



## **2.12 Norway**

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### 2.12.1 Introduction

The Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Disabled People, FFO is the co-operative body of disabled peoples' organisations in Norway. The 55 organisations that make up FFO have more than 250 000 individual members representing approximately 90% of Disabled people organised in Norway. FFO's function is to promote common political action for disabled people's organisations. FFO's primary objective is to allow disabled people to participate on equal terms in society.

### 2.12.2 User participation– Some principles

*- User participation is a necessary precondition to realise human rights and develop a society that ensures equality and participation for everybody.*

(FFO Action plan 1996-99)

In equality and participation lies a democratic right to take part and have influence. In today's Norway disabled people are discriminated as a consequence of a lack of adaptation in society – with reduced possibilities to development and participation as a consequence.

Simply spoken, user participation is to let those, who are affected by a decision, take part in the decision-making – that those who are affected by a decision should have an influence on the decision-making process. We are talking about an interrelation between human beings. By practising user participation we are entering a learning process providing us with experiences and development of new ideas, new knowledge and new attitudes. A user may be defined as one who receives or uses services from public authorities. In those cases where users themselves are not able to take care of their own rights as users, many people also include relatives as users. This may be the case e.g. for parents of disabled children.

The notion of user participation is not unequivocal: it encompasses *both* user representation from the organisations on behalf of the whole user group *and* participation by the single individual's ability to influence his or her own service provisions. The word itself is therefore often used in a different way by service



providers and users and is often understood in different ways in different circumstances, as well. When the service providers use the word, they often imply that the users are being consulted on what they think about the services they receive – a sort of marketing survey. When the users are asked what they associate with the word they often think about user participation as something more – a participation giving them real influence on which services are being offered them: How the services are made up and how they are delivered. User participation, both as influence and participation is to influence on different levels:

- On an individual level the users wish to influence on the shaping of their services in co-operation and dialogue with the service providers.
- On a service level the users wish to influence on the organisation of services in their environment together with those being responsible for the services.
- On a political level we, as users, wish to influence the politicians who determine the resource frameworks for the development of e.g. assistance and caretaking services.
- On a societal level we wish, as users, that the population at large had a clear idea of the needs and possibilities of disabled people.

In the Norwegian Federation of Organisations of Disabled People it is sometimes felt that user participation is regarded as problematic, when the representatives operate on the behalf of a user, or when the organisations try to operate on behalf of the majority of users. Words are used, like “professional users”, “quasi-users”, and “employed users” – which implies that the users’ representatives are not as legitimate or necessary in the process as the individual user. At best this is a misunderstanding. Users have – as all other citizens – the right to concentrate on their sphere of interest, the right to organise and to elect representatives to express their needs. User participation through organisations is primarily participation on the framework of the services – e.g. which services exist, how to organise the services etc. The organisations should participate in the work to make it possible for users and service providers to work in a satisfactory way on an individual level. The user should, however, also have the right to receive assistance from his or her organisation – and



to let him- or herself be represented by the organisation. In such cases the organisations step into the place of the user and should be treated as if the user himself was present. To disallow the representatives of the user group is to disallow the user himself. Often the result is the same – a less adapted service.

### 2.12.3 *On method*

The method used for compiling the Norwegian inventory has been search of primary and secondary literature sources, interviews with informants at various expert bodies in Norway -written and through telephone surveys, as well as use of sources already compiled by FFO.

The main methodological problem has been to summarise the vast literature available on the principle of user participation to focus it on the area concerned. In Norway each year a special forum for user participation e.g. exists, whence a report is made on philosophy and practice in user participation on a political and societal level. Much has also been produced on assistive technology and disabled people, as well as a range of national and international projects concerning these topics. The following must therefore be a summary of what in FFO's view are the most important facts on AT and user involvement in Norway.

FFO used a concentrated questionnaire in its telephone survey of relevant expert groups, asking the respondents about

- Their philosophy concerning user/consumer involvement in product research and development
- Practical implementation of this philosophy
- Critical evaluation of their policy towards the specific group of disabled people
- Ideas for improvement of the situation.

In addition to the results of this survey, written material from FFO's previous work on user participation has been added, as well as government produced material on the situation of disabled people and assistive technology in Norway.



An annex is provided in this document of useful addresses to be contacted in Norway for further information.

## 2.12.4 *The Norwegian experience*

The situation concerning involvement of disabled people in production of AT, rehabilitation and user involvement in Norway can be systematised into several levels.

### 2.12.4.1 **Governmental level**

The Norwegian government has through three planning periods produced Action Plans for Disabled People. The current Action Plan is spanning the period 1998-2000. These plans encompass the various ministries' activities and plans in the field of disability issues. Policy fields and initiatives are based on inputs from disabled peoples' organisations, according to the government. The organisations suggest areas that should be highlighted, ways of organising the activities and concrete projects. Not all of the proposed initiatives are followed up in the government's action plans. But meetings are held between the government and disabled peoples' organisations on an annual level. The organisations are involved in the implementation of governmental initiatives, and it is assumed that all projects under the auspices of the government shall involve user participation.<sup>1</sup>

**The Norwegian State Council on Disability, RfF**, is the Government's council on issues of importance to disabled people's living conditions. The purpose of the council is to advise the public authorities on the creation and implementation of disability policy. The council's activities are based on the fundamental view that persons with disabilities are entitled to full participation and equality in society, satisfactory living conditions and a sense of belonging

In the local environment. Among its objectives during the 1995-1999 period the council is a.o. working for the implementation of the measures in the Government's Action Plan, increased competence on technical measures and the adaptation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Regjeringens Handlingsplan for Funksjonshemmede 1998-2000, Sosial- og Helsedepartementet, Oslo 1997



environment for disabled people, as well as telecommunications and information technology.

#### 2.12.4.2 Industry level

Our survey has proved that many enterprises strive to ensure user participation in their product development work, but not following a systematic approach to such involvement. The principle of user participation is on average accepted by Norwegian producers, but systematic plans for involving user from an early stage in the research and development are not yet available.

However, user involvement is a principle that seems to be accepted on a case by case basis.

A report produced by the **University of Oslo, Centre for Technology and Human Values**<sup>2</sup> in 1996 showed, that producers of assistive technology have established well-functioning contacts with users' *representatives*, i.e. service providers, organisations, distribution centres for assistive technology etc., but more infrequently directly with the users themselves. The representatives collect the users' experiences and viewpoints and transmit them to the producers. Smaller producers often have some direct links to the individual users.

An attempt has been made to create a network for producers of assistive technology, but this was not a success.

Our survey shows that both producers of assistive technology and consultant bodies for producers of AT strive to involve disabled users when specific technology is being developed for a certain group, for instance people with sensory disabilities. When a technical aids is developed for telecommunication the Norwegian company ***Telenor Forskning og Utvikling***

(Telenor Research and Development) is developing a new service specifically for a group of e.g. deaf people, user participation is ensured by inviting representatives of this group. Telenor has for many years strived to ensure such involvement, but

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<sup>2</sup> Universitetet i Oslo: Senter for Teknologi og Menneskelige Verdier: "Informasjonsteknologi for funksjonshemmede. Bruker-producentsamarbeid for utvikling av tekniske hjelpemidler. TMV skriftserie 17/96



invariably excludes some groups of disabled people as there is no *systematic* approach to disability and product development. This company is currently working on providing a cheque-list towards specific of user-groups, but this has not been generalised.

Some producers of assistive technology do not practice direct user involvement in evaluation or development of their products, but get infrequently responses from their distributors, who are in direct contact with users. Others get reports from service providers, like doctors, rehabilitation experts etc.

Organisations running projects on product development also involve user participation. These companies, like *SINTEF Unimed*, provide consulting services for developers of products for a.o. disabled people. This company differs between “user focused product development” and “user participation”, concentrating on the former. User participation involves the users in a project team during the development of a new product. User focused product development involves potential users as informants and testing persons giving their comments and information to the producers. This company regards the methods as successful in clarifying the demands of the users. The method used is establishment of workshops where user representatives are assisting in testing out and evaluating new products. However the selection of these users is not systematised, but takes place sometimes through contact with disabled peoples’ organisations, sometimes through one of the project partners, who take direct contact with users.

#### 2.12.4.3 Research level

It is difficult to give a comprehensive overview on all research projects in Norway involving user participation and product development. The following is meant to give some samples of research projects taking place in the Norwegian environment. For further information, we refer to the contacts listed in the annex enclosed.

Several research projects in Norway have aimed at developing methods for evaluating the quality and usefulness of assistive technology. In 1995-1996 SINTEF Unimed e.g. carried out two research projects: on methods for evaluating the utility if



assistive technology for disabled people<sup>3</sup>, and on cost-utility methods for distribution of technical aids<sup>4</sup>. A questionnaire was developed for evaluating individual utility of AT and the projects showed the necessity of performing such user surveys. The projects gave proof that there are differences between the information given by users and service providers, a.o. on the choice of AT of vital importance for the users, the relevance of AT for the activities to be performed, and changes in the life situation for the users resulting from the technical aids provided.

The *Delta-senteret* was established in 1997, to build up an expert network and promote increased co-operation among various scientific groups, collect and disseminate information and initiate projects to make society more accessible for disabled people and contribute towards increased societal participation among disabled people. Through what today is offered of assistive technology, totally new possibilities arise to meet the challenges implicit in establishing a platform for competence networking. What kind of technological infrastructure and information structure is relevant, the Centre maintains, is dependent on needs, that is, what kind of co-operation is needed between the parties concerned. The Centre will work on information technology for disabled people and adaptation of rehabilitation and work places a.o. through technical measures. An information technology network will be established for development and improving of IT for disabled people. The network should be accessible for users and family as well as experts within health, education and research. User participation will be an overall principle both concerning choice of objectives and priorities, the building of scientific networks and in practical work on the chosen fields of activities.

#### 2.12.4.4 Organizational level

One of the main objectives for the interest organisations of disabled people in Norway is to increase user participation for disabled people in all aspects of society; on political, economic and social levels. **The Norwegian Federation of**

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<sup>3</sup> SINTEF Unimed Rehab: Utprøving av metoder for å måle nytte innen hjelpemiddelformidling. Rapport STF78 A96401, March 1996

<sup>4</sup> SINTEF Unimed Rehab: Resultatmåling av hjelpemiddelformidling; videreutvikling og pilottesting. Rapport STF78 A96406, September 1996.



**Organisations of Disabled People** has established as part of its long-term programme that “ technical aids and solutions will be decisive for many disabled people in a working situation, and correct use of these will mean better work opportunities for disabled people. FFO believes that all public institutions and offices should require all technical equipment adapted for use by disabled people”.

#### **2.12.4.5 The FunkWeb project**

One example of projects for increasing user participation in the process of shaping new working places through the use of assistive technology, to increase employment for disabled people in Norway. FunkWeb is a recently founded organisation, which is fully owned by FFO. Within a commercial framework, the aim is to create workplaces for disabled people.

FunkWeb will offer services, assistance and training based on technological competence and consumer-based experiences to member organisations, individual users, relatives, public authorities and businesses. In addition, FunkWeb will offer a development programme for disabled people through a three-year computer-training programme to qualify them for work in private enterprises. The education is a combination of theory and practical work.

FunkWeb should be known as a competent multi media actor, both among FFO's own member organisations and externally in the market.

The cost of the above mentioned jobs will mainly be covered through public employment subsidies. The objective is that persons participating in sheltered employment measures will, within a period of three years, be able to acquire a professional education. FunkWeb is to be an interactive and project-based organisation where professional foundations are developed, in which all the employees belong. It is a central point of the organisation that a project leader base exists, co-ordinating the interactive projects via video communication, E-mail etc., and it must consist of people who can operate in customer meetings. What regards geographical location, all other employees, after a period of three years, will be able to take a professional education.



FunkWeb is an interactive and project-based organisation where professional bases are developed, in which all the employees belong. A central element of the organisation is a project leader group, co-ordinating the interactive projects via video communication, E-mail etc. As for geographical location, all other employees can be spread around in virtual offices (home offices) as distant working places, combined with a physical office. Project meetings will be organised regularly in an office or through videoconferences.

### **2.12.5      *Useful addresses and contacts in Norway****Telenor Forskning og Utvikling*

#### **Instituttveien 23**

N-2007 Kjeller

Norway

Tel: + 47 63 848 400

#### **National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO)**

P.O. Box 173

N-1324 Lysaker

Norway

Tel: +47 67 599 600

Fax: +47 67 531 948

#### **Human Factors Solutions**

Øvre Voll gate 7

N-0158 Oslo

Norway

Tel: +47 22 42 18 57

Fax: + 47 22 42 32 42

#### **SINTEF Unimed**

P.O. Box 124 Blindern

N-0314 Oslo

Norway

Tel: +47 22 06 73 00



Fax: +47 22 06 79 09

**SINTEF Unimed**

Innovation in the Health Sector

Olav Kyrres g. 3

N-7034 Trondheim

Norway

Tel: +47 73 59 25 90

**Access AS**

P.O. Box 430

N-2301 Hamar

Norway

Tel: +47 62 51 85 00

**Actuator AS**

P.O. Box 408

N-2801 Gjøvik

Norway

**Alu Rehab AS**

Nikkelveien 10

N-4300 Sandnes

Norway

Tel: +47 51 68 18 88

**AS Ergomekanikk**

Fokserødveien 31

N-3233 Sandefjord

Norway

Tel: 33 47 00 80



**Braillo Norge AS**

P.O. Box 647

N-3101 Tønsberg

Norway

Tel: +47 33 31 66 22

**Falck Produkter**

P.O. Box 123

N-4951 Risør

Norway

Tel: +47 37 15 18 66

**Hepro AS**

Øvermoan 9

N-8250 Rognan

Norway

Tel: +47 75 69 11 66

**Innherred Produkter**

P.O. Box 173

Levanger

Norway

Tel: +47 74 08 20 00

**Jacsy AS**

Ytre Birkeland

N-4200 Sauda

Norway

Tel: + 47 74 08 20 00

**Pikomed AS Assistent Systemer**

P.O. Box 25

N-4930 Vegårshei

Norway

Tel: +47 37 16 96 80



**Handicare AS**

Øvre Måsan 10C  
N-1370 Asker  
Norway  
Tel: +47 66 79 23 00

**Seatronic-gruppen**

P.O. Box 749  
N-1501 Moss  
Norway  
Tel: +47 69 27 64 30

**Totenprodukter AS**

P.O. Box 428  
N-2801 Gjøvik  
Norway  
Tel: +47 61 17 22 32

**J. Jørgensen AS**

Tvetenveien 156  
N-0671 Oslo  
Norway  
Tel: +47 22 27 45 20

**Delta-senteret**

Grenseveien 32a  
N-0571 Oslo  
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Tel: +47 22 80 99 00  
Fax: +47 22 80 99 11  
E-mail: [delta@delta.oslo.no](mailto:delta@delta.oslo.no)



**Norwegian State Council on Disability, RFF**

P.O. Box 8192 Dep  
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Tel: +47 22 24 85 57  
Fax: +47 22 24 95 79

**Norwegian Ministry for Health and Social Affairs**

P.O. Box 8011 Dep  
N-0030 Oslo  
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Tel: +47 22 24 85 61  
Fax: +47 22 24 27 66

**University of Oslo**

Centre for Technology and Human Values  
Gaustadalleen 21  
N-0371 Oslo  
Norway  
Tel: +47 22 95 88 30

**Norwegian National Insurance Administration (Rikstrygdeverket)**

Drammensveien 60  
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