

RIO – a Norwegian users' association in the field of alcohol and drugs.  
Oslo, Norway

16 March 2026

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Geneva, Switzerland

**cc:**

Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security  
Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services  
Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations in Vienna  
Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations in Geneva  
UNODC Civil Society Unit  
Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs (VNGOC)

**Civil Society Submission – Norway – Implementation of pledge on meaningful involvement of people who use drugs (Agenda Item 6)**

Dear High Commissioner,

Norway has formally pledged, within the UNODC framework, to ensure the meaningful involvement of people who use drugs in decision-making processes and to adequately resource organisations led by people with lived experience<sup>1</sup>. This pledge is currently subject to reporting and evaluation under Agenda Item 6, concerning the implementation of international drug policy commitments<sup>2</sup>. This submission is provided for the information of the Office of the High Commissioner in the context of monitoring the implementation of international drug policy commitments.

Based on documented interactions with national authorities, there are serious concerns as to whether this commitment has been fulfilled in substance. In 2021, the Norwegian police became embroiled in a scandal. The Director of Public Prosecutions of Norway had found that Norwegian police officers had systematically used coercive measures unlawfully in minor drug cases over a period of years, including unlawful searches of homes and data and bodily examinations<sup>3</sup>. This practice was formally acknowledged by Parliament<sup>4</sup>, and Norway's National Human Rights Institution, and raised serious rule-of-law and human rights concerns.

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Norway, official pledge delivered at the Commission on Narcotic Drugs High-Level Segment, committing to involve people who use drugs in decision-making processes and adequately resource organisations led by individuals with lived experience (UNODC Pledge4Action framework).

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), Agenda Item 6: *Implementation of all international drug policy commitments*, including reporting on national pledges under the 2019 Ministerial Declaration framework.

<sup>3</sup> Director of Public Prosecutions of Norway, *Tvangsmiddelbruk i mindre alvorlige narkotikasaker (2021–2022)*, acknowledging unlawful police practices and requiring corrective action:  
[Nasj-rapport-tvangsmiddelbruk-i-mindre-alv-narkotikasaker.pdf](#)

<sup>4</sup> Norwegian Parliament (Stortinget), Document 8:232S (2021–2022), recognising unlawful coercive practices and calling for review and accountability:  
<https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Publikasjoner/Representantforslag/2021-2022/dok8-202122-232s/>

The Ministry of Justice responded by establishing a committee on drug enforcement (Rushåndhevingsutvalget) while requests from legislators for a formal apology, first directed to the Minister of Justice and subsequently to the Prime Minister, were not met<sup>5</sup>.

Over a period of two years, RIO formally and repeatedly requested dialogue with the Ministry of Justice and Public Security regarding legislative developments with direct implications for the rights of our members, including coercive police powers previously clarified as unlawful by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

A formal meeting request was submitted on 9 March 2023,<sup>6</sup> followed by a written reminder on 26 September 2023. No substantive response was provided, and RIO was informed that a meeting was unlikely to take place. A renewed request was submitted on 4 February 2025,<sup>7</sup> followed by a written reminder in March 2025. A meeting was ultimately granted on 27 March 2025, after years of repeated requests and at a stage where key policy directions had already been established. In the meantime, in meetings and via telephone, the Ministry of Health indicated to us that the governing party would not implement stricter coercive measures against people who use drugs.

This sequence of events indicates procedural access without substantive participation. Meaningful involvement requires timely engagement at stages where input can genuinely influence legislative and policy outcomes.

These concerns arise in a broader context where Norway's National Human Rights Institution has raised concerns regarding unlawful coercive measures affecting people who use drugs, including potential violations of fundamental rights and the need to consider redress<sup>8</sup>.

At the same time, the Office of the Auditor General of Norway has issued its strongest criticism of the government following its review of services for people with co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders, concluding that the provision of services is insufficient<sup>9</sup>.

Moreover, the main umbrella organisation in the field, have warned of a significant dismantling of treatment capacity and reductions in earmarked funding for drug-related services, weakening both treatment availability and the structural basis for meaningful participation by user-led organisations<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> PM Thorsvik's Oral question to Minister of Justice (Mehl) asking whether the Government would apologise for unlawful coercive measures in minor drug cases (30 March 2022): <https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporstmal/Sporretimesporstmal/et-sporretimesporstmal/?qid=70030>

Thorsvik's written question to the Prime Minister (submitted 2 April 2022) asking whether the PM would apologise; the PM requested the Minister of Justice to answer, and the reply did not provide an apology (answered 22 April 2022):

<https://www.stortinget.no/no/Saker-og-publikasjoner/Sporstmal/Skriftlige-sporstmal-og-svar/Skriftlig-sporstmal/?qid=70045>

<sup>6</sup> RIO – A National User's Association in the Field of Alcohol and Drugs, formal letter to Minister of Justice and Public Security Emilie Enger Mehl, dated 9 March 2023, requesting dialogue regarding coercive measures and legal protections:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:1d6494e5-2246-4ad4-92d5-1285da69ac69>

<sup>7</sup> RIO, formal letter to Minister of Justice and Public Security Astri Aas-Hansen, dated 4 February 2025, requesting dialogue regarding coercive police measures and proportionality: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:85f1c296-430e-458f-ab4c-866fcbfd51e3>

<sup>8</sup> Norwegian National Human Rights Institution (NIM), *Rus og menneskerettigheter* (2022), available at:

<https://www.nhri.no/2022/ny-nim-rapport-rusbrukeres-menneskerettigheter-ivaretas-ikke-godt-nok/>

<sup>9</sup> Office of the Auditor General of Norway, *Helse- og velferdstjenester til personer med samtidig rusmiddellidelse og psykisk lidelse*, Dokument 3:5 (2024–2025), 6 February 2025, <https://www.riksrevisjonen.no/rapporter-mappe/no-2024-2025/helse-og-velferdstjenester-til-personer-med-samtidig-rusmiddellidelse-og-psykisk-lidelse/>

<sup>10</sup> Rusfeltets Hovedorganisasjon (RHO), public statements documenting reductions in residential treatment capacity and structural weakening of the treatment system, including warnings that up to 400 residential treatment places may be lost within two years and concerns regarding removal of earmarked funding for municipal drug services. Available at:

Taken together, these developments suggest that Norway has achieved procedural compliance with its pledge, while falling short of ensuring meaningful involvement in substantive terms. Ensuring full compliance will require structurally embedded, timely, and good-faith involvement of organisations led by people who use drugs throughout the policy and legislative cycle, including at agenda-setting and drafting stages.

Meaningful participation, as repeatedly emphasised in resolutions of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, requires more than procedural access and presupposes engagement at stages where civil society input can genuinely influence policy outcomes.

We therefore respectfully encourage the Office of the High Commissioner to consider these developments in its assessment of Norway's reporting under Agenda Item 6.

*Respectfully submitted,*

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*Managing director*

*RIO – a Norwegian user's association in the field of alcohol and drugs*

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<https://www.rusfeltet.no/arkiv/nedprioriteres-det-som-ikke-lett-kan-telles>  
<https://www.rusfeltet.no/arkiv/vi-gir-oss-ikke-dramatisk-kutt-i-rusforebyggende-arbeid>  
Supplementary documentation from sector organisations and reporting:  
<https://www.dagensmedisin.no/flere-tusen-i-fakkeltog-mot-kutt-i-rusbehandling/660818>  
<https://journalen.oslomet.no/nb/innenriks/2025/05/flere-hundre-dognplasser-kuttet-pa-ti-ar>