



No Job? GET LOST!

In one part of Norway, unemployment isn't allowed BY ANDREW HIGGINS

ANALYZE
THE
ARTICLE

Norway's northernmost territory, Svalbard, has a police force with just six officers and a single jail cell for an area twice the size of New Jersey. But even that is overkill: Nobody has been locked up in the capital, Longyearbyen, since the summer of 2013. And that was for just two days.

The key to Svalbard's status as Europe's closest thing to a crime-free society, according to the governor, is that unemployment is, in effect, illegal.

"If you don't have a job, you can't live here," Governor Odd Olsen Ingero says.

How is such a policy enforced? By deporting the jobless. Even retirees are sent away unless they can prove they can support themselves. Homelessness is also banned; all residents must have a permanent address.

The unusual rules have a lot to do

with Svalbard's geography and climate. An archipelago located 800 miles from the North Pole, Svalbard is shrouded in near-total darkness for six months of the year and snowfall continues deep into summer. The government says that banning homelessness and unemployment—a problem plaguing much of Europe (*see chart*)—is meant to ensure that none of Svalbard's nearly 3,000 residents freezes to death.

Front Doors Unlocked

"[It] is a very quiet and law-abiding society," says Ingero. In total, the police in Svalbard handle about 100 cases a year, most of which involve infractions like reckless driving on snowmobiles and shoplifting. Residents regularly leave their car and snowmobile keys in the ignition and don't bother locking their front doors. Coffee shop patrons leave their computers

unattended, never worrying they might get stolen. No serious crimes have been reported so far this year; however, the authorities are worried about a spate of littering by untidy scientists who failed to clean up their garbage after doing research in the wilderness.

Ingero, who spent most of his previous career fighting crime as a senior police official on the Norwegian mainland, isn't advocating the Svalbard approach as a solution to crime elsewhere. But he does think it shows a clear link between unemployment and lawlessness.

At the same time, it also seems to debunk a view held by populist parties across Europe, including Norway, that immigration is largely to blame for rising crime: Svalbard has no restrictions on foreigners. In fact, nearly a third of all residents are from elsewhere, including Thailand and China; hundreds of Ukrainians also work in a mining operation owned by Russia. "The demographics here are



Download stats about youth unemployment in Europe

Few troublemakers:
In Svalbard, Norway (left), where crime is virtually nonexistent, polar bears cause most of the problems.



AND IN THE REST OF EUROPE . . .
Much of the continent suffers from high unemployment

1.	Greece	27%
2.	Spain	24.5%
3.	Croatia	16.2%
4.	Portugal	14%
5.	Slovakia	13.8%
.....		
34.	Norway	3.3%
	U.S.	6.1%

SOURCES: EUROSTAT; U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

rather unique," says Ingero.

Svalbard's bans against joblessness and homelessness are a far cry from how things operate in the rest of Norway. The country prides itself on being a "welfare state," in which the government provides cradle-to-grave support—and pays for it with high income taxes and a 25 percent sales tax, the ninth-highest in the world. (In the U.S., the highest sales tax is 9.5 percent, in Tennessee.)

Guns & Polar Bears

Svalbard does fund a school and a hospital, and subsidizes the territory's biggest employer—a money-losing state-owned coal company. But other than that, residents largely have to fend for themselves without any social services to fall back on, which is why taxes are lower in Svalbard than elsewhere in Norway.

Though Svalbard has been featured in the James Bond movie *Die Another*

Day—part of a car chase on ice was filmed there—there are so few human villains that polar bears have taken on the role as the main troublemakers.

Polar bear attacks regularly make front-page news (along with melting glaciers and scientific research projects). That's why nearly everyone in Svalbard owns a gun. The police enforce a rule that anybody

moving outside the city limits of Longyearbyen must carry a weapon and know how to use it.

Another recent hot topic is the exorbitant price of fresh food. A local newspaper ran an "exposé" on what it called the world's most expensive milk (nearly \$27 per gallon, compared with an average of about \$3.70 in the U.S.).

Mark Sabbatini, an American in Svalbard who edits an English-language weekly called *Icepeople*, says he doesn't worry much about bears and even less about thieves and muggers. "I used to be a crime reporter in Los Angeles," he says. "I can't say I enjoyed it."

But he acknowledges that living in such a remote place brings its own stresses.

"If you want to live here," he says, "there is something slightly warped about you." •

Andrew Higgins is a New York Times reporter who covers Europe.

ANDY ROUSE/NATUREPL.COM (POLAR BEAR); MAP: JIMI MCMAHON



Young & Unemployed

The European countries with the highest unemployment rates for people under 25

Country	Youth Unemployment Rate (%)
1. Spain	53.4
2. Greece	51.5
3. Italy	43.7
4. Croatia	41.5
5. Portugal	36.4
6. Slovakia	32.1
7. Ireland	25.0
8. Romania	24.4
9. Sweden	23.6
10. Poland	23.5
.....	
31. Norway*	7.6
United States	13.3

SOURCES: EUROSTAT; U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS, JUNE 2014
NOTE: ALL EUROPE FIGURES FROM JUNE 2014, EXCEPT FOR ROMANIA, WHICH IS FROM MARCH 2014
*NORWAY HAS THE LOWEST YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN EUROPE.

Critical-Thinking Questions

- In Spain and Greece, more than half of young people are unemployed. How does that compare with the other European countries on the list?
- How might a high youth unemployment rate affect a society?
- Both Europe and the U.S. were badly hit by the global recession that began in 2008. Why do you think the U.S. has a lower youth unemployment rate than many European countries?
- If you were the leader of a country with high youth unemployment, what would you do to help get young people get jobs?
- Many young people in countries like Spain and Greece have been leaving home for jobs in places like Germany (where youth unemployment was 7.8 percent as of July 2014). What are some of the upsides and downsides for the individuals leaving home and for their home countries?

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“No Job? Get Lost!”

Reading Assignment (HS.50)

Directions: Read the article, “No Job? Get Lost!” On a separate piece of paper, write answers to the questions below using complete sentences.

1. Explain what Svalbard’s leaders perceive as the reason for the territory’s low crime rate. Do you think the leaders are correct? Why or why not?
2. How is climate related to Svalbard’s unusual policies?
3. Compare Svalbard’s government policies with policies in the rest of Norway.
4. Based on the article, how would you rate the quality of life in Svalbard, Norway? Why? Support your claims with evidence from the article.
5. Is Svalbard justified in deporting residents who don’t have jobs and retirees who don’t have steady incomes? Why, or why not?
6. Would policies like Svalbard’s would help solve the youth-unemployment problem elsewhere in Europe, or in the United States? Why, or why not?

(Answering all of the questions above correctly and in complete sentences could earn a 2.0)

USE THE “Young & Unemployed” STATISTICAL CHART TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

7. In Spain and Greece, more than half of young people are unemployed. How does that compare with the other European countries on the list?
8. How might a high youth unemployment rate affect a society?
9. Both Europe and the U.S. were badly hit by the global recession that began in 2008. Why do you think the U.S. has a lower youth unemployment rate than many European countries?
10. If you were the leader of a country with high youth unemployment, what would you do to help get young people get jobs?
11. Many young people in countries like Spain and Greece have been leaving home for jobs in places like Germany (where youth unemployment was 7.8 percent as of July 2014). What are some of the upsides and downsides for the individuals leaving home and for their home countries?

(Answering all of the questions above correctly and in complete sentences could earn a 3.0 or above)