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Personal assistance services and other public measures for people with disabilities in the work environment and in higher education in Norway.

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Foreword

This is the second report on the project ‘Independent living of students with disabilities and graduates of higher education institutions’, financed by the European Economic Area and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms Programme.

According to the Consortium Agreement between the University of Warsaw and the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, the main approach of the report should be to explain and discuss ‘the Norwegian personal assistance services for people with disabilities in the work environment’. Reports on experiences with assistance services connected to work are scarce in Norway. Therefore, besides discussing the arrangement of ‘functional assistance’, which is the term for personal assistance related to working life, the report also provides a broader overview and discusses the different public measures for including people with disabilities into working life in Norway. Because higher education appears to be a main entrance for transition into working life, the report further presents and discusses the measures for people with disabilities in higher education.

December 2019

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Abstract

A major goal for the Norwegian welfare policy is to design services and benefits in a way that stimulates inclusion and participation in working life. Since 2006, labour and welfare services are collected under a common administration (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration).

The report gives an account of and discusses public measures for including people with disabilities in working life in Norway. Experiences with “Functional assistance”, where user-controlled personal assistance (UPA) is connected directly to working life is presented and discussed more in detail. Because higher education appears to be a main entrance for the transition into working life, the report further presents and discusses the measures for people with disabilities in higher education.

Even if there are many different measures connected to both the labour market and the educational sector, the data show that the existing measures are incomplete. The goal to include people with disabilities in working life has had limited success, and students with disabilities still encounter significant barriers in educational institutions.

Many of the measures in both labour and educational areas in Norway are provided as grants to the employer or educational institution with the aim of allowing different kinds of facilitations for people with disabilities. The personal assistance model thus far has had a rather modest scope in the Norwegian labour and educational system, as it is essentially connected to the users’ home and their leisure time.

In many ways, it is a paradox that the personal assistance model has such a modest scope, because evaluation of the functional assistance arrangement clearly concludes that it increases participation of people with disabilities in work. The report concludes that an extension of the functional assistance arrangement and a closer connection between the arrangement and the UPA are solutions that could improve the situation for people with disabilities in relation to both work and higher education.

Contents

The situation of people with disabilities in working life	5
Measures to include people with disabilities into working life	7
Political measures	7
Public support measures to include people with disabilities in working life	8
Functional assistance: personal assistance in working life	10
Experiences with functional assistance	11
The users	12
The assistants	13
The employers	14
Contribution of functional assistance to participation in work	15
Supported employment	16
Measures for students with disabilities	17
Concluding remarks	19
References	21

The situation of people with disabilities in working life

Since the 1990s, a major goal for the Norwegian welfare policy has been to design services and benefits in a way that stimulates inclusion and participation in working life (Stjernø & Øverbye 2012). A more distinct link has developed between the labour market and welfare policies. In the White Paper on welfare policy from the mid-90s, the goal is clarified in the following way: ‘Welfare arrangements and instruments individually and collectively should be designed, dimensioned and facilitated in a way that supports the goal of work for all’ (St. meld. nr. 35 (1994-95: 9)). In 2006, labour and welfare services were collected under a common administration. (the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, NAV).

The unemployment rate in Norway is low; in August 2019, it was 3.7%¹. However, the unemployment rate is substantially higher for people with disabilities. In 2018, the employment rate for people with disabilities was 44% for those aged 15–66 years, while the corresponding employment rate for the general population was 74% (Bø 2018). The difference between the employment rates for the general population and for people with disabilities was the least for persons aged 15–24 years at 14%, while it was the largest for persons aged 40–60 years at approximately 34%. Nevertheless, almost half of the population with disabilities aged 25–54 years is unemployed, that is, at the ages when a high employment rate is expected.

A large proportion of the people with disabilities who were employed worked part-time. In 2017, 41% and 24% of employed people with disabilities and those without disabilities worked part-time, respectively (Bø & Håland 2017). More women than men worked part-time both among people with and without disabilities.

In 2018, 32% of those who were employed received one or more benefits because of their disability. Nevertheless, unemployed people with disabilities received benefits more frequently (82%). The actual benefits were mainly disability pension or other benefits from NAV.

The unemployment figures covers up that the disability pension rate is rather high and increasing in Norway. At the end of September 2019, 348,800 persons aged 18–67 years (10.2% of the age group) received a disability pension². The increase was the highest for

¹ <https://www.ssb.no/akumnd>

² <https://www.nav.no/no/NAV+og+samfunn/Statistikk/AAP+nedsatt+arbeidsevne+og+uforetrygd+-+statistikk/Nyheter/2+000+fleire+fekk+uf%C3%B8retrygd+i+3.+kvartal+2019>

young persons. While 3299 persons aged 20–24 years received disability pension in 2010, the number had doubled to 6644 in 2019³.

As could be expected, the employment rate increases with the educational level. Research indicates that among people with disabilities, higher education is one of the most significant facilitators for a successful transition into employment (Vedeler 2009; Finnvold & Grue 2014). A lower proportion of people with disabilities than that in the general population have received higher education (Bø 2018). Among employed persons with a disability, 30% have received education at the university or university college level, while the corresponding proportion for the general population is 40%. A high proportion of people with disabilities (84%) who are not employed have received education until the secondary level or lower. This suggests that completing secondary education is of immense importance for the population with disabilities.

It is a strongly expressed wish among disabled people outside working life to be better integrated in the labour market. Approximately 25% or 85,000 persons expressed such a wish in the second half of 2018, and this number has been consistent since 2002 (Bø 2018). In the total unemployed population, 30% of persons aged 15–66 years wished to be employed.

³ <https://www.nav.no/no/NAV+og+samfunn/Statistikk/AAP+nedsatt+arbeidsevne+og+uforetrygd+-+statistikk/Tabeller/mottakere-av-uf%C3%B8retrygd-etter-kj%C3%B8nn-og-alder.pr.30.09.2010-2019.antall>

Measures to include people with disabilities into working life

Political measures

In Norway as well as in the other Nordic countries, there is a long tradition of close co-operation between the state and labour organisations (unions and employers' organisations), commonly referred to as 'cooperation between three parts' (Dølvik et al. 2014; Thomassen 2019). In 2001, the government and labour organisations entered into an agreement about a more inclusive working life (The IA Agreement) with the intention to facilitate conditions to ensure that as many people as possible can work as much as possible, for as long as possible⁴. The agreement had three main goals: 1) to reduce long-lasting sick-leave; 2) to increase the average departure age from working life; and 3) to increase the number of people with disabilities in working life⁵. The agreement has shown positive results and the number of sick-leaves in the workforce has decreased (Hagaseth 2019). Although the working activity for older persons has also increased, the agreement has shown limited results for the goal of including more people with disabilities in working life. The figures show that the situation for people with disabilities in the labour market has been stable since the agreement was formulated.

Even if the employment rate for people with disabilities has not improved over time, more persons have received facilitations at their workplace as a result of their disability (Bø 2018). In 2018, this was observed for 60% of people with disabilities, an increase of 8% compared with the previous year. This is considered a consequence of the inclusive working life agreement and the instruments that have been subsequently designed, such as physical adaptations at the workplace and change of work tasks or working duration.

The IA Agreement was renewed in January 2019 for a period of 4 years⁶. In the new agreement, the stated goal to include more people with disabilities in the workforce was removed. This exclusion was met by protests from organisations of people with disabilities (Handikappnytt 2018), but the government instead launched a 'collective project for inclusion', where both public and private sectors were invited to co-operate with the goal to

⁴ https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/arbeidsliv/arbeidsmiljo-og-sikkerhet/inkluderende_arbeidsliv/ia-tidligere-avtaleperioder/inkluderende-arbeidsliv---avtaleperioden-2001-2005/id2356123/

⁵ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/stprp-nr-1-tillegg-nr-1-2001-2002-/id435755/sec2?q=>

⁶ <https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/fc3b4fed90b146499b90947491c846ad/the-ia-agreement-20192022.pdf>

include more people with disabilities in ordinary work⁷. Measures from the state to fulfil the goals include increasing state support to wage subsidies to the employers, improved opportunities to obtain individual support for persons in need of it at work, and to support mentor arrangements. Economic support from the state to the arrangement ‘functional assistance’ was increased by 10 million Norwegian kroner (about 1 million euro) for the state budget for 2020. The state as employer should be bound to reserve at least 5% of the new employment positions for persons with a disability or a ‘gap in employment’.

Public support measures to include people with disabilities in working life

The Labour and Welfare Administration has the executive responsibility for labour services for people with disabilities. In co-operation between the user and the local Labour and Welfare Office, individual plans should be prepared with actual activities that could enable inclusion in the workplace. An agreement of necessary facilitations and follow-up could then be established between the Labour and Welfare Office, the individuals with disability and actual employers. The most important measures are as follows⁸.

Wage grants: The Labour and Welfare Administration can offer wage grants to employers to employ persons who have difficulty in entering the labour market on ordinary terms. The grants can be accorded temporarily (up to 1 year) or permanently.

Inclusion grants: Employers can apply for grants to compensate for costs related to persons in need of adaptation of the workplace. The intention is to enable recruitment of jobseekers needing special follow-up. The grant can be used to compensate for documented extra costs for using resources for examining the needs for adaptations, extra procurement of furniture, performing the work, information and communication technology (ICT) solutions, software, licences, insurance and courses as well as training to facilitate work performance. The Labour and Welfare Administration decides a maximum sum for the grant, which can be given for up to 1 year.

The Assistive Technology Centres administered by the counties have the executive and co-ordinating responsibilities for supporting their inhabitants with the necessary assistive devices.

⁷ <https://www.regjeringen.no/no/sub/inkluderingsdugnad/id2596993/>

⁸ <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2015-12-11-1598>

Follow-up measures: Persons with considerable needs of assistance for obtaining or keeping a job can receive supervision, training and facilitation of the work task and situation. These measures generally have a duration of 6 months but can be extended.

Work clarification money: Persons with reduced capability for working (at least 50%) because of illness or injuries can receive support for up to 3 years with the goal to enter working life. The support consists of work-related measures and/or economic support for medical treatment or other follow-up activities. For this support, it is required that the person actively contributes to the process of entering into working life.

Support for reading or secretarial aid: The person with disability can receive support for reading and secretarial aid to assist them to perform their work.

Support for interpreters: Deaf persons and persons with significantly weakened hearing can receive support for obtaining interpreter services to enable them to perform their work.

Support for extra travelling expenses: Persons with permanent mobility impairments and who are not able to take public transport systems can apply for economic support to travel between their home and workplace and have the right to cover the expenses for taxi services.

As noted, the present employment rate for people with disabilities is approximately the same as that when the IA Agreement was established in 2001 (44% for persons aged 15–66 years in 2018). Therefore, it appears that the established measures have succeeded at varying levels in fulfilling the goal of increased inclusion of people with disabilities in working life. Bø (2018) concluded that wage grants to employers appeared to be the measure that provides the most positive effects for the transition to working life. It was also shown that many people received adaptations at their workplace, such as physical adaptations and change of work tasks or working duration; these factors likely had positive consequences in that many of these people could not have been in their jobs or would have been excluded from a job without these adaptations. Wik (2019) studied the arrangement of work clarification money and concluded that it succeeded to a limited extent in catching up with young people with disabilities. The arrangement duration was rather short and the follow-up and individualisation of the arrangement were not optimal. Many young people with disabilities who participated in the arrangement left it with a rather unclarified situation related to working life.

Functional assistance: personal assistance in working life

Personal assistance and user-controlled personal assistance (UPA) are characterised as practical assistance and training inside and outside the user's home⁹. UPA is not meant for assistance in the work environment or at school. For assistance in these areas, municipalities are encouraged to co-ordinate UPA with other available services.

Some public documents stress that UPA provides the user with better possibilities for participation in working life and education (Circular I-9/2015), but that it has a more indirect effect. This is confirmed by studies that indicate that UPA affects the users' opportunities for participation in working life and education (Rambøll 2012). Together with various kinds of other practical adaptations and assistance at work, the UPA arrangement forms an important pillar. UPA has an indirect effect by making the situation at home, family life and leisure time easier for the user; in that way, users gain additional capacity and strength to take part in work or education.

It appears that UPA has a more direct effect on participation in working life for users' families than for users themselves (Rambøll 2012). The UPA arrangement makes available time for the users' family carers. For some close relatives, the UPA arrangement appears to be of crucial importance for paid work opportunities. This is especially true for parents with children aged under 18 years who receive UPA and spouses of persons with comprehensive needs of assistance. In a study of parents with children who received UPA (Jenhaug & Askheim 2018), all the parents stated that it would not have been possible for them to take part in working life without the UPA arrangement.

Personal assistance connected directly to working life is established with the arrangement of 'functional assistance'. It was initiated in 1997 as a trial administered by the Norwegian Directorate for Health and Social Affairs. Since 2005, it has been administered by NAV. In the state regulations, functional assistance is specified as an established labour market service¹⁰.

Functional assistance is meant for persons with a comprehensive disability, blindness or strong vision impairment who require assistance to be capable of working¹¹. It covers

⁹ Please see the first report from this project 'The Norwegian system of supporting people with disabilities in independent living including assistant services'.

¹⁰ <https://lovdata.no/dokument/SF/forskrift/2015-12-11-1598>.

¹¹ <https://www.nav.no/no/Bedrift/Hjelpemidler/Funksjonsassistanse>

expenditure for tasks that the employee is unable to perform owing to their disability. In the state regulations, activities that are mentioned include dressing and undressing, copying written material, necessary movements in the working situation and assistance in work-related travel. For blind persons, the arrangement also covers expenditure for an accompanying assistant when needed. However, the assistant should not perform the user's ordinary work tasks. NAV pays the expenses to the user's employer. The need for adaptations and actual devices should be clarified before functional assistance is granted; the employers can then apply for separate grants for this. The grant is provided for 1 year at a time.

Blind and weak-sighted persons can in addition receive assistance for reading or secretarial help; however, this is not specifically included in the functional assistance arrangement but is provided as a separate measure.

The extent of functional assistance is modest. In 2018, only 270 persons received functional assistance¹². However, as a follow-up of the renewal of the IA Agreement in 2019, the support to functional assistance from the state was increased to 10 million kroner in the budget for 2020 (cf. note 5).

Experiences with functional assistance

To date, only one study has reported the experiences with functional assistance in Norway. In the study from 2008, questionnaires were sent to the users of the arrangement, their employers and their assistants, and interviews with these three groups were conducted in five workplaces that employed at least one person receiving functional assistance (Econ Pöyry 2008). The data from this study are presented as follows.

¹² <https://velferd.no/velferdsbloggen/2018/assistanse-gir-likestilling-ogsa-pa-jobb>, accessed 30 September 2019.

The users

The persons who received functional assistance had a very varied work background and performed varied work tasks. User professions included teachers, occupational therapists, farmers, researchers, artists, priests, mechanics, musicians and office workers. Most users were employees (95%) with the remainder self-employed. A little more than half were employed in private companies, just over 40% in public enterprises and 7% in a user organisation.

Approximately 55% of the users were men. There were few young persons among the users, and only 4.5% were in the age group 20–29 years. The distribution between the age groups of 30–39, 40–49 and 50–59 years was quite similar and ranged from 27% to 31%.

A majority of the users had extensive physical impairments. Many were dependent on a wheelchair and other technical aids. Interestingly, more than 60% of users received UPA in addition to functional assistance. Most of the users had been working prior to receiving functional assistance, and most had been working at their present appointment for a considerable time.

A total of 47% of those who received functional assistance worked full-time; 53% worked part-time and had a pension as their main source of income. Approximately one-third specified that they worked between half-time and full-time, while a relatively small group worked between 31% and 49% of full time and 10% less than 30%. For most persons, the changes were relatively small when they compared the work duration before and after receiving functional assistance. However, among those who had reduced working time, more persons had increased their work duration after receiving functional assistance.

The most common kind of assistance the users received was facilitation. Three out of five users received ‘practical personally directed assistance’, while two out of five received ‘accompanying assistance’. Typical examples of tasks performed by the assistants were supplying food and drink, fetching the post, packing and deliveries, archiving, fetching prints, ranking, carrying, assistance with doors and lifts, preparations of meetings, adaptations and aid in travels, dressing and assistance at the toilet.

The amount of assistance received varied. Roughly one-third of users received assistance for 15–19 hours a week, about 10% for more than 30 hours, and 7.5% for less than 5 hours a week. In total, 80% of users rated the assistance scope as sufficient, while 20% found it to be

too low.

The users of functional assistance stated unanimously that they were satisfied with the arrangement; indeed, 88% were 'very satisfied'. In the interviews, they especially emphasised the importance of having good relations with the assistants. One negative aspect for users was that because functional assistance was granted for only 1 year at a time, they experienced some insecurity and worry. This could also make it more difficult to recruit assistants for longer durations.

Similar to UPA, the users of functional assistance are responsible for recruiting assistants, training them and planning their work tasks. A total of 25% of users had one or more colleagues as the assistant, while 75% had assistants recruited externally. Approximately 60% of users also received UPA besides functional assistance, and approximately 40% of those who received functional assistance had an assistant who also worked for them as a personal assistant. Some users found it difficult to recruit functional assistants, especially if the scope of the assistance was only a few hours each week.

The assistants

A little more than 60% of assistants were women. Almost one-third were relatively young, aged 20–29 years; 28% were aged 40–49; 18% were aged 30–39; and a corresponding number aged 50–59 years. Only 3% of assistants were aged over 60 years. A little less than one-third had an ordinary job in the same company as the users, and one-third had another job besides the functional assistant job. Approximately 15% were students.

As noted, approximately 40% of those who received functional assistance had an assistant who also worked for them as a personal assistant. This arrangement often worked well for the assistants, and as the assistance roles would often overlap, it was natural to combine the assistant positions.

Most of the assistants had not been at their job position for very long. Almost all assistants (94%) had only worked for their present manager; more than half had worked for their present manager for less than 2 years and 37% for 2–4 years; and 10% had worked as functional assistants for more than 4 years.

A little more than one-fourth of assistants did not have fixed working hours, while 66% had fixed or partly fixed working hours. Almost one-fourth had varied working hours each week.

Many assistants felt that the flexibility of the job was an advantage, while others felt that the job was mostly advantageous for the users, and they wanted more predictable time frames for their job. Nevertheless, a majority of assistants were satisfied with their job; 52% were 'satisfied' and 42% 'very satisfied'. Satisfaction was lowest regarding the employment conditions and salary. A total of 44% answered that they could imagine continuing the job for some or many years, while 30% considered it a temporary job; 18% answered that they were assistants for a colleague and helped him or her as long as there was a need for it.

The employers

The employers gave mainly positive feedback regarding the arrangement. Most were fine with having an employee with an assistant. Almost 40% answered that it worked 'very well', while 57% said it worked 'well'. Similar to the users, a majority of the employers (78%) felt that the scope of assistance matched the needs of the users for performing their job, while the remainder felt the scope was too limited.

Nevertheless, some of the employers expressed a wish that the arrangement be made easier to manage; they especially complained that they had to make advance payments to the assistants and the expenses were refunded only later by NAV. A minority of the employers also felt that it would be easier if they did not have to undertake the employment responsibility for the assistants.

Some of the employers also wished that the system was more flexible because there was a stronger need for assistance in some periods than in others. Moreover, some employers wanted better information from NAV. Over half of the employees showed an open mind to employ a new employee with functional assistance, while 27% answered that they did not know how they felt regarding such a situation. Many of them explained that this would depend on the person's professional qualifications; it was his or her competence that would decide if they were suitable for employment or not.

Contribution of functional assistance to participation in work

Almost half of the employers answered that they did not think their employees with assistance would have been working without assistance; 40% of users felt the same. One-fourth of employees and one-fifth of employers felt that they would be working the same number of hours without the assistant, but they would then be more dependent on their colleagues.

The study by Econ Pöyry (2008) concludes that there are distinct indications that the functional assistance arrangement contributes towards enabling persons with extensive disabilities to obtain and continue work. It concludes that without the arrangement, many of the present users would have dropped out of the labour market. Some would have managed to continue work without the arrangement but would have worked fewer hours and would be more dependent on help from colleagues and benevolent employers. Many users experience this as problematic and bothersome.

Given that the response to the assistance arrangement is highly positive, it appears a paradox that so few individuals have been included in the programme to date. It could be seen as even more paradoxical because the proportion of people with disabilities at work has not improved, although it is a strongly emphasised goal of the state authorities to increase their work participation. One reason might be that the communication of information regarding the arrangement has not been optimal. In the interviews, it appeared that many of the users had obtained information about the arrangement rather randomly. Some had received it from the local NAV office and others from a user organisation or their employer. This situation might have improved after the study was completed. At present, functional assistance is announced among other labour market services and is clearly noted on the NAV home page.

Nevertheless, the scope of the arrangement is rather limited. The report recommends that the arrangement should be used more actively for persons who are in a transitional phase between studies and work as this is often a critical period for people with disabilities. It further recommends that the target group could be expanded, for instance, to persons with mental health problems and those with cognitive disabilities. It refers to Denmark where a corresponding arrangement included approximately 2500 persons, but where the target group was wider and the criteria for eligibility less strict. As noted, financial support of the arrangement has been increased in the 2020 state budget. Therefore, the number of users will probably increase in the years to come.

Supported employment

Supported employment is an umbrella concept that combines different efforts to include groups of people who are difficult to integrate into ordinary workplaces. The main strategy is facilitation, training and follow-up in the workplace (the ‘place–train model’) conducted by ‘job specialists’, persons who have education and training in using ordinary workplaces as a means for inclusion of vulnerable groups (Frøyland 2019). Using strict follow-ups, the goal is to ensure that the jobseekers are not only employed at the workplace, but also receive sufficient support to be able to perform an ordinary job there. In Norway, supported employment was attempted for persons with intellectual disabilities in the 1990s. In 1996, the arrangement was included in labour market measures, and the target group was extended to persons with different kinds of disabilities for inclusion in the ordinary labour market. From a modest start with 750 persons in 1996, the number had increased in 2014 to between 6000 and 7000. In 2015, the programme was merged with the above-mentioned labour market follow-up measures.

A variant of the supported employment model—individual job support, which was proposed for persons with mental health problems—was developed in co-operation between the labour market and health authorities. The intention was to provide an arrangement for persons with moderate or serious mental health problems and/or intoxication problems. Evaluations of the programme showed satisfactory results, and individual job support was included in the labour market measures for this special target group.

However, taken together, the results of the supported employment arrangement were mixed, mainly because there seemed to be limited focus on how jobseekers should succeed in keeping their job over time and on the development of the jobseeker’s career. That said, Frøyland (2019) concluded that even if supported employment was given a lower priority, and partly abandoned, the authorities increasingly wished to build upon the principles behind supported employment in the labour market policy.

Measures for students with disabilities

As noted, educational level appears to have considerable importance for the employment rate of people with disabilities. Studies have concluded that education is even more important for people with disabilities than for those without disabilities and could be seen as a main avenue of entrance into the labour market (Bø & Håland 2017, Finnvold & Grue 2014). People with disabilities with secondary education have 2.3 times higher chances to be active in working life compared with those with only primary education (Molden, Wendelborg & Tøssebro 2009).

Although there is no reliable register of the number of students with disabilities in higher education (Magnus & Tøssebro 2014), according to Knarlag and Jacobsen (2000), 4.5% of Norwegian students would need substantial support (including personal assistance for practical help on campus and special assistive technology) and 8% would need some support. According to a 2007 survey on the living conditions of people with disabilities, 10.5% of all 20–29 year-olds with a higher education degree fit a broad definition of disability (Molden, Wendelborg & Tøssebro 2009).

In Norway, students with disabilities have an equal right to education, and it is an expressed aim of the state to increase the participation rate of people with disabilities in higher education to that of other young people (St. meld. nr. 40 (2002-2003)). Higher education, including accessibility issues, is regulated by the 2005 Higher Education Act. According to this act, all higher education institutions are instructed to take the necessary steps to ensure that students with disabilities have the same access to education as their peers without disabilities, and to adjust the physical learning environment to meet the principles of universal design.

Furthermore, since 1999, all higher education institutions are required to have an action plan for accessibility and must provide a contact person for students with disabilities (St. meld. nr. 8 (1998-1999)). Higher education institutions are further required to establish a disability service informing and advising students on adjustment possibilities and rights. This may involve counselling when applying for higher education, information about financial support, assistive technology, individual exams, a person taking notes and transfer at campus. The most important measures for including students with disabilities are as follows¹³.

Physical accessibility: According to the Act on Equality and the Prohibition of Discrimination

¹³

https://www.ung.no/utdanning/houtd/977_Rettigheter_i_h%C3%B8yere_utdanning_for_personer_med_nedsatt_funksjon_sevne.html

(Equality and Discrimination Act) (2017), all public and private institutions directed towards the public are committed to securing universal access as long as it does not imply a disproportionate burden for the institution. This means that, as much as is possible and reasonable, the institution should facilitate the localities, access, sanitary and technical equipment so that students with disabilities are capable of studying at the institution.

Facilitation in the daily study situation: The educational institution should do as much as is possible and reasonable to adapt the study situation for students with disabilities. This includes daily activities and exams.

Assistive devices: Students with disabilities can receive assistive devices both at home and in the educational institution to solve practical problems.

Contact person and consultant service for students with disabilities: All higher education institutions should have a separate contact person, an action plan for students with disabilities and plans for the facilitation of their study situation. Students following studies with a scope of 60 European Credit Transfer System points or more have the right to have an individual study plan.

Support for reading or secretarial aid: The person with disability can receive support for reading and secretarial aid. This is supported by the Insurance Act and managed by the assistive technology centres.

Support for interpreters: Deaf persons and persons with significantly weakened hearing can receive support for interpreter services supported by the Insurance Act.

Nevertheless, the measures in many ways appear to be incomplete. Statistics clearly show that people with disabilities generally have lower educational qualifications than those without disabilities (Bufdir 2018¹⁴). In 2015, only 21% of people with disabilities had at least 1 year of higher education compared with 45% of the general population (Bufdir 2018). Among those who begin higher education, fewer continue to the master's and PhD levels (Bliksvær & Hanssen 2006). Furthermore, 44% of people with disabilities have no education over primary level compared with 27% of people in the general population.

A study of students with disabilities in higher education highlighted that they experienced both pedagogical, physical, digital and social barriers (Proba 2018). Most of them felt that they had to work harder than other students and their study progress was reduced. Many felt

¹⁴ https://www.bufdir.no/Statistikk_og_analyse/Nedsatt_funksjonsevne/Oppvekst_og_utdanning/Hoyere_utdanning/

that better facilitation would have reduced the problems. Many had to take the initiative themselves to receive the support or adjustments that they needed (Magnus & Tøssebro 2014). Especially for students with impairments that are not visible, the process of acquiring individual support frequently entails negotiations, both self-negotiation and negotiation with those in the social environment.

Magnus and Tøssebro (2014) concluded that based on existing research, it is the lack of possibilities for individual support that constitutes a paramount issue for students with disabilities. This is partly because progress towards universal design is slow, and because it is through individual support that the individual can solve his or her accessibility problems in the short term. Moreover, the experience of barriers is related to issues not solved by universal measures, and in many cases, it will not be solved by using this strategy.

Concluding remarks

Even if there are many different measures connected to both the labour market and the educational sector, the data reported here clearly show that such measures are incomplete. The goal to include people with disabilities in working life has had limited success, and students with disabilities still encounter significant barriers in educational institutions. It appears that Norway has not been able to realize the goals of inclusion in the same way as the neighbouring countries. The report from Econ Pöyry (2008) showed that an arrangement similar to functional assistance in Denmark but with a wider target group included almost 10 times as many persons (2500 persons) as in the Norwegian arrangement. In his article published by Statistics Norway, Bø (2018) showed that Sweden also has a considerably higher share of employed people with disabilities than Norway. His analysis showed that in Sweden there are more labour market measures targeted directly at people with disabilities as a target group than in Norway. He concluded that with similar measures in Norway, the employment rate would have increased by approximately 6%. Therefore, the potential for employing people with disabilities in Norway is undoubtedly higher than the current situation. Many of the measures in both labour and educational areas in Norway are provided as grants to the employer or educational institution with the aim of allowing different kinds of facilitations for people with disabilities. Alternatively, economic support is granted for, for example, secretarial aid or interpreter services. The personal assistance model thus far has had a rather modest scope in the Norwegian labour system, as it is essentially connected to the

users' home and their leisure time. At the same time, it is interesting to note that more than 60% of those who received functional assistance also received UPA and that many of them had assistants who worked as both functional assistants and as personal assistants.

In many ways, it is a paradox that the personal assistance model has such a modest scope, because evaluation of the functional assistance arrangement clearly concludes that it increases participation of people with disabilities in work. Econ Pöyry (2008) recommended that the arrangement should be used more for persons who are in a transitional phase between studies and work as this is often a critical period for people with disabilities. It was also recommended that the target group could be expanded, for instance, to persons with mental health problems and those with cognitive disabilities. Magnus and Tøssebro (2014) concluded that the lack of opportunities for individual adaptations is a main hindrance for students with disabilities. The conclusion indicates that an extension of the functional assistance model would be helpful.

The public commission appointed by the government in September 2019 to provide an account of, consider and formulate suggestions about how UPA can better fulfil its intentions (Regjeringen.no 20.09.2019) will, as part of its mandate, also closely examine how UPA can be organised to secure participation in work, studies and leisure time activities. It will consider relevant and adjoining assistance arrangements in other arenas as for instance working life and education. An extension of the functional assistance arrangement and a closer connection between the arrangement and the UPA are likely solutions and could improve the situation for people with disabilities in relation to both work and higher education.

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Høgskolen
i Innlandet

This is the second report on the project 'Independent living of students with disabilities and graduates of higher education institutions', financed by the European Economic Area and Norwegian Financial Mechanisms Programme.

According to the Consortium Agreement between the University of Warsaw and the Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences, the main approach of the report should be to explain and discuss 'the Norwegian personal assistance services for people with disabilities in the work environment'. Reports on experiences with assistance services connected to work are scarce in Norway. Therefore, besides discussing the arrangement of 'functional assistance', which is the term for personal assistance related to working life, the report also provides a broader overview and discusses the different public measures for including people with disabilities into working life in Norway. Because higher education appears to be a main entrance for transition into working life, the report further presents and discusses the measures for people with disabilities in higher education.