

Notice: Undefined index: et_header_layout in /home/hrwfe90/domains/hrwf.eu/public_html/wp-content/plugins/pdf-print/pdf-print.php on line 1214

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NORWAY: Norwegian city under fire for refusing grants to Christian institutions

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Nine council members in the city of Klepp in Norway are investigating possible violations of religious discrimination.

CNE (11.04.2023) – The municipal council members are currently contacting state administrators over an incident that occurred

last year, according to a Vart Land report.

Five Christian organisations have complained that they were denied community grant funding from Klepp's municipality. The organisations have reportedly been refused based on their views regarding gender, marriage, and sexuality. All five filed complaints, but these were later denied on 13 March. However, nine council members have deemed the decision unfair and have sent a "legality check request" to the State Administrator. The State Administer has yet to assess if the denial violated the National Public Administration Act.

Grants

In December 2021, the Klepp municipality passed a new clause added to their criteria for awarding community grants. All members within the applicant organisation were now required to be able to get "elected to boards, positions of trust and positions, regardless of cohabitation, sexual orientation, gender or ethnicity." CNE previously reported that this new law had been passed by 20 against 11 votes by the municipal board.

However, opponents of the new move have said that it conflicts with section 6 of the Norwegian Equality and Discrimination Act. Section 6 dictates that discrimination against a particular religion is unlawful. In addition to Section 6, the decision may also violate Section 6 of the Religious Societies Act, Section 104 of the Constitution and other human rights laws. After filing a proposal for a reversal, Klepp mayor, Sigmund Rolfsen, said he did not want to "add to any new debate about the guidelines," which led to him rejecting the move. The complaint was later sent to the State Administrator.

Unjustified

However, the Vart Land report said the State Administrator considered the 2021 municipal decision within legal grounds. According to the administrator, if a municipality has reason

to believe that there is “unjustified discrimination,” the applicant can be denied.

“This means that if an organisation believes it has a legal basis for discriminating when it comes to positions of trust and positions, then the municipality must decide on this,” the State Administration said.

Free Church

While the initial decision is two years old, Christian organisations outside the Free Church in Klepp remain affected. While the theological views are the same throughout these institutions, the municipality has treated them differently. The Free Church in Klepp was not denied public support because they did not have requirements for their board members. However, other Christian institutions have been left to “fight on a principled basis.”

According to Anne-Jorunn Bjørkum Leigvold, the municipal director of Klepp, the Free Church made it clear that everyone could be elected to their board. “Klepp Free Church has clarified that all members can be elected. They have no statutes, rules or other formalities that say someone cannot stand for election. It is a democratic assessment that should be the basis for assessments based on the regulations, that is, whether everyone can stand for election in the organisation in question,” she said to Vart Land.

Photo: In the city of Klepp (Norway), there is a debate about which organisations should receive grants from the community. Organisations that stick to the traditional understanding of marriage seem to be excluded. Photo Gunleiv Hadland

[Further reading about FORB in Norway on HRWF website](#)

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