

Norway – NOKUT

Institution	NOKUT
Interviewed Person	Suraya (40), from Tunisia, in Norway thanks to a family immigration permit

I – Preparation

Suraya (40) is originally from Tunisia, and came to Norway in 2001 on a family immigration permit.

II – Awareness

Suraya graduated from university with a Bachelor degree in 1999. She started studying a Master's degree, however this degree was not completed, and she left the university in 2000.

While studying law she worked part-time as a paralegal assistant. After leaving the university, she worked as a teacher in French and Arabic.

In 2002 she made inquiries at the Faculty of Law at the University of Oslo to see whether she would be able to complete her Master's degree in Law in Norway. When she found that one of the admission requirements was a B1/B2 level in both Norwegian and English she decided not to pursue that goal.

III – Starting up

Persons with a refugee status in Norway have to carry out the introduction course in Norwegian, and in order to obtain permanent residency will have to continue with language training until passing the B1 level in Norwegian. Individuals who come to Norway via family reunification is not given the possibility to attend the introduction course, and unfortunately, there is no system for assigning them a supervisor at the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration or from the municipality. In order to obtain information regarding language courses, studying in Norway or employment schemes they will have to rely on information given to them from their family members already living in Norway, or by being active in seeking information.

Souraya attended different courses during her first years in Norway. An office assistant course and a computer course, but she never attended a language course. She became a Norwegian citizen in 2005. At that time the requirements to become a Norwegian citizen was different then the requirements of today. Today one of the requirements is a B1 level in Norwegian.

Since Suraya's husband was working and supporting the family, she could stay at home with the kids. In 2009 the family moved back to Tunisia and lived there for a few years before returning to Norway in 2013. A couple of years ago Suraya's husband died, and she was left with the sole responsibility of three children. She received a widow pension, and could support the family with this. However, she felt she needed to activate herself again.

IV – Documentation and support

She started by searching information on the internet about getting a recognition of her foreign higher education. In 2016 she applied for general recognition at NOKUT. Then she passed the B2 level exam in Norwegian without ever having attended a Norwegian language course.

A friend told her about a case officer-training course, and she decided to apply for this. After four months of theory she went for a job interview at NOKUT, and was given a four-month long job practice.

VI – Impact

At first, she was very nervous about doing a job-practice. After so many years not participating in the work-life, she was uncertain about how she would cope. She was also nervous about her language proficiencies in Norwegian and English. Although she passed the B2 level in Norwegian, she did not feel so confident about her language ability. In her work at NOKUT she would have to use English, but she was very honest at her job interview and explained that she understood English, but was not very good at speaking it.

Suraya proved to be a valuable language asset for the Section for recognition of refugees' qualifications with her knowledge of Arabic and French. After her four-month long work practice, she was offered a temporary position as an executive officer for six months. She hopes to be able to continue working at NOKUT, but at the time she is very happy with everything she has accomplished even though she had to find information on her own, and push herself with learning the language and getting work experience.