Intercountry adoption in Norway
Anyone who wants to adopt a child from abroad must apply for advance approval to do so. In addition, in nearly all cases it is a requirement that the adoption is arranged through one of the accredited adoption organizations.

Most common to adopt from China
Through the three accredited adoption organizations, Norway has established cooperation with 19 countries on intercountry adoptions. These countries are: Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Nepal, Peru, The Philippines, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, South Korea and Thailand.
In some few cases children are also adopted from other countries. In these cases the applicants have so strong ties/connections to the child’s country of origin that they get approval for adoption without using the accredited adoption organizations.
In 2001 appr. 900 children were adopted in Norway, 721 of these children were foreign, and the main part of the Norwegian children adopted were stepchildren. Among the children adopted from foreign countries, 23 % came from China.

Legal framework for adoption in Norway
The Act on Adoption and governmental regulations and guidelines constitutethe legal framework for adoption in Norway.

The Adoption Act
The current Norwegian Adoption Act, which replaced the former Adoption Act of 1917, was passed on 28 February 1986, and came into force on 1 January 1987. The Act is divided into five chapters, (1) Conditions for adoption, etc., (2) Anonymous adoption, duty to provide information (2), Effects of adoption, etc (3), Issues relating to private international law (4), and Commencement, amendments to other Acts, etc (5). The Act has been subsequently amended, twice in 1999 and, most recently, by Act of 15 June 2001.
An official English translation of the Act (the 1999 version) was published in Circular Letter Q-1008 E from the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

Governmental regulations
Pursuant to the Act on Adoption the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has stipulated two sets of regulations, both from 1999, one applicable to placement of children in domestic adoption and one regarding requirements relating to organizations that arrange placement of children in intercountry adoption.
An official English translation of the latter regulation is published in Circular Letter Q-1008 E mentioned above.

Governmental guidelines
The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has laid down guidelines (1998) for examination and approval of adoptive homes in intercountry adoption. Further guidelines are now being prepared by the Ministry.
The Hague Convention of 29 May 1993 on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Intercountry Adoption
National adoption
The most common types of national adoptions are adoption of stepchildren. There are also adoption of foster children, and adoptions where the parents ask for the authorities help to find adoptive parents for their child, usually called “consent adoptions”. In the national adoption cases, the application is handled and decided only by Norwegian authorities and only by Norwegian law. It’s the Regional Offices of Children, Youth and Family Affairs that handles these applications.

Norwegian accredited adoption organizations
There are three such organizations in Norway:
Adopsjonsforum
InorAdopt
Verdens Barn (Children of the World – Norway),

The organizations need the permission of the National Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs to arrange placement of children from foreign countries, and are subject to supervision by the National Office. The work of the adoption organizations is based on the fundamental principle of the best interests of the child. The organizations are operated on a non-profit basis.

In nearly all cases it is a requirement that the adoption is arranged through one of the accredited adoption organizations. However, it is possible to apply for an exemption from this rule if you plan to adopt a child from your own country of origin, or from a country with which you have special and strong ties/connections. In that case, our office would be responsible for taking over the functions of the adoption organization. This means that we would not issue an advance approval that would allow you to handle the adoption yourself. The application would have to be sent from our office to the Central Authority on intercountry adoption in the child’s country of origin for further processing there.

Norwegian Adoption Authorities
The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs
In the Ministry general children and youth policy, child and adolescent welfare and adoption are the responsibility of the Department for Children and Youth Policy.

The Department administers the following Acts:
Act relating to Child welfare
Act relating to Adoption
Act relating to the Commissioner for Children The Department has the responsibility for developing and coordinating the general children and youth policy, including grants to children and youth organizations, international exchange schemes for young people within the framework of the European Union (EU) and measures for young people in the larger urban communities. The Department is also responsible for the development programme aimed at strengthening environmental conditions (physical and social) under which children grow up, for measures for young people in rural areas and for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Ministry’s webpage.

Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) is a central government authority, administratively linked to the Ministry of Children
and Family Affairs. Bufdir is the central authority for both national and intercountry adoptions in Norway. Bufdir’s regional offices gives advance approval to applicants who want to adopt a child from abroad and processes applications for adoption of Norwegian children (mainly concerning stepchildren). Furthermore, Bufdir supervises the work of the three approved Norwegian adoption organisations, maintains a central adoption record, and allocates a one-time governmental adoption grant to those who have got approval to adopt a child.

Contact Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir):
Postal Address: P.O.Box 8113 Dep, N-0030 OSLO, Norway
Location: Universitetsgata 7, 0032 Oslo
Telephone: +47 24 04 40 00
Fax: +47 24 04 40 01
E-mail: post@bufdir.no
Web site: www.bufdir.no

The Professional Board for Adoption
The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs appoints a Professional Board for Adoptions composed by a medical doctor and two psychologists/psychiatrists. In domestic adoptions the Board is responsible for the entrustment process whenever there is a child in Norway in need for a new family through adoption. In intercountry adoptions the Board is responsible for the entrustment whenever the foreign child proposed for placement with the prospective adoptive parents, has special needs or is above a certain age.

As a competent authority The Professional Board for Adoption is an independent body. The National Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs acts as its secretariat. In other cases the Board has an advisory status for the National Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs.

Local authorities
The local authorities (municipalities) shall investigate the applicants and advise the National Office for Children Youth and Family Affairs before an advance approval to adopt a child from a foreign country is given. The local authorities shall also assist in providing information relating to an application for adoption after the child has arrived in Norway, so that the adoption may be carried out.

Procedure in intercountry adoption
Advance approval and social report. Any family (or single person) in Norway who wants to adopt a child from abroad, must apply for an advance approval, issued by the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs, before the application can be sent to the country of origin of the child. In order to apply for an advance approval, the family must first contact the Child Care Office or Social Office (or any other municipal authority in charge of these matters) in the municipality where they live, and register themselves as applicants. The competent authority will then make a home study of the family, interview them and write a social report on the applicants, consisting of two parts:

1. A summary of the applicants background, marriage, everyday life, interests, motives for wanting to adopt a child from abroad etc, and
2. A description of the social worker’s impressions of the family and their capabilities to become parents by adoption. The report must end with a recommendation whether the family should be given an advance approval to adopt a child or not. This recommendation must be based on what could be
considered the best interest of the (unknown) child.

In addition to the social report, the application must consist of the applicants’ health certificates, police records, marriage and birth certificates and documentation of their financial position.

**Membership in accredited adoption organization**

When the application is completed, the competent authority is responsible for sending it to the National Office for Children, Youth and Family Affairs for processing. Unless the applicants have special ties/connections to the country from which they want to adopt, they must register themselves as members of one the three accredited adoption organizations (see under headline 5 above) before the application will be decided upon. The adoption organizations are responsible for arranging adoptions to the applying families in Norway, if the application for advance approval is granted. The organizations work in close co-operation with the competent authorities in the various countries of origin.

**Decisions and appeals**

In average it takes the municipalities 3 – 6 months to prepare the necessary social report about the applying families. After that, it takes another 3 – 4 months to deal with the application in our office. If our office comes to a negative conclusion the decision may be appealed to the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs.

**Applicants’ physical and social credits**

According to regulations, we should show restraint in granting applications for persons over 45 years. There are, however, certain exemptions to this regulation, for example if one of the spouses is considerably younger than the other, or if the family already has adopted a child. The applicants must have a normal/good health both physically and mentally, and a stable financial situation. They must have a good conduct and a clean police record. Those who apply together must be married, and the marriage should have lasted for a minimum of two years. Persons living in registered partnership cannot apply to adopt a child from abroad.

**Statistics**

900 children were adopted in Norway in 2001, 721 of these were foreign, and the main part of the Norwegian children adopted were stepchildren. For more details on adoption statistics in Norway, please visit the Statistics Norway’s web pages on adoption (in English).