The government is tightening the rules for how municipalities settle refugees

The government is introducing stricter criteria for how municipalities settle refugees to ensure better integration and sustainable local capacity. Municipalities are urged to avoid settling refugees in areas with high immigrant populations or significant social challenges and to consider the effects of secondary migration.

Minister of Labour and Inclusion Kjersti Stenseng emphasised that integration depends on access to work and self-sufficiency, and settlement decisions should therefore prioritise areas with good employment and education opportunities.

The new 2026 guidelines tighten the simplified rules introduced after the war in Ukraine, following years of record-high refugee arrivals. While most refugees remain in their original settlement municipalities, some move to areas with weaker labour markets, prompting targeted investment in urban areas like Oslo and Østfold to boost employment.

Municipalities will continue to decide how many refugees to receive, but the government now expects managed, dispersed, and rapid settlement—focusing on labour market potential, local service capacity, and balanced regional distribution.

Source(s)

- Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion | Arbeids- og inkluderingsdepartementet (22 October, 2025), Strengere signaler for bosetting av flyktninger i norske kommuner [Stricter signals for the settlement of refugees in Norwegian municipalities], https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/strengere-signaler-for-bosetting-av-flyktninger-i-norske-kommuner/id3125872/

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