



Report on the employment of disabled people in European countries

Country: Norway
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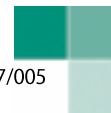
Background:

The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the *Thematic report on the implementation of EU Employment Strategy in European countries with reference to equality for disabled people*.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation of the European Employment Strategy from a disability equality perspective, and to provide the Commission with useful evidence in support of disability policy mainstreaming. More specifically, the report will review implementation of EU Employment Strategy and the PROGRESS initiative with reference to policy implementation evidence from European countries, including the strategies addressed in the EU Disability Action Plan (such as flexicurity and supported employment).

The first version of the report was published in 2008. This is the second version of the report updated with information available up to November 2009.



Summary of changes since 2008

New quantitative data:

Since the earlier ANED report on employment from Norway, there are two new quantitative data sources available, the 2008 labour force survey by Statistics Norway and a survey of the living conditions of disabled people that includes data on employment. These sources do not reveal any new trends.

According to the 2008 labour force survey, 17% of the working age population (15-66) is disabled. This is a 2% increase compared to earlier surveys, but this is due to a change in methodology. Earlier years give the same results if recalculated according to the new procedures (Statistics Norway 2009/10). The employment ratio of disabled people is 45% which is no change compared to earlier years. The gender and age differences are also constant, with 5% more men being employed. The proportion on part-time work is also more or less the same, 47% among employed disabled people as compared to 26% among employed people in total. There is also a constant proportion of 42% of the employed disabled people who were employed in their current job before the onset of the impairment. The only change worth noting is that an increasing number of unemployed disabled people report that they want a job – from 21% in 2007 to 31% in 2008. Figures from 2007 were however low compared to earlier years (when they ranged from 24% to 27%).

The next labour force survey with a “disability supplement” will be conducted at the end of 2009, with data available in spring 2010.

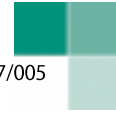
The survey on living conditions was conducted by Statistics Norway from August 2007 to January 2008. The results on rate of employment are the same as the labour force surveys. This survey however gives more opportunities to compare people with and without impairments, because a random sample of the population was screened. According to this survey, the difference in employment rate between disabled and non-disabled people is 40%. Disabled men are more often employed than disabled females (difference 7%) and ethnic minorities with a disability are less likely to be employed than the ethnic majority (difference 10%) (cf Statistics Norway 2008/65, Molden et al. 2009).

New policy changes:

The coming of an anti-discrimination law was mentioned in the earlier report from Norway. This was in force from January 1, 2009. One of the main concerns of the disability movement related to employment, was that buildings used for work purposes (working places) were not included in the universal design provisions. Instead individual accommodations (unless it was an undue burden) were referred to, similar to the EU directive 2000/78. With the enactment of a new Planning and Building code in June 2009, this was changed. Regulations on universal design of work places can now be implemented with reference to that act. The regulations are not yet in place, but the act is expected to be ready for enforcement from January 1, 2010.

New research evidence:

There are a number of studies on disability and employment recently published or in press.

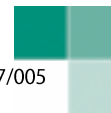


An edited book (Tøssebro (ed) forthcoming 2009) includes a studies of employer attitudes (Alm Andreassen, forthcoming), the (under)utilisation of ICT (Hansen, forthcoming), barriers in the rehabilitation system (Vedeler 2009) and an analysis of the employment data in the Statistics Norway survey on the living conditions of disabled people (Molden, Wendelborg and Tøssebro 2009).

By use of logistic regression Molden et al. show that (1) the odds of being employed is 5 times lower for disabled people, (2) that disability has a much stronger effect on the odds of being employed than for example gender, ethnicity or education, (3) that among disabled people (a) people with higher education are much more likely to be employed (the effect of education results in an employment rate of twice that of the non-disabled population), and (b) that people who were employed at the onset of the impairment had twice the odds of being employed compared to people who were not employed at the onset of impairment.

The economic crisis:

There is no good existing evidence on the impact of the economic crisis. Something might be read out of statistics on registered unemployed and the recipient of disability benefits: There has been an increase in the number registered as unemployed with “restricted working ability”, but this might also be due to changes in the registration procedures (NAV: Arbeid og Velferd 2-2009, pp 5-12, <http://www.nav.no/199215.cms>). The proportion of the population on disability benefits (18-66 years old) was stable until end of June 2009 (<http://www.nav.no/209658.cms>). The trend that a rising proportion of young people (<34) and a declining proportion of older people (>55) is on disability benefits is however continuing (cf. also OECD 2006).



PART ONE: GENERAL EVIDENCE

1.1 Academic publications and reports

In order to get an overview of the employment situation for disabled people in Norway, employment statistics (see below) do in general provide more information than research reports. Research reports tend to focus on specific issues, whereas employment statistics provide an overview. Research reports on specific issues cover, for instance, the experiences of young disabled people trying to enter the labour market (Anvik 2006), the impact of higher education (Bliksvær & Hanssen 2005), comparisons of policy measures in different countries (Econ 2006, Hvinden 2004) and general overviews (Hansen & Svalund 2007, Jakobsen 2006).

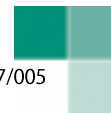
Very briefly, the key findings appear to be: 1) The differences in employment rates between disabled people and the total working-age population is much smaller among people with higher education (Bliksvær & Hansen 2006). Short term courses do not seem to work, but higher education does (Molden et al. 2009). 2) Young disabled people seeking help from the employment offices experience discontinuity, provisional arrangements, unpredictable transitions etc. (Anvik 2006), and even discouragement (Vedeler 2009). More consistent and strategic behaviour from employment offices appears to be needed. 3) Norway spend quite a lot of resources on economic support and also employment measures, more than many countries, but this does not lead to higher rates of employment. 4) Policy measures geared towards employers appear to be under-utilised (Econ 2006) and a change in the profile of measures is currently being discussed.

There are a number of new studies on disability and employment recently published or on the way to being published. These include a study of employer attitudes (Alm Andreassen, forthcoming), the (under)utilisation of ICT (Hansen, forthcoming), and an analysis of the employment data in the Statistics Norway survey on the living conditions of disabled people (Molden, Wendelborg and Tøssebro, 2009). By use of logistic regression Molden et al. show that (1) the odds of being employed are 5 times lower for disabled people, (2) that disability has a much stronger effect on the odds of being employed than for example gender, ethnicity or education, (3) that among disabled people (a) people with higher education are much more likely to be employed (the effect of education twice that of the non-disabled population), and (b) that people who were employed at the onset of impairment have twice the odds of being employed compared to people who were not employed at the onset of impairment.

1.2 Employment statistics and trends

Four times each year Statistics Norway conducts labour force surveys. Since 2000, one of these surveys has included a supplement on the employment status and situation of disabled people. In (and since) 2002, this supplement was coordinated with a similar survey in the EU. Thus, since 2002, there has been time series data making it possible to study trends in the employment of disabled people. The methodology was changed in 2008 but not to an extent that makes trend reports unreliable. The latest report (Statistics Norway, report 2009/10) gives an overview of the 2008 survey and also trends since 2002. The next survey will be conducted at the end of 2009.

The proportion of the population aged 16-66 years that are classified as disabled according to the criteria of this survey varied around 15% (from 14.4 to 15.7), but increased to 17% in 2008 due to the methodology changes. Using the earlier methods, the proportion was not different from earlier years.



The proportion of disabled people that is employed varies around 45% (from 42.5 to 46.6). Even though changes from one year to the next sometimes are significant, there is no clear trend.

Thus, it is most likely that the changes are random. It is at least safe to conclude that during this decade, there is no evidence of changes or improvement in the employment situation of disabled people.

Compared to the total population, the employment rate of disabled people is about 30% lower (the rate of the total population aged 16-66 is about 75%). There is however some variation according to age. Among people aged 16-24 years, there is no difference between disabled people and the total population – most likely because many are still within the school system. The differences also become smaller when the employment rates in the general population declines substantially, that is, after the age of 60. But from age 24 to 60, the employment rate of disabled people is about 30-32% below that of the total population. The living conditions survey of Statistics Norway makes it possible to compare disabled with non-disabled people. This shows that the rate of employment is about 40% lower among disabled people (Molden et al. 2009).

The employment rate of disabled men is slightly higher than that of women, 47.9% vs 43.2% in 2008. This equals the difference between men and women in the total population. There is no data on disabled people from ethnic minorities in the labour force survey, but the living conditions survey suggests that disabled people from ethnic minorities have an employment rate about 10% lower than that of disabled people from the majority population. The difference in employment rates by ethnic background is about the same among non-disabled people.

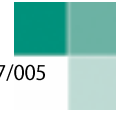
Unemployment rates of disabled people do not differ much from that of the general population (this varies from 2-4% from 2002-2008). Non-working disabled people are thus rarely registered as unemployed, but rather as “outside the labour force”. Some would say that the social security system conceals the real unemployment rate. Basically the unemployment figures on disabled people are not useful for comparative purposes, whereas figures on employment rates are.

Part time employment is more common among disabled people. In 2008, 46.7% of employed disabled people worked part time, compared to 25.9% of all employed. 28% of employed disabled people worked less than 20 hours per week. The gender gap in part-time employment is slightly larger among disabled people. 62% of the employed disabled women work part-time compared to 30% of disabled men. In the total population 41% women and 12% men work part-time.

The proportion of disabled people working in the public sector is higher than in the private sector (11.6% vs. 8.5% of all employed in the sectors). However, the employment rate in the state sector and public administration is not significantly above private sector. It is the local governments (municipalities and counties) that employ more disabled people, and in particular within community health and social services.

From 2002-2006 about 25% of non-employed disabled people maintained that they wanted employment. This figure dropped to 17% in 2007, and increased to 31% in 2008. It is unclear whether this is a new trend or not.

More disabled people appear to now have some kind of accommodation at work compared with a few years ago. In 2008, 55% reported accommodations compared to 43% in 2002. The most common accommodations were “changes in work tasks” (34%), “physical accommodation of the work place” (29%) and “changes in working hours” (24%). See section 2.1 on funding of reasonable accommodation.



1.3 Laws and policies

The most important changes recently in terms of law are to the labour legislation, in order to incorporate the EU employment discrimination directive. Furthermore, a general law to combat disability discrimination came into force from January 1, 2009. One of the main concerns of the disability movement related to employment, was that buildings used for work purposes (working places) were not included in the universal design provisions in that law. Instead it referred to individual accommodations (unless it was an undue burden), similar to the EU directive 2000/78. With the enactment of the new Planning and Building code in June this year, this was changed. Regulations on universal design of work places can now be implemented with reference to that act. The regulations are not yet in place, but the act is expected to be ready for enforcement from January 1, 2010.

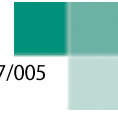
There are a number of minor policy reforms going on. Some relate specifically to disabled people, others to active labour market policies in general. Employment of disabled people is in general seen as an important issue for policy makers in Norway. The reason is partly because of the increasing numbers on disability benefits and partly because disabled people are a growing part of the non-working population. The latter point is related to the fact that employment rates rose considerably until 2008, for most groups – except disabled people. In the last white paper/government report on labour market policies, the situation of people with ethnic minority background and disabled people were given special attention (White paper 9, 2006-07). Disabled people seem to be a case in point showing that we have not succeeded in creating an inclusive working life. This does not however mean that when it comes to policy measures, disabled people are treated as a separate group. Most measures would be relevant for all people in a marginal position on the labour market, few measures are exclusive for disabled people, but some will be relevant only for disabled people (such as subsidised technical aids, physical accommodation, combination of work and disability benefits).

As for the labour market administration, a reform with possible wide-ranging consequences is under implementation. There will be a merger between the social security administration and the employment administration. The idea here is to be able to better coordinate measures operated by the two administrations, but of course also to try to counteract the increasing number on disability benefits. A number of the benefits operated by social security are clearly relevant for peoples' employment careers – such as sickness and rehabilitation benefits for people who have become sick or disabled later in life, but also temporary disability benefits and combinations of benefits and work. The outcomes of this reform are as yet uncertain.

Regarding the minor changes taking place, it is only possible to give examples that may very well be outdated soon. Since those examples should be read in context, the risk of misinterpretation will be substantial in this report. Therefore a discussion of these is omitted here. One could however add that there has recently been a programme for employing more disabled people in the state sector, and also a trainee program. Both programmes are still running, but the recruitment programme is under revision due to lack of success.

1.4 Type and quality of jobs

Please see section 1.2 for data on full and part-time work, and public vs. private sector employment. As for industries or employment sectors, disabled people are over-represented in Health and Social Services (27% vs. 20% in the total population) and underrepresented in financial and business services 9 vs. 14%).



The statistics on people in open labour market jobs, supported employment and sheltered employment is scattered and it requires a thorough special analysis to come up with reliable figures. What exists is information on people registered with “work limitations” that are admitted to labour market measures (White paper 9, 2006-07), and estimations of the total number of employed disabled people (based on labour market surveys, Statistics Norway 2007). To combine these statistics gives some indication, but it is not reliable. However, a rough calculation suggests that about 15% of all employed disabled people are in some kind of sheltered or supported employment (2005 data).



PART TWO: SPECIFIC EXAMPLES

2.1 Reasonable accommodation in the workplace

There is a system for public support (financing) of reasonable accommodation at work, and as a general rule the national government (social security) will cover most expenses. However, it appears as if this system is underutilised, maybe due to lack of information. The package of supports includes possibilities for: (1) transport to jobs (and education), (2) financial incentives for trying out accommodations, (3) technical aids (including a “green card” system through which the technical aids authorities guarantees support for accommodation at the workplace), (4) personal (called function) assistants. The system appears to be fairly generous, but is considered to be underutilised. There are currently a couple of research projects looking into why this is so, and it is suggested that there is both lack of information about the support system and the technical possibilities.

It is worth noting that the public funding of accommodations is likely to interact with the reasonable accommodation requirements in the labour legislation (the employment discrimination directive), in particular because the public funding will reduce the relevance of “undue burden” arguments by employers.

2.2 Other activation policies

There are examples of both recruitment measures (an action plan in the state sector, and also smaller local projects), help with transport, job coaching, supported employment and training. Except for supported employment, it is unclear if these measures have increased employment among disabled people. An evaluation of the transport scheme suggested that it made life easier for people, but it hardly increased the number of disabled people employed (Hedlund & Kongsvik 1998). The state sector action plan has so far shown results that fall clearly short of ambitions, and it is currently under revision.

2.3 One example of best practice

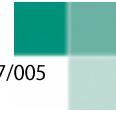
Even though it involves few people, the most frequently mentioned “best example” in Norway is Telenor Open Mind (<http://www.telenor.no/openmind/english/>). This is a program run by a large telecommunications company. It involves a qualification period where disabled people are taught relevant computer skills, and then a practice period with actual work experience. 75% of the people that have completed the programme are now in a permanent job. The programme celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2006, and about 100 people have completed the programme. It is largely financed through regular labour market funding/ measures (courses).



PART THREE: SUMMARY

3.1 Conclusions and recommendations

Unfortunately the employment situation for disabled people in Norway is not improving, in spite of increasing attention and a number of measures/actions. Disabled people are included in the vision of active labour market policies, but current measures do not appear to work adequately. Most likely there is a need for more focus on employers, and on young disabled people who are excluded from the labour market. The “insider problem”, that is, helping people to keep their jobs if they are disabled later in life and already have a job, appears to be have been more adequately addressed.



3.2 References (those included in annex not included)

Alm Andreassen, T. (in press) Når politikken rettes mot arbeidslivet [When policies address employers]. In Tøssebro (Ed.) Funksjonshemming; politikk, hverdagsliv og arbeidsliv [Disability; politics, everyday life and working life]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Anvik, C. H. (2006) Mellom drøm og virkelighet? Unge funksjonshemmede i overganger mellom utdanning og arbeidsliv [Between dream and reality? Young disabled people in transition between education and working life] report 17/2007, Bodø, Nordland Research Institute

Bliksvær, T. & J.I. Hansen (2005): Funksjonshemming, utdanning og arbeidsmarkedsdeltakelse. [Disability, education and labour market participation] Report, Senter for inkluderende arbeidslivsforskning

Econ (2006) Virkemidler for å få flere med redusert arbeidsevne i jobb – erfaringer fra fire land [Measures to increase the number of employed disabled people – lessons from four countries] report 34/2006, Oslo, Econ

Hedlund, M. & T. Kongsvik (1998) Arbeids- og utdanningsreiser for funksjonshemmede. Evaluering av et forsøk i Nord-Trøndelag. [Work and school transport for disabled people. An evaluation of a test implementation in Nord-Trøndelag county]. Report 16/1998. Steinkjer: Nord-Trøndelag Research Institute

Hansen, I.L.S (in press) IKT – et underutnyttet potensial for et inkluderende arbeidsliv. In Tøssebro (Ed.) Funksjonshemming; politikk, hverdagsliv og arbeidsliv (Disability; politics, everyday life and working life). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

Hvinden, B. (2004) Nordic disability policies in a changing Europe; is there still a distinct Nordic modell? Social policy and Administration 38: 170-189

Jakoben, K. (2006) Arbeid [Employment] In Full participation for all? Developments 2001-2006. Oslo, Directorate of health and social affairs/ National documentation centre on disability

Hansen, I. L. S. & J. Svalund (2007) Funksjonshemmede på arbeidsmarkedet – et oversiktsbilde [Disabled people and the labour market – an overview] Oslo: FAFO/AFI-WRI

Molden, Wendelborg & Tøssebro (2009) Levekår blant personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne [Living conditions of people with impairments]. Trondheim: NTNU Social Research

OECD (2006): Sickness, Disability and Work: Breaking the Barriers. Norway, Poland and Switzerland. OECD Publishing

Statistics Norway (2007) Funksjonshemmede på arbeidsmarkedet [Disabled persons on the labour market] Oslo: Statistics Norway (written by B. Olsen & Mem T. V.)

Statistics Norway (2009/10) Funksjonshemma på arbeidsmarknaden [Disabled people and the labour market]. Oslo: Statistics Norway

Statistics Norway 2008/65 Levekårsundersøking blant personar med nedsett funksjonsevne 2007 (Living conditions survey among people with impairments 2007). Oslo: Statistics Norway

Vedeler, J. S. (2009): "When benefits becomes barriers" Alter, 3, 61-83



White paper 9 (2006-07) Arbeid, velferd og inkludering. [Work, welfare and inclusion] Oslo, the Royal Department of Labour and Inclusion



Annex 1: quantitative data on the employment of disabled people

Source: Statistics Norway 2009/10 cf. literature list

Year: 2008	Absolute? (N)	Percentage (%)	Change (from previous year)
Disability rate	555 000	17.2	Cf text
Employment rate of disabled people	251 000	45.3	none
Activity rate of disabled people			
Inactivity rate of disabled people			
Employment in open labour market			
Employment in sheltered workshop			
Reason for leaving the labour market due to disability or long standing health problem			

Year: 2008	% Permanent	% Temporary
Permanent contracts vs. short term contracts	90%	10%

Year:	% Full-time	% Part-time
Full time vs. part time jobs	53.3	46.7

Year:	Public sector	Private sector	(e.g. comment or give % employers meeting obligations?)
Fulfilment of employment quota (if it exists) <i>Does not exist</i>			

Participation in training of disabled people	The number of people with "restricted working ability" taking part in a programme for (re-)integration into the labour market was 55 918 in May 2009.	(e.g. comment or give number of people participating in vocational or work-related employment)
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Annex 2: 2008-9 laws and policies on the employment of disabled people

Name of law:	The Act on Discrimination and Accessibility
Date of entering into force:	January 1, 2009
Objective:	To prevent discrimination and promote equality for disabled people
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	Too early to be evaluated, but expected to be positive, however uncertain when it comes to employment.

Name of law:	Planning and building Act
Date of entering into force:	Probably January 1. 2010
Objective:	Has a lot of new regulations, including regulations related to accessibility to working places.
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	Not yet in force

Name of law:	
Date of entering into force:	
Objective:	
Impact assessment (positive/negative):	



Annex 3: 2008-9 research/evaluation on the employment of disabled people

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	Alm Andreassen: Når politikken rettes mot arbeidslivet. In Tøssebro (Ed.) Funksjonshemming; politikk, hverdagsliv og arbeidsliv (Disability, politics, everyday life and working life) Forthcoming 2009, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget
Key findings from the research:	Shows different rates of employment in different economic sectors, and also that the pattern of recruitment varies.
Comment or assessment:	It argues that employment measures needs to be sector specific, since processes both of keeping jobs and recruitment varies across industries.

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	Vedeler & Mossige: Barrierer for karriere. In Tøssebro (Ed.) Funksjonshemming; politikk, hverdagsliv og arbeidsliv (Disability, politics, everyday life and working life) Forthcoming 2009, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget
Key findings from the research:	Shows that some young disabled people are discouraged from seeking employment by officers at employment offices.
Comment or assessment:	Indicates that the official activation policies do not always guide the practices of street level bureaucrats.

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	Hansen: IKT – et underutnyttet potensial for et inkluderende arbeidsliv. In Tøssebro (Ed.) Funksjonshemming; politikk, hverdagsliv og arbeidsliv (Disability, politics, everyday life and working life) Forthcoming 2009, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget
Key findings from the research:	Shows that ICT is much underutilized as a tool to accommodate jobs for disabled people
Comment or assessment:	

Publication details (author, date, title, etc):	Molden, Wendelborg & Tøssebro (2009) Levekår blant personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne (Living conditions of people with impairments). Trondheim: NTNU Social Research
Key findings from the research:	Provides key findings on employment of disabled people based on the Statistics Norway survey of the living conditions of disabled people in Norway. Key findings are referred to above.
Comment or assessment:	