworks for inter-country adoptions. The chapter provides a descriptive overview of the main features, and the topics covered in the chapter are presented in more detail and discussed elsewhere in the report.

In *Chapter 7*, the Committee provides an overview of the organisations that have arranged adoptions to Norway. A general overview of the organisations' origins and development is provided. The focus is particularly on organisational aspects that the Committee considers as central to its descriptions and assessments of the system for inter-country adoptions in general, and for adoptions arranged through these organisations in particular.

Chapter 8 addresses various types of policy guidelines in the field of adoption that do not naturally fall under the description of specific regulatory changes or major reforms. The chapter addresses issues that have been raised in the Storting in various formats, guidelines on adoptions in party manifestos and government platforms, as well as information from the Committee's interviews with ministry staff regarding the key priorities of political leadership in the field of adoption. The Committee's general impression is that there has been relatively broad political consensus that the system of inter-country adoptions should be maintained, and that opportunities for inter-country adoptions should be improved. There has been political consensus on reforms that, among other things, have tightened the requirements for legal protection and oversight in the field of adoption, such as the ratification of the Hague Convention and amendments to adoption legislation. Beyond the political consideration of such reforms, political engagement has, at least up until around 2020, been primarily directed towards measures to make it easier and quicker for adoption applicants to adopt.

2.4 Part 3 Country investigations

This section discusses the findings from the Committee's country investigations.

Chapter 9 describes adoption mediation from *Bangladesh*. Between 1973 and 1981, 110 adoptions to Norway were carried out with the assistance of Adopsjonsforum. These are the Committee's key findings:

- The situation in Bangladesh was complex and difficult to assess for several reasons, and the system there was not suited to ensuring effective verification of the identity of the children and the persons who handed them over to the authorities or private children's homes.
- Original mothers received little help or guidance in connection with the decision to place their child in a children's home, and did not always understand that signing the transfer of guardianship to the orphanage could result in the child being adopted abroad.
- The adoptions were carried out in Norway, based on the transfer of guardianship from the orphanage in Bangladesh to the prospective adoptive parents and the child's Bangladeshi passport. The Norwegian authorities did not have a sufficient basis for assessing whether the conditions of the Norwegian Adoption Act and other principles governing international adoption were met in each individual case.

- The Norwegian authorities were aware of and accepted the risk of incorrect information regarding the children's background and identity in the documentation on which the adoption decision was based.
- The adoptions from Bangladesh took place at a time when guidelines and principles for inter-country adoption were relatively underdeveloped. These are factors that must be taken into account when considering the degree of criticism directed at those responsible. The Committee nevertheless believes that the Norwegian authorities could and should have conducted more thorough investigations into whether the adoptions were carried out in a responsible manner, and imposed stricter requirements on the adoption organisations.

Chapter 10 describes adoption mediation from *Brazil*. Between 1990 and 2013, 471 adoptions to Norway were arranged through the adoption organisations InorAdopt, Adopsjonsforum, and Verdens Barn. These are the Committee's key findings:

- The Committee has not received any enquiries or uncovered any specific information to suggest that the legal determination of adoptability, and the adoption itself, of children placed with Norwegian adoptive parents through InorAdopt or the two other Norwegian adoption organisations occurred on an unlawful basis.
- In Brazil, the intermediaries covered only minor administrative costs, and there were no additional donations or other fees associated with the adoptions. The committee considers that this reduced the risk of improper financial gain in connection with the adoptions. The Committee finds that the investigation carried out by the Norwegian authorities prior to the commencement of adoption activities from Brazil was insufficient to make a sound assessment of adoptions from Brazil, cf. the duty of investigation under Section 17, first paragraph, of the Public Administration Act.
- The Committee considers that the adoption authorities did not take sufficient account of the information and warnings that emerged during the dialogue with the Foreign Service prior to the commencement of adoption activities from Brazil.
- The Committee considers it censurable that the Norwegian adoption authorities did not themselves ensure that local social services offices in the municipality where the child was settled following adoption to Norway issued the follow-up reports required by the Brazilian authorities to complete the adoption (until Brazil introduced a new adoption law in 1990).
- The Committee assumes that the resource situation within the Brazilian child welfare system has entailed a certain general risk that not all original parents have received adequate help and/or guidance prior to an adoption, and has led to some limitations regarding the scope of investigations into alternative placements for the children within Brazil.
- The Committee emphasises that the practice of bringing children at high risk of trauma-related issues to Norway at an age when one would expect them to have developed language skills, without at the same time ensuring they have the opportunity to express themselves and/or process their experiences in their own language, is particularly censurable.

Chapter 11 describes adoption mediation from *Chile*. Between 1985 and 2016, 314 adoptions to Norway were arranged through Adopsjonsforum. These are the Committee's key findings:

- The Committee believes that the Norwegian adoption authorities did not carry out sufficiently thorough assessments of whether it was justifiable to grant authorisation to mediate adoptions from Chile to the adoption organisation Adopsjonsforum – particularly given

that the country was a military dictatorship with a significant degree of corruption, political oppression, and serious violations of fundamental human rights.

- The Committee considers that the Norwegian adoption authorities' assessments of the Chilean adoption rules prior to the first authorisations (for pilot cases) being granted were inadequate: At that time, the Norwegian adoption authorities permitted a system of adoptions for which there was no basis in Chilean adoption legislation.
- The Committee considers that the Norwegian adoption authorities did not carry out a proper assessment of legal protection and the political and social conditions in the country when the general authorisation for adoptions was granted to Adopsjonsforum in December 1988. In the Committee's view, it was not justifiable to grant an adoption authorisation for Chile at the time this was granted.
- The Committee considers that the Norwegian adoption authorities' ongoing monitoring of placements from Chile had significant shortcomings, particularly in the document checks prior to the granting of an adoption order in Norway (up to 1999). The Committee wishes to emphasise that the Norwegian authorities had a special responsibility to check the documents when they themselves granted an adoption order.
- The Committee considers that Adopsjonsforum acted censurably and exercised poor judgement by proposing or accepting several arrangements involving obvious risks of unlawful and/or irregular adoptions.
- The Committee considers it likely that the judge in Temuco, with whom Adopsjonsforum collaborated, shared in whole or in part some of the military junta's prejudices against indigenous people and the notion that adoption could be a solution to this 'problem'.
- The Committee has identified one adoption to Norway where the child is said to have been taken from the mother at birth on the claim that the child was stillborn. This case is from Temuco.
- The Committee considers that there is a high risk of criminal offences, illegalities, or other irregularities in adoptions from Temuco during the period 1987–1995. This could include breaches of the requirement for informed consent from the original parents, of the principle of subsidiarity, and of the prohibition against improper financial gain in adoptions. Adoptions from other parts of the country are also associated with a risk of errors and illegalities, particularly in the period up to 1999.

Chapter 12 describes adoption mediation from *Colombia*. Between 1972 and 2025, Adopsjonsforum arranged 4,096 adoptions to Norway. These are the Committee's key findings:

- The Committee believes that Adopsjonsforum's cooperation with several private institutions was structured and developed in a way that contributed to making the institutions financially dependent on placing children for adoption in order to receive donations. This created a risk that financial considerations might take precedence over the best interests of the child, and posed a risk of breaches of, among other things, the requirement for informed consent, the principle of subsidiarity, and the prohibition against improper financial gain in adoptions.
- The Committee is critical of the advance payment agreements that Adopsjonsforum entered into with some of the private institutions, which entailed a risk that considerations other

than the best interests of the child could become the determining factor in each individual adoption.

- The Committee is also critical of the fact that, over a long period, Adopsjonsforum was not entirely open about these agreements with Norwegian adoption authorities.
- The Committee is further critical of how Norwegian adoption authorities in several instances failed to act on information they received, both regarding the possibility of irregularities in adoptions from Bogotá to Norway in the late 1970s, and regarding the fact that donations to private institutions in the early 2000s were, in some cases, transferred directly to accounts in third countries, which should have prompted further investigations.
- The Committee believes that the risk of irregularities in adoptions through the ICBF has been present throughout the entire placement period, partly due to a lack of resources within the ICBF to conduct an adequate investigation of the child's background and the family's situation.
- The Committee considers that the manner in which the original family is notified of the hearing and the decision concerning a child's legal release for adoption must be regarded as a serious weakness in the Colombian adoption system.
- The Committee considers it censurable that, up until 2017, the Norwegian adoption authorities showed limited interest in and had limited knowledge of the case process in Colombia until a decision on release for adoption and subsequent adoption was made, particularly in adoption cases that were not based on the consent of the original parents.

Chapter 13 describes adoption mediation from *Costa Rica*. Between 1975 and 1992, 101 adoptions to Norway were arranged through Adopsjonsforum. These are the Committee's key findings:

- The Committee's investigations have not revealed indications that there were any significant issues worthy of criticism at the systemic level relating to Adopsjonsforum's adoption mediation from Costa Rica.
- A significant proportion of the children adopted from Costa Rica to Norway were adopted following child protection proceedings resulting in the removal of parental responsibility. Therefore, it is censurable that the Norwegian adoption authorities did not obtain thorough information about the stages of this process and its legal basis, nor did they assess the soundness of this process before authorising adoption cooperation with the country.
- Information from various sources indicates that there may be a risk that attitudes within the Costa Rican child welfare services towards people from lower socio-economic groups and single parents have contributed to inadequate processes.

Chapter 14 describes adoption mediation from *Ecuador*. Between 1976 and 2004, 185 adoptions to Norway were arranged through Adopsjonsforum. The Committee's investigations have focused in particular on the so-called Moncayo case, but the Committee has also examined certain other matters from the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. These are the Committee's key findings:

- There is a risk that there may be irregularities in adoptions to Norway from Amparo y Hogar in the 1980s.
- When lawyer Roberto Moncayo was approved as Adopsjonsforum's contact person in Ecuador in 1986, the authorities and Adopsjonsforum should have requested a detailed explanation of how he intended to find children suitable for adoption. The fact that this was not done constituted a breach of the adoption authorities' duty of investigation under the Public Administration Act.

- After Moncayo was arrested, the Norwegian authorities should have been far more concerned with clarifying whether any criminal offences had been committed that could justify reversing some of the adoptions, and with expediting the assessment of this in Ecuador.
- It is censurable that the Norwegian authorities accepted a proposed solution that involved paying money to avoid a demand to return a kidnapped child. This is contrary to the fundamental principles that adoptions must be decided in the best interests of the child, and that no one should derive any undue financial gain. The breach of these principles is serious.

Chapter 15 describes adoption mediation from *Ethiopia*. Between 1990 and 2013, 693 adoptions to Norway were arranged through Adopsjonsforum. These are the Committee's key findings:

- When adoption work began in 1991, Ethiopia was a military dictatorship. In general, the Committee considers it concerning that the Norwegian authorities permitted adoption cooperation with countries under military dictatorship.
- Between 1998 and 2000, there was a war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Committee considers it censurable that neither the State Office for Youth and Adoption nor the Ministry carried out investigations or further assessments in connection with this.
- The Committee believes that there is a significant risk that the original parents of children adopted to Norway consented to the adoption without fully understanding the absolute severance of ties that such a decision entailed.
- The Committee is aware of two cases of staged abandonment involving adoptees in Norway, and believes there is a risk that this has also occurred in other cases.
- In some cases, original parents or relatives have only decided to give up their child for adoption after being made aware of the possibility of receiving financial support for any remaining children or siblings through Adopsjonsforum's sibling project. This constitutes undue influence on the parents' consent and is a breach of fundamental principles of adoption law.
- Staff at Adopsjonsforum's partner children's home Faya (2009–2013) stated that inter-country adoptions were presented as a 'first option' for original parents who were struggling to care for their children. Such a practice is contrary to the principle of subsidiarity.
- The Committee considers that the practice of moving children to Adopsjonsforum's transit home before the process of determining that the child is adoptable was completed entailed a risk that the principle of subsidiarity was not adequately safeguarded.
- The Committee considers that the financial compensation paid to Adopsjonsforum's first foreign contact (1991–2004) was, on the whole, of such a magnitude that it contravened the principle of improper financial gain in Article 21(d) of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child and the prohibition against unreasonably high remuneration in Article 32(3) of the 1993 Hague Convention.
- The Committee considers that the agreements on financial support that Adopsjonsforum entered into from 2006 with private organisations/children's homes responsible for placing children for adoption were in breach of principles relating to financial transactions in adoption work, cf. inter alia Article 21(d) of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Committee considers it censurable that Adopsjonsforum, on several occasions, unilaterally and at short notice, withdrew fixed and substantial support for the running of children's homes and various aid projects.

- The Committee considers it censurable that the Norwegian adoption authorities did not conduct further investigations following the information they received during the supervisory visit in 2003. This applies both to information regarding suspicions about a key official in Ethiopia and to information relating to Adopsjonsforum's sibling project.
- The Committee believes that the Norwegian authorities should, to a greater extent, have questioned and investigated the information contained in the applications for authorisation to operate in Ethiopia indicating that Adopsjonsforum provided financial support to the children's homes from which they were allocated children.
- The Committee considers that the Norwegian authorities did not carry out sufficient investigations or take adequate measures to ensure the propriety of adoptions to Norway during the 2010s, when several irregularities in the adoption process in Ethiopia were uncovered at international level.

Chapter 16 describes adoption mediation from *Indonesia*. Between 1977 and 1983, 110 adoptions to Norway were carried out with the assistance of Adopsjonsforum. These are the Committee's key findings:

- During the period when adoptions from Indonesia took place, the country was a military dictatorship. In general, the Committee considers it concerning that the Norwegian authorities permitted adoption cooperation with countries under military dictatorship.
- There is a risk that children may have been adopted to Norway on false grounds or with an incorrect identity. The information about the mothers in the documentation establishing that children were legally adoptable is often incomplete, and it is likely that this information is not always correct. This applies in particular to adoptions from the clinic Panca Dharma.
- The process for the release for adoption has not sufficiently ensured voluntary and informed consent from the original parents.
- The agreement that Adopsjonsforum's representative entered into with Panca Dharma, regarding a set number of children per week and an advance payment of a fixed sum per child, posed a risk that considerations other than the best interests of the child would dominate the adoption process.
- The Norwegian authorities took some positive steps as the situation in Indonesia developed, and information about the work came to light. Among other things, it was positive that they sent a representative to the country, established contact with the Indonesian authorities and introduced a temporary suspension. The Committee nevertheless believes that the authorities should have established direct contact with the Indonesian authorities at an earlier stage.
- The inter-country adoptions from Indonesia took place at a time when guidelines and principles for inter-country adoption were relatively underdeveloped. The Committee nevertheless believes that the Norwegian authorities could and should have conducted more thorough investigations into the feasibility of carrying out responsible adoptions, and imposed stricter requirements on the adoption organisations.

Chapter 17 describes adoption mediation from *China*. Between 1991 and 2017, 3,030 adoptions to Norway were arranged through the adoption organisations Verdens Barn, Adopsjonsforum, and InorAdopt. These are the Committee's key findings:

- The Committee is critical of the fact that the adoption process and conditions in China were inadequately investigated when the Norwegian adoption authorities in the early 1990s granted permission for adoptions from the country.
- The Committee believes that the steady increase in demand from abroad for the adoption of Chinese children, combined with the high donations associated with each adoption, led to a gradually increasing risk of errors in adoption cases.
- The Committee finds that the accumulation of risk factors highlighted by the ‘Hunan case’ in 2006 suggests that the Norwegian adoption authorities should have suspended adoption cooperation with China, or at the very least thoroughly considered a temporary suspension of adoptions and initiated dialogue with the Central Authorities of other receiving countries regarding what measures could be proposed or set as conditions for continued cooperation.
- The Committee considers that throughout the entire placement period there was a risk of a breach of the prohibition on remuneration/profit in adoptions and a risk that original parents had not voluntarily surrendered their children. Furthermore, the Committee believes there is a risk of a breach of the principle of subsidiarity, including in the period after 2006, when the Hague Convention came into force in China.

Chapter 18 describes adoption mediation from *Sri Lanka*. Between 1975 and 2015, 222 adoptions to Norway were arranged through Adopsjonsforum. These are the Committee’s key findings:

- The Committee’s archival findings show that Adopsjonsforum has, from the start of its adoption activities in the country, been aware of the risks associated with adoptions from Sri Lanka, but believed that they would be able to navigate the landscape in an ethically sound manner. Nevertheless, at various times, they established arrangements that carried obvious risks of breaching fundamental principles of adoption law.
- Norwegian adoption authorities have been restrictive in permitting independent adoptions. The Committee views this general aspect of Norwegian adoption regulation as highly positive, and in Sri Lanka’s case, it has likely played a significant role in preventing a number of illegal and unethical practices described in investigations from other receiving countries.
- Corruption was a significant social problem in Sri Lanka throughout the period investigated. In such a context, it is particularly important to avoid payments or other benefits that may entail improper financial gain or other gain in connection with adoptions, beyond the coverage of actual costs and reasonable remuneration for services rendered. It was the Norwegian adoption authorities who, in 1985, proposed that adoptions from the religious partner institutions should be accompanied by a fixed donation from Adopsjonsforum. Adopsjonsforum cannot therefore be criticised for having followed this recommendation. The situation is different with respect to Adopsjonsforum’s donations to the Central Authority and its 2009 development aid project, which aimed to increase the number of placements for Norwegian applicants.
- The Committee considers that the Norwegian adoption authorities have, on several occasions, made inadequate assessments, and that the supervision of adoption arrangements from Sri Lanka to Norway has been inadequate. It is censurable that Norwegian adoption authorities have failed to follow up on several reports of irregularities in the processes, failed to ask relevant questions about the adoption work and the adoption process, or failed to obtain further information about conditions in the country, for example when establishing

cooperation in new regions. This is particularly relevant given that the country was in the midst of a civil war for much of the period investigated.

Chapter 19 describes adoption mediation from *South Korea*. A total of 6,726 adoptions were arranged from South Korea to Norway during the period 1954–2024. These are the Committee’s key findings:

- In its second phase of investigations, the South Korean Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has uncovered many systematic shortcomings in the adoption work carried out in South Korea. The Committee draws heavily on the TRC’s work and refers to the systemic weaknesses revealed in its report. In March 2026, the TRC was re-established for a third period of investigations and has begun accepting new complaints about adoptions, submitted by inter-country adoptees and original parents.
- In South Korea, government oversight of inter-country adoptions and the private adoption organisations has been severely lacking. This applies in particular to the period up to 1989. Since then, oversight has gradually improved. Nevertheless, oversight remained limited between 1989 and 2012. The situation improved somewhat following reforms in 2012, which, among other things, meant that the process of approving adoptions was transferred to the courts. However, official oversight still had weaknesses, and the Hague Convention was not implemented until 2025.
- Until 1989, there was a risk that missing children who had been separated from their parents could be adopted abroad.
- In South Korea, checks to ensure that consent had been given by parents or others with the authority to give consent were severely lacking in the 1970s and 1980s.
- Verdens Barn should, as early as the 1980s, have questioned whether channelling all aid to South Korea through Holt (a South Korean adoption agency and welfare organisation) created a risk that considerations other than the best interests of the child might become decisive in adoptions.
- The Committee finds it likely that the total financial support provided to Holt, both from Verdens Barn and other cooperation partners competing for placements, has influenced Holt’s work on adoptions. There is a risk that financial considerations have at times taken precedence over the best interests of the individual child.
- The Committee finds no evidence that the Norwegian authorities have at any time carried out a comprehensive assessment of the support provided to Holt, or of how it has influenced the adoption processes. It is censurable that this was not done.
- The Committee considers it highly censurable that as late as the end of the 1990s, the Norwegian authorities were unaware that children with known parents were also being registered as having no known parents in the South Korean family register. The lack of action on the Norwegian side has contributed to a great many adoptees mistakenly believing that they were found as foundlings, with no known original parents or other relatives.
- Overall, the Norwegian authorities should have ensured significantly more thorough supervision of the adoption cooperation, particularly given that, for many years, more adoptees came from South Korea than from any other country. It is therefore particularly censurable that the Norwegian authorities had not acquired more knowledge about the adoption process in South Korea, and at times appear to have been uncertain about the background of the children who were adopted to Norway.

- The Committee has concluded that it was particularly censurable that the Norwegian authorities, right up until 2012, had a fixed practice of making decisions on adoptions from South Korea without independently assessing whether the conditions for adoption under the Norwegian Adoption Act had been met, and without obtaining documentation that would have made it possible to assess these conditions.
- In 1978, Koreaforeningen assisted a married couple in bringing a child from South Korea, even though their application for pre-approval for inter-country adoption had been rejected. Koreaforeningen deliberately provided false information to the South Korean authorities, stating that the parents had been approved by the Norwegian authorities. The Committee considers the association's conduct to have been particularly censurable.

Chapter 20 describes adoption mediation from *Vietnam*. A total of 228 adoptions from Vietnam were arranged over three periods. Between 1968 and 1975, 137 adoptions to Norway were carried out with the assistance of the Committee for South-East Asia, the Norwegian-Vietnamese Association, and the Parents' Association for Children from Vietnam. Between 1991 and 1999, 80 adoptions to Norway were arranged through Adopsjonsforum. Between 2016 and 2021, 11 adoptions were arranged through Adopsjonsforum. These are the Committee's key findings:

1968–1975

- The Committee believes that there was a significant risk of irregularities and errors in the adoptions from Vietnam during the period 1968–1975. This applies, among other things, to the reliability of information relating to the children's background and identity and whether the processes of determining that the children were adoptable were carried out correctly.
- In 1968–1975, there was an ongoing civil war in Vietnam. The Committee generally considers it censurable to permit adoptions from a country at war, as it is difficult to make sound assessments of what is in the best interests of the child. Based on current knowledge and guidelines regarding the adoption of children in war and crisis situations, the Committee finds it clear that adoptions of children from Vietnam should not have taken place during the period in question. However, as international cooperation and guidelines on international adoption were far less developed around 1970, the Committee nevertheless believes that there is no basis for strong criticism of the Norwegian authorities for permitting adoption cooperation under the conditions that were set for this.
- The Committee considers it concerning that an authorisation to arrange adoptions was granted to a group of young politicians without specific expertise in the legal and social aspects relevant to inter-country adoption.
- To the extent that this was possible in a country at war, the conditions set by the Norwegian authorities in the mediation authorisation granted to the Committee for South-East Asia ensured that the children were lawfully released for adoption. In the Committee's view, the fact that the conditions regarding the number of children, information about the children, and the adoption processes carried out were not complied with is not something for which the Norwegian authorities can be directly blamed.
- In 1971, the leader of the Norwegian-Vietnamese Association brought ten children from Vietnam to Norway without permission. He circumvented the Norwegian authorities' explicit ban on this, partly by obtaining visas for Germany. The Committee finds no censurable acts or omissions on the part of the Norwegian authorities in this situation.

- The Committee has not prioritised a detailed investigation of the adoptions arranged by the Parents' Association for Children from Vietnam between 1973 and 1975. Nevertheless, the Committee considers it generally concerning that, in the spring of 1975, the Norwegian authorities allowed the Parents' Association to bring several dozen children from Vietnam before the adoption process had been completed in the country of origin.

1991–1999

- The Committee considers it censurable that the Norwegian authorities did not ensure to a greater extent that it was possible for Adopsjonsforum to ensure lawful and responsible adoptions before permission was granted to carry out five 'pilot cases' from Vietnam in 1990.
- The Committee considers it censurable that the Norwegian authorities permitted adoptions from Vietnam to proceed when the country's own authorities had pointed to a lack of legislation, systems, and specialised bodies.
- It is censurable that the authorisation to arrange adoptions from Vietnam was not withdrawn or that a temporary suspension was not introduced when the Norwegian authorities were made aware in the mid-1990s of uncertainties surrounding financial transactions in Vietnam.
- A high level of corruption and the 'buying and selling' of children for private adoptions was a well-known issue in Vietnam. The Committee believes there is a risk that children adopted via children's homes and adoption agencies could also have been part of such transactions, but has not found information relating to specific cases concerning adoptions to Norway.
- The Committee also believes that the conditions uncovered during the supervisory visit in October 1998, including corruption, power struggles between various ministries, and information regarding the 'buying and selling' of children, were so serious that the Norwegian adoption authorities should have withdrawn the authorisation to arrange adoptions from the country. Nevertheless, the Committee finds it particularly censurable that the Norwegian authorities continued to permit adoptions to Norway until July 1999, despite the highly problematic conditions in Vietnam.

2016–2021

- In the period up to 2021, the Norwegian Central Authority for adoptions' (Bufdir) practices and understanding of its role changed. Among other things, they devoted more resources than before to processing country-specific authorisations and conducted more independent investigations into adoption regulations and practices in Vietnam. In the Committee's view, this improved the basis for assessing the soundness of the adoption work.

Chapter 21 describes two individual cases from the 1980s involving circumstances worthy of criticism, in which the country of origin is not disclosed for privacy reasons. Furthermore, a brief account is given of certain issues relating to adoptions from Guatemala.

The first individual case concerns a situation where an adoption went ahead despite the Norwegian adoption organisation believing that it would not be in the best interests of the child. The second concerns a case where a Norwegian married couple, having been advised on how to adopt in a

country where they were temporarily resident, had registered a child as their own and taken the child with them to Norway. When following up the case, the Norwegian authorities did not contact the authorities in the country of origin to investigate the case and the child's background in more detail.

Furthermore, section 21.3 provides a brief description of certain aspects of adoptions from Guatemala.

2.5 Part 4 The Committee's assessments of the adoption system

This section presents and discusses the Committee's assessments of the adoption system. The assessments in this section are based on findings from the country investigations and the Committee's investigations of regulations, systems, and practices at a more general level. Key methods used in this part of the investigation are legal analysis, archival studies, and interviews. Documents of a more general nature, such as instructions and mediation authorisations, as well as documents relating to individual adoptions are examined.

Chapter 22 serves as an introduction to the Committee's assessments in Part 4, describing certain overarching principles for the assessments, in particular the requirement of soundness.

Chapter 23 addresses the question in the mandate regarding 'how the ratification of the 1993 Hague Convention led to changes in the regulations and practices governing adoptions to Norway'. The chapter has three main points. The first outlines the background to the Convention and its main features. The next main point describes and discusses how the Norwegian authorities have dealt with Article 17 c) of the Hague Convention. This provision stipulates that a decision in the country of origin to place a child with the prospective adoptive parents may only be made if the Central Authorities in both states agree that the adoption may proceed. Until 2021, the Norwegian authorities' view was that the Norwegian side's scrutiny of an adoption at this stage was limited to assessing whether the allocated child corresponded to the pre-approval for inter-country adoption given to prospective adoptive parents. Responsibility for this control was delegated to the adoption organisations. The Committee considers that the Norwegian authorities' interpretation before 2021 was incorrect and that the control also included a responsibility to assess the process in the country of origin regarding the release for adoption of the child. In the Committee's view, the Norwegian authorities' interpretation of the Convention has had the effect that significant weaknesses in the documentation of release processes in individual adoptions have not been identified.

The third section of the chapter assesses the changes the Hague Convention has brought about for adoption mediation to Norway. First, an overview is provided of whether, and if so when, the 12 priority countries of origin in the Committee's mandate have ratified the Hague Convention. The next question is what impact the Hague Convention has had on regulation and practice in Norway. The Norwegian authorities took the view that only minor changes were necessary to meet the Convention's requirements. This meant, among other things, that no changes were made upon ratification with regard to the processing of individual adoptions, cf. *inter alia* the issue of Article 17 c). Furthermore, the Norwegian authorities made no significant changes to the support measures available to adoptees and their families following adoption (post-adoption services).

However, upon ratification of the Convention, the Norwegian authorities based their approach on a recommendation from the Hague Conference that receiving countries that had ratified the Convention should arrange adoptions only from countries whose processes were in accordance with the fundamental principles of the Convention. This had implications for the processing of applications for country-specific authorisations for new countries. Furthermore, in the Committee's view, the Hague Convention has played a role in the tightening of the control from Norwegian authorities

over the past five years, both with regard to the processing of country-specific authorisations and individual cases.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the significance the Hague Convention has had in the various countries of origin, followed by the Hague Conference's own evaluation of the Convention's significance.

Finally, the Committee presents its overall assessment of the Convention's significance. The Committee considers that the Hague Convention has contributed to stricter controls on inter-country adoptions, both in Norway and in the relevant countries of origin. In Norway's case, however, the view that Norwegian law and practice were in accordance with the Convention's requirements meant that the reforms to the Norwegian adoption system resulting from the Convention were delayed and implemented in several stages. Until 2021, the Convention had limited significance for Norway's review of the process for determining the child's adoptability in individual cases, which were left almost entirely to the country of origin.

In *Chapter 24*, the Committee assesses the system of adoption organisations and their activities. The Committee's overall assessment is that there have been and continue to be significant weaknesses in the system of adoption organisations in Norway. On the one hand, it is positive that the adoption organisations have consisted of members, employees, and board members with a personal commitment to the field, and are not commercially motivated enterprises. On the other hand, this personal connection to adoption entails a risk that strategic choices, decisions, and assessments may be influenced, consciously or unconsciously, in undesirable ways.

The Committee believes that the Norwegian authorities should have ensured more thorough control and supervision of the adoption organisations' organisation and work. Furthermore, the responsibility for issuing Article 17 c) consents under the Hague Convention should have been assigned to the Central Authority and not delegated to the adoption organisations. When the Norwegian authorities took over responsibility for this assessment in 2025, this was an important step towards strengthening legal protection in adoption processes.

The Committee further believes that the adoption organisations should not derive their main funding from parental fees for individual adoptions, but should receive a high proportion of public funding.

Chapter 25 addresses issues concerning the Norwegian authorities' processing of authorisations to operate in specific countries of origin and the renewal of such authorisations, as well as the approval of contact persons. It also addresses issues concerning the adoption authorities' supervision of the adoption organisations. The investigation has revealed that there were significant weaknesses in the authorities' work on country-specific authorisations and the approval of contact persons before the Hague Convention came into force. The processing of country-specific authorisations for new countries appears to have become significantly more thorough, and the criteria for granting authorisations stricter, following the Hague Convention. As regards the renewal of authorisations for existing partner countries, the Hague Convention appears to have had a significantly lesser impact until around 2019.

The supervision of the adoption organisations and inter-country adoption activities in relation to various countries of origin has had significant shortcomings. This concerns, first, the oversight of financial matters relating to the activities of the adoption organisations in inter-country adoption. The Committee finds that the Norwegian authorities gave insufficient consideration to risk factors related to the financial aspects of inter-country adoption arrangements, such as high remuneration of contact persons, and failed to impose conditions to country-specific authorisations regarding the level of such remuneration. Furthermore, the supervision of development aid work was highly inadequate. The focus was on ensuring that the adoption organisations in Norway kept separate accounts for aid and inter-country adoption activities, whilst the crucial question of how the link

between aid and adoption was perceived by cooperation partners in the countries of origin was completely overlooked.

There were also clear weaknesses regarding monitoring visits to countries of origin. For one thing, particularly after 2000, there were few visits compared with the number of countries of origin from which adoptions were arranged, and throughout much of the period during which inter-country adoptions were arranged to Norway, some of the visits appear to have been more in the nature of fact-finding missions than monitoring visits. Another weakness in the Norwegian authorities' supervision of inter-country adoptions is that the Norwegian Foreign Service has not fulfilled the role envisaged by the Norwegian authorities as a source of information on matters of significance for inter-country adoptions.

The Committee also finds that there has been a clear mismatch between the adoption authorities' staffing and financial resources and the tasks they were required to perform.

Since 1987, the processing of individual cases concerning approval of prospective adoptive parents, registration of adoption, and adoption orders has been the responsibility of the same body that has processed applications for country-specific authorisations, approved contact persons, etc., and supervised inter-country adoption arrangements. Despite this, there have been no systems in place for sharing experience from the processing of individual cases with the adoption authorities' work on country-specific authorisations and supervision. This has led to significant weaknesses not being investigated or taken into account.

Chapter 26 sets out the Norwegian adoption authorities' handling of cases concerning approval of prospective adoptive parents. The Committee describes developments in regulations and practice, and gives its assessment of these. It is pointed out that known weaknesses, such as persistent variations in the quality of the municipalities' assessments of prospective adoptive parents, were not rectified until 2015. The same applies to the lack of compulsory preparatory adoption courses.

In *Chapter 27*, the Committee provides a description and assessment of the Norwegian authorities' handling of the individual adoption cases after the child has been placed with the adoptive parents and has arrived in Norway.

Under the Norwegian Adoption Act, the Norwegian authorities' responsibilities at this stage have depended on whether the adoption was finalised in the country of origin or in Norway. In most countries of origin, the children were adopted there before arriving in Norway. In such cases, the processing of the case in Norway consisted of deciding whether the adoption should be recognised and registered in Norway (registration cases). In some countries of origin, however, children were merely released for adoption to Norwegian adoption applicants, whilst the actual adoption was finalised in Norway through the Norwegian authorities granting an adoption order (adoption order cases).

Following long-standing practice, registration cases and adoption order cases have been handled in a broadly similar manner in Norway. The processing has mainly consisted of checking that the competent authority or body in the country of origin has made a final decision on adoption (registration case) or on the release of the child for adoption (adoption order case), respectively. The Committee has concluded that this practice has been incorrect in the case of adoption order cases.

An adoption order is the final decision in an adoption case. Although the decision may and should be based on case preparation carried out at earlier stages of the adoption process, the Norwegian authorities have had a duty to make an independent assessment of whether the conditions for adoption under the Norwegian Adoption Act were fulfilled at the time of the decision. In the Committee's view, the handling of adoption order cases has therefore been in breach of the requirements of the Norwegian Adoption Act and the Public Administration Act.

In *Chapter 28*, adoptions carried out without the involvement of adoption organisations are described. This includes both adoptions with pre-approval from Norwegian authorities (independent adoptions) and adoptions where such pre-approval has not been required (recognition cases). In addition, the report discusses some cases where prospective adoptive parents in other ways have independently carried out adoption processes or similar arrangements for taking children into care in contravention of Norwegian law. The Committee describes developments in regulations and practice, and presents its assessment of these.

Chapter 29 deals with the rights of inter-country adoptees and their opportunities to obtain information about their own adoption process, the background to it, and their origins. It provides an overview of the regulations concerning adoptees' right to information and access, including rules on anonymous adoptions and adoptive parents' duty to share information about the adoption with the child. It also describes administrative practices regarding access to Norwegian adoption records, as well as existing public assistance for origin searches. The chapter also contains a summary of key findings from the twelve countries the Committee has examined, regarding adoptees' ability to obtain information about their own origins. The practice of never disclosing information on adoption cases in Norwegian archives to original families' is also discussed. Finally, the Committee makes recommendations on the support that should be available to adoptees seeking information on their background and recommends a review of whether original families in some cases should have a limited right to information.

In *Chapter 30*, the Committee considers issues relating to post-adoption measures during the period of inter-country adoption to Norway. The term 'post-adoption', as used by the Committee, encompasses the assistance and support provided to adoptees and adoptive families after the adoption has been finalised. In this chapter, the Committee outlines and assesses post-adoption services in different periods. The Committee is critical of the fact that no review or strengthening of post-adoption services was carried out in connection with the ratification of the Hague Convention. The Committee believes that the services introduced by Bufdir in 2023 led to a significant strengthening, but that there are still weaknesses. In this chapter, the Committee also makes a number of recommendations regarding measures that should be introduced.

Chapter 31 contains the Committee's overall conclusions. The Committee assesses risk factors, as well as the soundness of various parts of the adoption system during different periods and how fundamental principles of adoption law have been upheld. The Committee's overall assessment is that there have been clear shortcomings in Norway's adoption system throughout the entire period of inter-country adoptions to Norway up until the Committee began its work. However, the Committee believes that the soundness of the system has been strengthened in several respects over time.

In the Committee's view, it has been of decisive importance for the supervision of inter-country adoptions that, until very recently, the Norwegian adoption authorities largely did not consider themselves responsible for supervising the part of the adoption process taking place in the country of origin, beyond ensuring that the adoptions could formally be carried out in a valid manner. The handling of individual adoption cases, both adoption order and registration cases, was inadequate until the Norwegian Central Authority changed its understanding of the control to be carried out as part of the consent to be given under Article 17 c) of the Hague Convention, and in 2022, instructed the adoption organisations that they also had a responsibility to assess the process of determining that the child is legally free for adoption. The control was further strengthened when the Central Authority took over the processing of Article 17 c) consents from 2025.

The processes for declaring children legally free for adoption and the adoption system in the countries of origin were not assessed with sufficient rigour when processing country-specific authorisations prior to the Hague Convention's entry into force in 1998. With regard to authorisations to arrange adoptions from new countries, there has been a clear improvement in case prepara-

tion and assessments since the Hague Convention came into force; however, regarding the renewal of country-specific authorisations, the Committee finds that the assessments have, in several cases, not been sound, and that a clear improvement only occurred from around 2019.

The Committee believes that the resource situation, particularly since the State Adoption Office was established in 1987, limited the opportunity to conduct sufficiently thorough supervision of the processes for declaring children legally free for adoption and other matters in the countries of origin. The resource situation did not improve significantly throughout the 2000s and was in line with the prevailing view at the time that the Norwegian authorities had only a limited responsibility for monitoring the part of the adoption process that took place in the country of origin.

With regard to the processing of cases concerning pre-approval for inter-country adoption, there were long-standing weaknesses in the assessments of prospective adoptive parents, including a lack of statutory requirements (until 2015) and adequate guidelines for the exercise of discretion. Furthermore, it was a weakness that, until 2015, applicants were assessed by their home municipalities rather than by specialised units. The Committee is also critical of the fact that there were no compulsory preparatory adoption courses prior to 2015. With regard to post-adoption measures, there has been a significant development during the period of inter-country adoptions to Norway, from services provided solely by the adoption organisations to gradually increasing public involvement and funding. The Committee is critical of the Norwegian authorities' general stance right up until the last decade that adoptive families should not be singled out as a special group, but instead be supported through the general public service provision. This may have meant that adoptees and adoptive parents have not received the support they needed.

The Committee believes that the Norwegian authorities and adoption organisations have clearly underestimated the risk factors associated with inter-country adoptions and have exercised insufficient control. Nor has the system for inter-country adoptions been suitable or been allocated the necessary resources to exercise adequate control over the risk factors in all the various countries of origin.

In *Chapter 32*, the Committee sets out its recommendations. In brief, these are:

If the Norwegian authorities continue the scheme whereby private adoption organisations act as key players in inter-country adoptions, the following must be done:

- It must be investigated whether organisations granted permission to arrange adoptions may be member organisations or must have a different organisational form. In addition, an investigation should be conducted into the requirements to be imposed on board composition and professional competence.
- The adoption organisations' fixed share of public funding must be significantly increased, so that their operations and core staffing are less dependent on the number of adoptions.
- The scheme introduced in 2025 whereby the Norwegian Central Authority itself carries out control in accordance with Article 17 c) of the Hague Convention must be continued to ensure that the Norwegian authorities safeguard the principles of soundness and legal protection in adoptions to Norway.
- The regulatory provision on country-specific authorisations should include a list of the factors relating to the countries of origin and the cooperation partners that must be assessed when granting and renewing an authorisation to operate in a particular country of origin.
- The Norwegian authorities should continue current practice regarding how applications for country-specific authorisations and renewals of such authorisations are processed, with thorough case preparation involving the examination of a range of sources.

- The Norwegian Central Authority must be provided with sufficient resources to ensure the proper processing of applications for country-specific authorisations, as well as supervision and monitoring.
- Country-specific authorisations must not be granted beyond the Norwegian Central Authority's capacity to provide adequate supervision and monitoring.
- The Norwegian authorities must exercise strict control over financial matters relating to organisations providing inter-country adoption services, including arrangements for remuneration of contact persons and legal representatives, and how the relationship between development aid and adoption is perceived by cooperation partners in the countries of origin.

The following measures are recommended regarding access to adoption cases in Norway and searches for origins:

- Development of new and improved guidance for adoptees who wish to request access to foreign archives and who wish to search for their origins.
- Counselling services for adoptees in connection with searches for their origins, return visits, or reunion with their original family.
- Advice on DNA testing, based on a detailed investigation of the matter, including the possibilities for financial support for DNA testing.
- Development of new and improved guidance for adoptees regarding enquiries from original families.
- An investigation into whether, in certain cases, access to certain information about the adoption should be granted to original families who contact Norwegian adoption authorities.
- Norwegian adoption authorities should compile a comprehensive overview of adoption documentation held by private individuals, etc., and then assess the need to retrieve this and make it available to adoptees who request access.

The following recommendations are made regarding post-adoption measures:

- Peer support services should be established under public auspices in consultation with private organisations.
- A centre of expertise on adoption should be established.
- Tailored courses or counselling should be established to address conflicts or other challenges in adoptive families relating to adoption-specific issues.
- Adopted children should have the right to mother tongue tuition at school to learn and/or maintain the language of their country of origin, regardless of their Norwegian language skills.
- Adult adoptees should be entitled to free language training in the language of their country of origin.
- The NIBR report from 2021 has recommendations on the prevention of, and measures against, racism and discrimination against inter-country adoptees that should be followed up.
- Mandatory courses for adoptive parents following adoption should be introduced.
- Mandatory follow-up of adoptive families following adoption should be introduced, in the form of supervisory home visits, etc.

- A requirement should be introduced that prospective adoptive parents have basic language skills in the child's native language prior to adoption.
- Standardised assessment tools to evaluate the mental health and attachment capacity of prospective adoptive parents should be included in the case assessment process in applications for pre-approval for inter-country adoption.

Measures relating to the health of adoptees:

- Several of the measures recommended in the 2013 report by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health on the health of adoptees should be followed up.
- Measures should be implemented to improve the expertise of healthcare personnel, including on adoption-specific trauma, attachment issues and identity development among adoptees.
- Genetic counselling should, as far as possible, be offered to adoptees who lack information about their biological background.
- Research into the physical and mental health of adoptees should be strengthened to improve the knowledge base for measures.

In light of the scale and seriousness of the errors uncovered in this investigation, the Committee also recommends the following measures:

- The Ministry should ensure that the Committee's report is translated into English. The report may be of interest both in the countries of origin and in other receiving countries. If only the executive summary is available in English, the accessibility of the report is limited, including for original parents and their representatives or support networks.
- Greater emphasis on Norway's international obligations to combat corruption, including in the field of adoption.
- Investigate whether unlawful adoptions should be included as a specific form of exploitation in the criminal provision on human trafficking.
- Norwegian authorities should be receptive to cooperation with countries of origin in reviews and criminal investigations of adoptions, insofar as such cooperation complies with fundamental due process guarantees.

3 [Vedleggsnr. resett]

Vedlegg 3.

Forkortelser i rapporten

AF

Adopsjonsforum

AiE

Adopsjon i Endring

BFD

Barne- og familiedepartementet (1991 – 2006; 2019 – d.d.)