



ROYAL NORWEGIAN MINISTRY OF  
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND MODERNISATION

Guidelines

# About the Relationship between Political Leadership and the Civil Service

Seven Duties for the Civil Service





## Foreword

In the ministries, politics and public administration meet. The ministries are professional secretariats for the political leadership, not political secretariats. The ministries perform and safeguard administrative tasks and values. On the one hand, the civil service shall safeguard considerations of professionalism and continuity over time, and on the other hand assist the currently sitting Government in developing and implementing policies.

In Norway, there is a long-standing tradition of politicians and civil service working together well and respecting each other's roles. Therefore, we have not created new rules or tightened the existing rules.

The regulations in this area are currently spread across many documents, and they can therefore appear to be overly complex and not very accessible. These guidelines should remedy this.

The purpose of these guidelines is to raise awareness about the relationship between politics and the civil service in light of changes in the tasks and trends in society. One example of this is the fact that the scope of the tasks related to the role of a secretariat for the political leadership has increased in recent decades, while the relative scope of traditional administrative tasks has been reduced. Another example is the increased and continuous attention of various media.

The guidelines are in Section 4 formulated as seven duties for the civil service. The civil service is defined in this context as employees in the central administration. The target group for the guidelines is first and foremost the civil service in the ministries, but they may also be useful for the political leadership. In addition, they may also be of interest to managers and employees in the subordinated agencies.

The aim of the guidelines is to make it easier for both the civil service and politicians to be able to handle the administrative ethical dilemmas that may arise in practical daily life. This can support a good relationship of mutual trust between politicians and the civil service, and between public administration and the citizens.

These guidelines do not necessarily provide answers to specific challenges/dilemmas that the civil service and politicians may experience or be faced with.

The aim is to describe what considerations must be taken into account when the civil service and politicians need to deal with such challenges. These guidelines may help one to find good solutions if a dilemma arises.

In addition to the guidelines, a collection of specific dilemmas regarding the relationship between the political leadership and civil service has been prepared. It is recommended that ministries use the collection of dilemmas in their ongoing competence development and supplement it with examples from their own ministerial area.

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Eivind Dale

Secretary General, Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation

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In our guidelines, we use the term civil service for both those who are appointed as civil servants by the King in Council and for those who are employed by the ministries.

Additional orientation in the English version: In order of a better understanding of the scope of the Norwegian Ministerial system, we have some places in the text specified that some civil servant posts are appointed by the King (also mentioned “senior civil servants”).