



Employment of persons with disabilities: an assessment of the effectiveness of national policies

Norway

State of affairs November 2024

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers
Directorate D — Equality and Non-Discrimination
Unit D4 — Disability

*European Commission
B-1049 Brussels*

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Norway

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This report has been developed under Contract VC/2024/0034 with the European Commission.

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Manuscript completed in May 2025

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1 Executive summary

1.1 Analysis of the employment situation of persons with disabilities, including the disability employment gap

At the time of writing, one in five of the population between 20 and 66 years of age are outside employment, education or employment schemes. These numbers have been quite stable since 2012. The level of employment, at 80.9 % in 2022, is a little higher than the target of 78 % in the EU strategy.

The gender differences remain stable, with fewer women than men in employment: for women, the rate is between 80.2 % and 83.7 %, while for men, it is between 76.2 % and 78.0 %.

The disability employment gap has usually been around 32 % to 35 % of the population. In 2023, it was at its lowest level since 2014, at 28.7 %.

There are no clear effects from the measures that have been taken on the percentage of persons with disabilities in employment.

1.2 National targets for the employment of persons with disabilities, including monitoring of the targets

There are two current Government action plans regarding disability equality, both of which were produced by the previous Government: one action plan on universal design, and one on equality and non-discrimination in general for persons with disabilities.

In a white paper presented to Parliament on 6 September 2024, the Government set a target for 82 % of people between the ages of 20 and 64 to be employed by 2030, and a target of 83 % by 2035.¹ The only previous numerical goal related to the employment of persons with disabilities has been discontinued: this target, known as the joint inclusion effort (*inkluderingsdugnad*), aimed for 5 % of all newly recruited employees in the national public administration to have a disability or similar. The reason given for discontinuation was that the target had only reached 2.5 %.

Regular statistics are provided by Statistics Norway and the Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav). Monitoring of the implementation of action plans is performed by the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir). An overview of knowledge, including statistics, is also provided by Bufdir, and is publicly available.

1.3 Identification and evaluation of employment measures over the last decade

The work assessment scheme (AAP) is the main welfare scheme for assisting persons with disabilities to obtain or retain employment. This may include several types of assistance, such as healthcare, work assessment, work training etc. It came into being in 2010 and has undergone several reforms, mainly concerning time limits for participation.

¹ Norwegian Government, 'Meld.St.33 En forsterket arbeidslinje' (White paper to the Parliament, Meld.St.33 A strengthened work norm).

From 2009 to 2024, the number of persons under 30 years of age who receive a disability benefit has doubled. Research attributes this mainly to stricter time limits in the Work Assessment Scheme by the Labour and Welfare Administration, which is the most important welfare measure for increasing employment among persons with disabilities, long-term health issues, etc.

Evaluation and research have shown that there is a lack of individual assessment and of grounds given for the decisions made by the Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav). Access to justice is an issue of concern. While the timescale for assessments has become shorter, there are no clear indications of any positive effects of the AAP scheme or its reforms.

The main measure with regard to employers is known as the active equality efforts. This is, in practice, a simpler version of the risk management procedure in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive. Since 2018, it has been mandatory for employers with more than 50 employees, and for all employers in the public sector. There is also a duty to issue a statement in the annual report; however, except for the accountant verifying that there is such a statement, there is no enforcement of this duty.

The 'Letter of Intent regarding a more inclusive working life' drawn up between the Government, the trade unions and the employers' organisations (the IA Agreement) is the main measure aimed at coordinating the efforts of employers, trade unions and the public administration. From its beginning in 2001, it has had three main targets. The target of increased employment for persons with disabilities, which had been in place from the first such agreement in 2001, was discontinued. The two other main targets – to reduce the level of health-related absence from work, and to increase the average age of retirement – were retained, as they had included numerical targets and the efforts to meet them had been more extensive.

1.4 Future plans and overall assessment

A lack of participation and research on the perspectives of the people concerned appears to be a general feature, whether in relation to adapting welfare schemes to the individual, involvement in risk assessment or negotiations on the IA Agreement, or research on all these schemes in general. A white paper was presented to the Parliament in September 2024 concerning measures for increasing the employment of persons with disabilities. So far, however, the measures have had limited effect, and the white paper is unlikely to change that.

What might have a significant impact, as it addresses a main barrier, is the current investigation of costs and legislation for universal design of ICT in the workplace.

1.5 Recommendations on effective target setting and monitoring

Recommendations for Norway:

- The perspectives of persons with disabilities and/or long-term health issues need to be included systematically.

- Bias and structural discrimination needs to be addressed through proactive measures, and these must have clear targets and must be monitored efficiently. This includes employers in both the private and public sector, as well as in the public administration.
- Access to justice for persons with disabilities must be improved, including effective remedies both in individual cases and regarding proactive efforts.

Recommendation for the European Commission: Provide clear duties and guidelines for enterprises reporting on social sustainability in accordance with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) regarding different types of disability, building on the UN CRPD.

2 Analysis of the employment situation of persons with disabilities, including the disability employment gap

2.1 Overall employment rate and trends

The Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) publishes statistics and analyses on equality issues, including for disabilities,² based on the labour market survey³ and the living conditions survey,⁴ both of which are provided by Statistics Norway (SSB). While the latter is part of EU-SILC and uses its definition of disability, the former is based on the respondents' answer to the question whether they have a physical or mental health condition of a more permanent character that constitutes barriers or limitations in their daily life.

The most up-to-date analysis of trends regarding the employment of persons with disabilities⁵ is based on numbers from 2020. The tables below show the employment rate of the population aged 20-66, by registered gender (%). This includes persons who worked at least one hour per week when the survey was undertaken.

Table 1: Employment rate of population aged 20-64, by sex⁶, in percentage

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	79.9	79.9	79.6	79.1	78.6	78.3	79.2	79.5	78.8	80	80.9
Women	77.3	77.1	77.1	76.7	76.7	76.2	76.5	76.8	76.5	77.5	78
Men	82.4	82.1	81.9	81.3	80.4	80.2	81.7	82	81.1	82.3	83.7

Source: EUROSTAT, EU-LFS (online data code: lfsa_ergan)

Data extracted on 03/09/2024

At the time of writing, one in five of the population between 20 and 66 years of age are outside employment, education or employment schemes.⁷ These numbers have been quite stable since 2012; still, the level of employment, at 80.9 % in 2022, is a little higher than the target of 78 % in the EU strategy.

The gender differences remain stable, with fewer women than men in employment: the rate for women is between 80.2 % and 83.7 %, while for men, it is between 76.2 % and 78.0 %.

2.2 Description of the employment rate of persons with disabilities and trends

While the number of persons employed in the general population remain stable, there has been more variation regarding the employment of persons with disabilities. The number of women reporting a disability is a little higher than the number of men.⁸

² Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) (2024), '[Statistikk og analyse, Funksjonsnedsettelse, Arbeid](#)' (Statistics and Analysis, Disability, Employment).

³ Statistics Norway, '[Arbeidsmarkedsundersøkelsen](#)' (Labour market survey).

⁴ Part of EU-SILC reporting duties.

⁵ Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) (2024), '[Funksjonsnedsettelse \(Disability\)](#)'.

⁶ EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS).

⁷ Statistics Norway (2024), '[18 prosent i yrkesaktiv alder er utenfor](#)' (18 per cent of persons of working age are outside [employment]).

⁸ Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) (2024), '[Statistikk nedsatt funksjonsevne](#)' (Statistics on disability).

2.3 Description of the disability employment gap and trends

Table 2: Disability employment gap by sex⁹, in percentage

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Total	32.2	35.5	34.9	33.5	35.5	32.6	34.5	34.3	33.1	28.7
Women	29.3	36.6	33.4	29.7	33.5	29.0	32.4	33.2	33.4	24.8
Men	35	32.1	35.3	37.3	37.3	36.2	35.6	33.3	30.1	32

Source: EUROSTAT, EU-SILC (online data code: hlth_dlm200)

Data extracted on 03/09/2024

As can be seen in Table 2 above, the disability employment gap has usually been around 32 % to 35 % of the population. In 2023, it was at its lowest level since 2014, at 28.7 %.

The gap has most often been smaller for women than men, but this has varied: in 2021, the numbers were almost the same (33.2 % for women and 33.3 % for men), while in 2015 and in 2022, the gap was larger for women. In 2023, it was at its lowest level for women since 2023, at 24.8 %, while the lowest level for men was in 2022, at 30.1 %.

According to the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs,¹⁰ the coordinating Government agency for disability equality and non-discrimination, the following trends can be seen regarding the employment of persons with disabilities in Norway:

- the level of employment of persons with disabilities has remained stable since 2012; and
- the number of women outside employment is a little higher than the number of men, at a little over 30 %, and this has remained stable since 2012. Correspondingly, more women than men report having a disability.

Several research studies show that the type of disability impacts the level of employment.¹¹ These studies operate with different definitions of disability, but some trends are consistent throughout all of them:¹²

- those who have a disability from a young age are less often employed;
- persons with mental illness, cognitive disabilities or mobility disabilities are less often employed;
- persons with allergies, diabetes or auditory disabilities are more often employed, but only if the disability is acquired later in life;
- if someone is employed when they acquire their disability, this increases their chance of being employed; and
- the employment gap diminishes with increased levels of education.

⁹ Statistics Norway, EU-SILC, <https://www.ssb.no/en/innrapportering/undersokelse-om-levekar>.

¹⁰ Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir), 'Statistikk og analyse, funksjonsnedsettelse, Arbeidsdeltakelse for personer med funksjonsnedsettelse' (Statistics and analyses, Disability, Employment of persons with disabilities).

¹¹ Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir), 'Personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne, Arbeid og sysselsetting' (Persons with disabilities, Work and employment).

¹² Kittelsaa, A., Wik, S.E., and Tøssebro, J. (2015), [Levekår for personer med personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne. Fellestrekk og variasjon](#) (Living conditions for persons with a disability: common traits and variations, report 2015) NTNU Samfunnsforskning.

2.4 Employment of persons with disabilities in ‘sheltered workshops’

Sheltered workplaces, and similar employment in ordinary workplaces, are an option for persons who receive a disability benefit.¹³ This entails having a permanent position with an ordinary employment contract,¹⁴ while receiving a disability benefit. The employer may pay some wages, up to a maximum threshold.¹⁵

There are two types of long-term accommodated workplaces: in ordinary workplaces and in sheltered workshops. The trend, as can be seen in Table 3 below, is an increasing number of persons in such work, from a total of 8 737 in 2012 to 12 633 in 2023. Compared with the total population of the same age group, this constitutes 0.5 % and 0.7 % respectively, i.e. a very small proportion of the population.

The numbers are small, so it is necessary to look at the absolute numbers to get a good picture of gender differences. There is a clear trend in that fewer women than men are in such work, and their levels of employment remain around 60 % of the levels for men. The result is approximately the same, whether the work is in a sheltered workshop or in an ordinary workplace. This is contrary to the general trend, whereby more women than men have a long-term, reduced ability to work, as described in Section 2.2 and 2.5.

There are no disaggregated data regarding types of disability for persons in this type of employment.

Table 3: Accommodated workplaces, absolute numbers¹⁶

	Women	Women	Men	Men	
	Long-term accommodated work at ordinary workplaces	Long-term accommodated work in ‘sheltered workshops’	Long-term accommodated work at ordinary workplaces	Long-term accommodated work in ‘sheltered workshops’	Number of persons in total
2012	400	3 060	591	4 686	8 737
2013	464	3 119	681	4 767	9 031
2014	516	3 178	775	4 785	9 254
2015	575	3 162	856	4 827	9 420
2016	573	3 129	899	4 895	9 496
2017	608	3 118	981	4 930	9 637
2018	672	3 137	1 107	5 105	10 021
2019	798	3 262	1 304	5 287	10 651
2020	936	3 419	1 536	5 437	11 328
2021	1053	3 454	1 727	5 566	11 800
2022	1 177	3 496	1 971	5 650	12 294
2023	1 305	3 510	2 139	5 679	12 633

¹³ Labour and Welfare Administration, ‘[Statistikk, Varig tilrettelagt arbeid](#)’ (Statistics on long-term accommodated workplaces).

¹⁴ Labour and Welfare Administration, ‘[Statistikk, Varig tilrettelagt arbeid](#)’ (Statistics on long-term accommodated workplaces).

¹⁵ Employment Measure Regulations of 11 December 2015, No. 1598 ([Forskrift FOR-2015-12-11-1598 om arbeidsmarkedstiltak \(tiltaksforskriften\)](#)).

¹⁶ Labour and Welfare Administration, provided on request in an email of 5 September 2024.

Table 4: Amount of persons at accommodated workplaces as a share of total population in the same age group (20 – 64), percentage¹⁷

	Women	Women	Men	Men	Total
	Long-term accommodated work at ordinary workplaces	Long-term accommodated work in 'sheltered workshops'	Long-term accommodated work at ordinary workplaces	Long-term accommodated work in 'sheltered workshops'	
2012	0	0.2	0	0.3	0.5
2013	0	0.2	0	0.3	0.5
2014	0	0.2	0	0.3	0.5
2015	0	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.5
2016	0	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.6
2017	0	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.6
2018	0	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.6
2019	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.6
2020	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.7
2021	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.7
2022	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.7
2023	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.3	0.7

2.5 Additional national indicators / data regarding employment of persons with disabilities

In a 2020 survey,¹⁸ 28 % of persons with disabilities outside employment wanted to work.

The Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) provides its own statistics based on types of welfare schemes. The tables below concern persons 'with reduced ability to work', absolute numbers and percentage of the population in the same age group (20-64).

¹⁷ Email from Christian Ruff, Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav), Section for Statistics and Analysis, dated 5 September 2024.

¹⁸ Statistics Norway (2022), '[108,000 personer med nedsatt funksjonsevne var sysselsatt i fjor](#)' (108 000 persons with a disability were employed last year).

Tables 5 and 6: Persons with reduced ability to work (absolute numbers and percentage of total population in same age group)¹⁹**Absolute numbers**

Year	Women	Men	Total
2012	116 065	90 266	206 331
2013	114 958	88 850	203 808
2014	111 008	87 152	198 160
2015	109 215	87 113	196 328
2016	106 850	85 877	192 727
2017	106 046	85 189	191 235
2018	101 016	81 218	182 234
2019	96 580	78 905	175 485
2020	97 691	80 539	178 230
2021	103 817	85 431	189 248
2022	107 978	86 695	194 673
2023	114 191	90 137	204 328

Percentage of population

Year	Women	Men	Total
2012	8	5.9	13.9
2013	7.8	5.7	13.5
2014	7.4	5.6	13
2015	7.3	5.5	12.8
2016	7	5.4	12.4
2017	6.9	5.3	12.2
2018	6.6	5	11.6
2019	6.3	4.9	11.2
2020	6.3	4.9	11.2
2021	6.7	5.2	11.9
2022	6.9	5.3	12.2
2023	7.2	5.4	12.6

The term 'reduced ability to work' is defined in Section 14a of the Act on the Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) of 16 June 2006,²⁰ and includes persons who, after a work ability assessment, are considered to be in need of long-term assistance to obtain or retain their employment.²¹

Most people in this group receive a work assessment allowance (AAP), which is one of the three main measures described in Section 4.²² Persons who receive a disability benefit, either in part or fully, and who do not need assistance from Nav to obtain (more) work or to retain their job, are not included in these statistics. Persons with a disability who work full time and do not need assistance from Nav are also not included in these statistics.

It should be noted that persons who are considered to have an ability to work of 51 % or more at the moment of entry into the scheme do not qualify for the work assessment allowance or the disability benefit.²³

The total has remained fairly stable since 2012, with a tiny decrease in the percentage of the population, from 5.9 % in 2012 to 5.4 % in 2023. Again, the numbers are consistently higher for women.

¹⁹ Email from Christian Ruff, Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav), Section for Statistics and Analysis, dated 5 September 2024.

²⁰ Act on the Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) of 16 June 2006, No. 20 ([Lov av 16. juni 2006 nr. 20 om arbeids- og velferdsforvaltningen](#)).

²¹ Nossen, J.P. (2023), '[Tiltaksdeltakere med nedsatt arbeidsevne – hvor går de etterpå?](#)' (Participants in employment schemes, who have a reduced ability to work - where do they go afterwards?), *Arbeid og velferd*, No. 2-2023.

²² Nossen, J.P. (2023).

²³ National Insurance Act, sections [11-5](#) and [12-17](#) (in Norwegian).

The Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) reports, however, a high increase among young persons receiving a disability benefit. In 2009, before the work assessment scheme and corresponding benefit (described in Subsection 4.1.1.) came into being, there were only 11 567 people on disability benefits below 30 years old.²⁴ The number increased to 12 316 in 2015, and reached 22 083 in July 2024.²⁵ This means that it has doubled in 15 years. Several studies highlight that young persons may often be in complex situations, and that a disability benefit may appear as a simple solution for the case worker involved.²⁶

In a 2021 survey, Statistics Norway found that, of 107 000 persons with disabilities who were in employment, 24 000 persons (22.4 %) needed greater provision of reasonable accommodation than they were receiving.²⁷ Per 1 000 persons in employment, 28 women and 20 men reported receiving accommodation at work. Among those not receiving accommodation, but reporting a need for such, there were twice as many women as men. Among those receiving accommodation, the differences between men and women were small. Women as much as men reported needing greater accommodation at work. Of the total who said that they needed greater accommodation, more than twice as many (about 11 000 persons) were not already receiving any accommodation, while the remainder (around 5 000 persons) needed greater accommodation than they were already receiving.²⁸

²⁴ Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) (2009), 'Mottakere av uføreytelser, etter kjønn og alder' ([Statistics on recipients of a disability benefit according to age and registered gender 2000-2009](#)).

²⁵ Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) (2024), 'Mottakere av uføretrygd, etter kjønn og alder' ([Statistics on recipients of a disability benefit according to age and registered gender 2015-2024](#)).

²⁶ For example, Bragstad, T. (2023), 'Unge i NAV: Fra arbeidsavklaringspenger til uføretrygd' (Young persons and the Labour and Welfare Administration: from work assessment benefit to disability benefit), *Arbeid og velferd*, No. 2-2023 and Myhre, A. (2021), 'Hvordan påvirker en kortere maksimal varighet på AAP overgang til arbeid og uføretrygd?' (How does a shorter maximum time on employment assessment benefit impact the transition to employment or disability benefit?), *Arbeid og velferd*, No. 1-2021.

²⁷ Statistics Norway, 'Arbeidskraftundersøkelsen' (Workforce analysis).

²⁸ Statistics Norway, 'Arbeidskraftundersøkelsen' (Workforce analysis).

3 National targets for the employment of persons with disabilities, including monitoring of the targets

3.1 National targets for employment of persons with disabilities

There are two current Government action plans regarding disability equality, both of which were produced by the previous Government (a coalition led by the Conservative Party): one action plan on universal design,²⁹ and one on equality and non-discrimination for persons with disabilities.³⁰

While both action plans have been followed up by the current Labour-led Government coalition, the only numerical goal regarding the employment of persons with disabilities has been discontinued. The target, which was known as a 'joint inclusion effort' (*inkluderingsdugnad*), was that 5 % of all newly recruited employees in the national, public administration should have either a disability or a so-called 'blank space in their CV' – a period where they had neither studied or worked, or similar, that had left them disadvantaged in the labour market.³¹

The 2021 evaluation report concluded that the effort should be continued, and that it had achieved results, even if the target of 5 % of new hires had not been reached. The only reason given for abandoning the target was that the percentage of new hires had never reached 2.5 %.³²

The action plan on universal design³³ mentions two measures regarding the universal design of workplaces: 1) the provision of sufficient financial and human resources to ensure access to interpreters for persons with auditory disabilities also outside working hours; and 2) an analysis of possible consequences and costs of stricter rules regarding universal design of information and communication technology (ICT) and the physical environment in the workplace.³⁴ The latter was later narrowed down to universal design of ICT only.³⁵

There were some indicators on the employment of persons with disabilities in the IA Agreement 2010-2013, as described in Subsection 4.1.2, but there were none in any

²⁹ Norwegian Government (2021), [Bærekraft og like muligheter – et universelt utformet Norge \(2021-2025\)](#) (Sustainability and equal opportunities – a universally designed Norway 2021-2025).

³⁰ Norwegian Government (2020), [Et samfunn for alle – Likestilling, demokrati og menneskerettigheter. Regjeringens handlingsplan for likestilling av personer med funksjonsnedsettelse 2020–2025](#) (A society for everyone – Equality, democracy and human rights. Government action plan for equality of persons with disabilities 2020-2025).

³¹ Norwegian Government (2020), [Et samfunn for alle – Likestilling, demokrati og menneskerettigheter. Regjeringens handlingsplan for likestilling av personer med funksjonsnedsettelse 2020–2025](#) (A society for everyone – Equality, democracy and human rights. Government action plan for equality of persons with disabilities 2020-2025), pp. 39-40.

³² This has not been explicitly announced, except for a statement in a newspaper article: '[Regjeringen avlyser dugnaden for folk med hull i CV-en](#)' ('The Government cancels the joint inclusion effort'), *Aftenposten*, 2 November 2023.

³³ Norwegian Government (2021), [Bærekraft og like muligheter – et universelt utformet Norge \(2021-2025\)](#) (Sustainability and equal opportunities – a universally designed Norway 2021-2025).

³⁴ Norwegian Government (2021), [Bærekraft og like muligheter – et universelt utformet Norge \(2021-2025\)](#) (Sustainability and equal opportunities – a universally designed Norway 2021-2025).

³⁵ Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) (2023), '[Status på tiltak i regjeringens handlingsplan for universell utforming](#)' (Status of the action plan on universal design).

later versions of this agreement.³⁶ The target of including more persons with a disability was abandoned entirely in the latest version, from 2019.³⁷

3.2 Indicators to monitor the targets

Statistics are provided regularly from both Statistics Norway and the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) on the employment of persons with disabilities or on various benefits respectively. While the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) publishes relevant statistics regarding disability equality, including from these sources, the statistics are, for the most part, not described in connection to targets in action plans, but rather as general descriptions of the status quo.³⁸ These statistics do not systematically include different types of disability.

Regarding the action plan on universal design, an analysis of existing legislation on universal design of ICT at the workplace has been finalised, but not published.³⁹ According to Bufdir, a cost / benefit analysis should be published in 2024.⁴⁰ No measures have been taken to fulfil the action plan's aim of increasing access to interpreters for persons with auditory disabilities, nor are any such measures planned.⁴¹ A few other measures were mentioned in this action plan, such as simplified access to financial support for inclusion. Indicators in connection to the action plans consist mainly of checklists for the implementation of measures. An analysis of the implementation of the joint inclusion effort (*inkluderingsdugnaden*) was performed by the coordinating agency in 2021, three years after its implementation started.⁴²

3.3 Timeline of monitoring

Monitoring, and the timeline for it, tends to vary. While the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) states that it provides annual updates to the action plan on universal design, updates to the general action plan on equality for persons with disabilities are not that regular, with the latest update being from 31 December 2022.⁴³

³⁶ Norwegian Government (2024), 'Tidligere avtaleperioder' ([Previous IA Agreements](#)).

³⁷ Norwegian Government (2019), '[Letter of Intent regarding a more inclusive working life](#)' (The IA Agreement) (*IA-avtalen*).

³⁸ Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir), '[Statistikk og analyse. Personer med funksjonsnedsettelse](#)' (Statistics and analyses: Persons with disabilities).

³⁹ Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) (2023), '[Status på tiltak i regjeringens handlingsplan for universell utforming](#)' (Status of the action plan on universal design).

⁴⁰ Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) (2023), '[Status på tiltak i regjeringens handlingsplan for universell utforming](#)' (Status of the action plan on universal design).

⁴¹ Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) (2023), '[Status på tiltak i regjeringens handlingsplan for universell utforming](#)' (Status of the action plan on universal design).

⁴² Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ) (2021), '[Evalueringsdugnaden i det statlige tariffområdet](#)' (Evaluation of the joint inclusion effort within the sphere of the governmental tariff agreement).

⁴³ Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) (2023), '[Status på tiltak i regjeringens handlingsplan for universell utforming](#)' (Status of the action plan on universal design) and [Et samfunn for alle - Likestilling, demokrati og menneskerettigheter. Regjeringens handlingsplan for likestilling av personer med funksjonsnedsettelse 2020-2025. Status for tiltak per 31.12.2022](#) (A society for everyone – Equality, democracy and human rights. Government action plan for equality of persons with disabilities 2020-2025: status of implementation 31 December 2022).

The joint inclusion effort, with its target of 5 % of new hires in the public sector having a disability or a 'blank space in their CV', was launched in 2018⁴⁴ and evaluated in 2021.⁴⁵

Statistics Norway provides monthly statistics on employment and the workforce.⁴⁶ It also provides annual statistics on living conditions for persons with disabilities.⁴⁷

The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) publishes quarterly statistics on people receiving work assessment allowance (AAP),⁴⁸ and monthly statistics on disability benefit,⁴⁹ as well as quarterly updates on persons with a reduced ability to work (described in Section 2.5).

3.4 Evaluation of targets

The joint effort for inclusion in the public administration, with its target of 5 % of new employees having a disability or a 'blank space in their CV', was evaluated by the Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ)⁵⁰ in a report published in 2021.⁵¹ The main findings were as follows:

- Government agencies had solid knowledge about the inclusion effort and worked actively to recruit more persons from the target groups.
- During the past three years, there had been a significant increase in the number of those recruited from the target groups.
- Few of the Government agencies had reached the target of 5 %.
- Managers reported satisfaction with the measures taken by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development; measures by the Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) and the trainee programme were considered important to increase the level of recruitment.
- Managers also expressed a need for more measures, such as financial support.

The Agency also provided the following recommendations:

- The active effort for inclusion should be maintained through clear signals from the management.

⁴⁴ Norwegian Government (2020), [Et samfunn for alle – Likestilling, demokrati og menneskerettigheter. Regjeringens handlingsplan for likestilling av personer med funksjonsnedsettelse 2020–2025](#) (A society for everyone – Equality, democracy and human rights: Government action plan for equality of persons with disabilities 2020-2025), pp. 39-40.

⁴⁵ Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ) (2021), ['Evalueringsav inkluderingsdugnaden i det statlige tariffområdet'](#) (Evaluation of the joint inclusion effort within the sphere of the governmental tariff agreement).

⁴⁶ Statistics Norway, ['Arbeidskraftundersøkelsen'](#) (Workforce analysis).

⁴⁷ Statistics Norway, ['Levekår hos personer med funksjonsnedsettelse'](#) (Living conditions for persons with disabilities).

⁴⁸ Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav), ['Mottakere av arbeidsavklaringspenger \(AAP\)'](#) (Recipients of work assessment allowance).

⁴⁹ Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav), ['Uføretrygd – månedsstatistikk'](#) (Disability benefit – Monthly statistics).

⁵⁰ Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ), ['About us'](#).

⁵¹ Norwegian Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ) (2021), ['Evalueringsav inkluderingsdugnaden i det statlige tariffområdet'](#) (Evaluation of the joint inclusion effort within the sphere of the governmental tariff agreement).

- Further development of guides and training materials from the Agency for Public and Financial Management (DFØ) should be developed.
- Awareness-raising and work on attitudes towards inclusion should be continued, including compiling a set of best practices.
- Civil society and applicants should, to a greater degree, be involved in the development of further measures.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud has mentioned the fact that a job applicant had to notify the employer about having a disability when applying for a job as an issue that needed particular attention in order to avoid its hampering the effectiveness of the measure.⁵²

The reports from the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) regarding the status of the various measures in the action plans systematically assess which targets have been met. While it is not uncommon for some targets to be revised, such as the target for assessing the consequences of stricter rules for universal design in the workplace, which was reduced to include only ICT, they are rarely abandoned. They function as both a coordination and monitoring unit within the Government, and systematically commission research and reports.

⁵² Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, '[Inkluderingsdugnad](#)' (A joint inclusion effort).

4 Identification and evaluation of employment measures over the last decade

4.1 Evaluation of national measures

In the following section, three measures will be described and assessed: one concerning help from the state to individuals; one focusing on employers' inclusion efforts; and one focusing on the coordination of efforts between employers, workers and the state.

There are numerous measures available, ranging from assistive devices to disability benefits, regarding assistance to individuals. Many of these measures may be part of the work assessment scheme and its corresponding benefit, AAP (*arbeidsavklaringspenger*). Since this scheme constitutes the main bridge – or sometimes a barrier – between employment and non-employment for persons with disabilities or health-related reduced ability to work, this will be the object of the analysis of measures aimed at supporting the individual.

The trade unions and employers' organisations play an important role when it comes to inclusion in the workplace. In Norway, there is a tripartite agreement between the Government, the trade unions and the employers' organisations on efforts to reduce the level of sick leave and promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities and health issues in the workplace.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (EADA),⁵³ in Section 26, contains duties similar to the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive regarding active equality efforts, including risk assessment; the development of risk-reducing measures; evaluation and adjustment of the efforts; and a duty to report on these efforts (Section 26a).

4.1.1 Measure 1: The work assessment scheme and allowance, AAP

If a person has a lasting disability that makes them unable to work for more than 50 % of a full-time position, they can receive a disability benefit.⁵⁴ This is a permanent benefit with no reporting duties, which is reduced only if they start earning more.

Before receiving such a benefit, one must go through a work assessment, which may include healthcare and a health assessment and/or various employment assessment or training schemes. Again, the person has to be unable to work for 50 % or more of a full-time position.⁵⁵

The work assessment scheme, AAP, was introduced on 1 March 2010 in an effort to consolidate a number of schemes into one, and to put a time limit on the assessment.⁵⁶ According to the white paper to the Parliament that first suggested this scheme,⁵⁷ it

⁵³ [Act of 16 June 2017, No. 51, relating to equality and a prohibition against discrimination](#) (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act), ([Lov av 16. juni 2017 om likestilling og forbud mot diskriminering](#) (*likestillings- og diskrimineringsloven*)).

⁵⁴ National Insurance Act, section [12-17](#) (in Norwegian).

⁵⁵ National Insurance Act, section [11-5](#) (in Norwegian).

⁵⁶ Norwegian Government (2006), '[St.meld. nr. 9 \(2006-2007\)](#)' (White paper to the Parliament).

⁵⁷ Norwegian Government (2006), '[St.meld. nr. 9 \(2006-2007\)](#)' (White paper to the Parliament).

was a key part of a broad effort by the Labour-led Government⁵⁸ to increase the level of employment among persons with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities or health issues may enter the scheme when they turn 18, and previous work experience is not required.⁵⁹ Most often, a person will have been on sick leave for the maximum of one year before entering the AAP scheme. During sick leave, a person receives full coverage of their wages, up to a maximum level.⁶⁰

In 2011, 117 900 persons, i.e. 5.4 % of the population (aged 18 to 67), were on the AAP scheme.⁶¹ By the end of 2019, the number had sunk to 114 893, i.e. 3.4 % of the population, before increasing again from 2020.⁶² By the end of 2023, there were 148 969 persons on the AAP scheme, i.e. 4.1 % of the population.⁶³

The percentage of persons aged below 30 on the scheme has remained stable in comparison with the general population of those in the same age group. Within this age group, however, there has been an increase in the percentage of young women (from 1 % to 2 % of the population below 20, and from 4 % to 5 % of the population of those aged 20-24), while the percentage of young men remains stable.⁶⁴ The main increase has been among persons above 60, from 2.8 % to 3.8 % of the population, with no gender differences.

The reasons for these variations are complex. Research points to changes in the scheme, as well as in the labour market, as the main factors discovered so far.⁶⁵

The scheme has undergone several reforms, the largest of which entered into force in January 2018. Until then, the maximum time for receiving the work assessment benefit was four years, with a possibility of extension, for example, if the person's health situation remained unstable.⁶⁶ The Conservative-led Government⁶⁷ introduced a stricter scheme, which set a time limit of three years with few exceptions, and a waiting period with no allowance for a year if the situation was not clarified within the three-year time frame.⁶⁸ Together with a closer follow-up of persons on work assessment

⁵⁸ Norwegian Government, [Regjeringen Støre](#) (The Støre Government).

⁵⁹ National Insurance Act, chapter 11 ([Folketrygdloven, kapittel 11](#)).

⁶⁰ National Insurance Act, Section 8-10 ([Folketrygdloven § 8-10](#)).

⁶¹ Bråthen, M. (2012), '[Arbeidsavklaringspenger - status ved utgangen av 2011](#)' (Work assessment allowance – status by the end of 2011), *Arbeid og velferd*, No. 1/2012, pp. 18-25.

⁶² Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav), [Arkiv: Mottakere av arbeidsavklaringspenger \(AAP\)](#) (Archive: Recipients of the work assessment allowance).

⁶³ Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav), [Arkiv: Mottakere av arbeidsavklaringspenger \(AAP\)](#) (Archive: Recipients of the work assessment allowance).

⁶⁴ Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav), '[Statistikk, Arbeidsavklaringspenger](#)' (Statistics, Work assessment allowance).

⁶⁵ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), '[Arbeidsavklaringspenger – en sammenstilling og oppsummering av kunnskap på området](#)' (The Work Assessment Allowance – An Overview and Summary of Existing Knowledge), AFI report No. 2024:11, p. 4.

⁶⁶ National Insurance Act, chapter 11, versions from 2010 to 2018.

⁶⁷ Norwegian Government, information on previous Governments, '[Erna Solberg's Government 16. October 2013–14. October 2021](#)'.

⁶⁸ Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion (2022), 'Høringsnotat om endringer i regelverket for Arbeidsavklaringspenger' ([Hearing regarding changes in the work assessment allowance, 21 January 2022](#)).

benefit, the aim was to increase the level of employment through increasing incentives to work and make the scheme more efficient.⁶⁹

The Work Research Institute (AFI) at Oslo Metropolitan University published a summary and review of research on the AAP scheme in May 2024, commissioned by the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion.⁷⁰ Its findings may be summarised as follows:

The number of persons receiving work assessment allowance depends on several factors, such as the labour market and levels of unemployment.⁷¹ Several studies raise the question whether there is an ongoing medicalisation of social issues, leading to increased exclusion from education and employment.⁷² Another key factor is how the various schemes are used at any given time. For example, persons who previously would have been on sick leave earlier have received work assessment allowance, while the total number of young persons in both schemes when viewed together has remained stable in comparison with the total population. It should be noted, however, that the number of young persons receiving a disability benefit has increased significantly, as described above, which is of interest regarding the effects of the scheme.

Factors that increase the probability of a person becoming a participant in the AAP scheme include experiences of poverty, sexual abuse and childhood traumas such as bullying or parents addicted to alcohol, in addition to greater mental and physical health issues.⁷³ Being born late in the year, as well as genetic factors, also influences the likelihood of receiving the AAP allowance. While more women participate in the scheme than men, the reasons behind this remain unclear.⁷⁴

Research on the effects of the AAP scheme has focused mainly on either the introduction of the scheme itself in 2010, or on the 2018 changes. The main conclusions⁷⁵ are that there are several indications that the reforms have had their intended effect to a certain degree – for example, there is a quicker assessment of people's ability to work. However, these effects seem to be small, and the findings are uncertain. Several studies have also found an increase in the number of young persons

⁶⁹ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (2016), '[Høringsnotat. Forslag til endringer i folketrygdloven kapittel 11 om arbeidsavklaringspenger](#)' (Hearing on proposed changes in the National Insurance Act, chapter 11).

⁷⁰ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024).

⁷¹ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), pp. 44-46.

⁷² See especially Markussen, S. and Røed, K. (2020), '[Bidrar medikalisering av ungdom til utstøtning fra skole og arbeidsliv?](#)' (Does medicalisation of young persons lead to increased exclusion from school and employment?), *Søkelys på arbeidslivet* 37(4), pp. 219-237, and Kann, I. C., and Sutterud, L. (2017), '[Utenforskap og trygdeordningenes rolle: sikkerhetsnett eller hvilepute](#)' (Exclusion and the role of welfare schemes: safety nets or cushions?), *Arbeid og velferd*, 3/2017, pp. 59-79.

⁷³ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), p. 58.

⁷⁴ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L., Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), p. 56.

⁷⁵ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), p. 49.

(aged 19 to 29) on a disability benefit as a consequence of the 2018 changes in particular.

The content of the AAP scheme is supposed to be adapted to the needs of each person. The Work Research Institute (AFI) found that the most frequently used measures within the scheme are medical treatment, work training schemes (*arbeidsrettede tiltak*) and part-time work.⁷⁶

AFI reports, however, that there are increased difficulties regarding access to justice and fulfilment of the rights of the participants in the AAP scheme. Of particular concern are standardised reasons given for decisions instead of de facto individual assessments, and several issues of concern regarding the complaints procedures.⁷⁷

One study found that case workers use language problems as a reason for concluding that a person should be on minimum social security allowance instead of participating in the AAP scheme.⁷⁸

The report points out a lack of information on how the persons concerned experienced the changes, as well as a lack of research from institutions other than the Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) itself⁷⁹ – and a lack of interdisciplinary research, especially research that includes health sciences.⁸⁰

The 2018 reform has been much criticised, and led to the founding in 2019 of a new civil society organisation called the AAP-movement.⁸¹ A focal point for criticism was the rule that people whose ability to work remained unclear after three years had to spend one year without an allowance before re-entering the AAP scheme, except if they had very serious medical conditions.⁸² The waiting year rule was removed in 2022.⁸³

Current criticism concerning the AAP scheme focuses on access to justice for persons with disabilities and health issues,⁸⁴ and the control regime for persons in difficult situations compared with the lack of sanctions for employers who do not fulfil their duties to provide reasonable accommodation.⁸⁵

⁷⁶ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), p. 59.

⁷⁷ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), pp. 51-53.

⁷⁸ Volckmar-Eeg, M. G. and Vassenden, A. (2022), 'Et flipperspill i velferdsstaten: Innlåsing av innvandrere med 'språkutfordringer' i NAV' (A Pinball Game in the Welfare State: The Locking in of Immigrants with 'Language Challenges' in NAV), *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning* 63(4), pp. 260-277.

⁷⁹ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), p. 49.

⁸⁰ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), p. 97.

⁸¹ The AAP movement, '[AAP-aksjonen, Om oss](#)' (About us).

⁸² The AAP movement in Klassekampen (2022), 'Ned med karensåret' (Down with the waiting year!).

⁸³ National Insurance Act, [Section 11-31](#), and Proposition to Parliament [Prop. 114 LS \(2021-2022\)](#).

⁸⁴ The AAP movement, '[En endeløs og invalidiserende avklaringskarusell](#)' (An endless and debilitating carousel of assessment), 12 September 2023.

⁸⁵ The Agenda think tank, '[Jobb, jobb, jobb](#)' (Work, work, work), 10 September 2024.

4.1.2 Measure 2: The IA Agreement

The Letter of Intent regarding a more inclusive working life between the Government, the employers' organisations and the trade unions (the IA Agreement) has been considered a main measure for inclusion of persons with disabilities and/or health issues reducing their ability to work since it first came into being in 2001. Since then, it has been renegotiated four times.⁸⁶

From 2001 to 2018, one of three aims was to increase employment of persons with disabilities. From 2019, only the two other aims remain: to reduce the level of sick leave (in Norway, one may have up to one year of sick leave with full coverage up to a maximum threshold)⁸⁷ and to increase the age of retirement.⁸⁸

These two aims had clear targets: to reduce the level of sickness absence by 20 % compared with the 2001 numbers, and to increase the average age of retirement by 12 months compared with the 2009 numbers.⁸⁹ For inclusion of persons with disabilities, however, a numerical target was never mentioned in the three main targets as specified. Instead, there were some numerical sub-targets negotiated in an addendum to the Agreement in 2007,⁹⁰ which became part of the Agreement itself in 2010.⁹¹

A study published in 2013 found that very few employers had worked actively to achieve the goal of increased employment of persons with disabilities.⁹²

There have been several evaluations of the agreements, from various institutions.

In the first evaluation of the IA Agreement, from 2009, some of the key findings by the research institute SINTEF were as follows:⁹³

- Absence due to illness decreased after the enterprises entered the Agreement.
- The Agreement's effects for persons outside employment were poor. Larger enterprises and Government agencies see themselves as better suited to include persons who are outside employment. The effects were better for the people who were employed.
- The Agreement has contributed to increased collaboration between the state, the employers' associations and the trade unions, together with a sharing of the burden of responsibility.

⁸⁶ All previous IA Agreements are available at:

https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/arbeidsliv/arbeidsmiljo-og-sikkerhet/inkluderende_arbeidsliv/ia-tidligere-avtaleperioder/id2340065/.

⁸⁷ National Insurance Act, chapter 8 (*Folketrygdloven kapittel 8*).

⁸⁸ Norwegian Government, 'The IA Agreement 2019-2024' (*IA-avtalen 2019-2024*).

⁸⁹ Norwegian Government, 'The IA Agreement 2014-2018' (*IA-avtalen 2014-2018*), p. 3 and p. 6.

⁹⁰ Norwegian Government, 'The IA Agreement, Addendum of 15 May 2007 to Addendum of 6 June 2006.' (*Tillegg av 15. mai 2007 til tilleggsavtale 6. juni 2006*).

⁹¹ Norwegian Government, 'The IA Agreement 2010-2013' (*IA-avtalen 2010-2013*).

⁹² Ose, S. O., Dyrstad, K., Slettebak, R., Lippestad, J., Mandal, R., Brattlid, I. and Jensberg, H. (2013), *Evaluering av IA-avtalen (2010 – 2013)* (Evaluation of the IA Agreement 2010-2013) SINTEF A24444. Trondheim: SINTEF Digital/Helse.

⁹³ Ose, S.O., Bjerkan, A.M., Pettersen, I., Hem, K.-G., Johnsen, A., Lippestad, J., Paulsen, B., Mo, T.O. and Saksvik P.Ø. (2009), *Evaluering av IA-Avtalen (2001-2009)* (Evaluation of the IA Agreement 2001-2009), SINTEF.

- There should be more focus on pre-emptive and proactive measures. Resources may be used more efficiently if they are deployed while the person is still employed rather than when they are outside employment later.

SINTEF also performed the second evaluation of the IA Agreement, in 2013.⁹⁴ Regarding target no. 2 on increased employment of persons with disabilities, there were three subsidiary targets at a national level from 2007:⁹⁵

- 70 % of persons who have been absent from work due to illness for 13 weeks or more should be back to work.
- 2.0 % percent of those absent from work for a long time due to illness should be on a work assessment scheme before their year of sick leave is over.
- increase the number of people who go from social benefit to employment to 45 %.

Many employers reported less willingness to employ persons with disabilities due to the stricter duties for following up people on sick leave.⁹⁶ In addition, the report mentions a lack of clear targets being set for each enterprise, and that the targets that were set were not clearly communicated from the management.⁹⁷

The main conclusions were as follows:⁹⁸

- There was widespread discontent about the result of the Agreement, especially regarding a strict and not very efficient follow-up system for persons on sick leave.
- The limited results of the Agreement were attributed to a narrow and insufficient knowledge base for the Agreement.
- The Agreement was considered to have great potential, but a more comprehensive, strategic approach with a focus on inclusion and pre-emptive measures was required.

There are numerous publications on the IA Agreement 2014-2018, the last version to include targets regarding inclusion of persons with disabilities.⁹⁹ In a summary report on lessons learned, produced by the Work Research Institute (AFI), the main findings were as follows:¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Ose, S. O., Dyrstad, K., Slettebak, R., Lippestad, J., Mandal, R., Brattlid, I. and Jensberg, H. (2013).

⁹⁵ Norwegian Government, 'The IA Agreement, Addendum of 15 May 2007 to Addendum of 6 June 2006.' ([Tillegg av 15. mai 2007 til tilleggsavtale 6. juni 2006](#)).

⁹⁶ Ose, S. O., Dyrstad, K., Slettebak, R., Lippestad, J., Mandal, R., Brattlid, I. and Jensberg, H. (2013), p. 24.

⁹⁷ Ose, S. O., Dyrstad, K., Slettebak, R., Lippestad, J., Mandal, R., Brattlid, I. and Jensberg, H. (2013), p. 23.

⁹⁸ Ose, S. O., Dyrstad, K., Slettebak, R., Lippestad, J., Mandal, R., Brattlid, I. and Jensberg, H. (2013), summary of findings in the preamble.

⁹⁹ Norwegian Government, '[Publikasjoner om IA 2014–2018](#)' (Publications concerning the IA Agreement 2014-2018).

¹⁰⁰ Frøyland, K., Nordberg, T.H. and Nedregård, O. (2018), [Nyere kunnskap om inkluderende arbeidsliv \(IA\). Sammenstilling og vurdering av studier med relevans for IA-avtalens mål og for et godt IA-arbeid, publisert i perioden 2014-2018](#) (Recent knowledge about work inclusion (IA). Summary and assessment of studies with relevance for the aims of the IA Agreement and for the effectiveness of the work inclusion efforts published in the period 2014-2018), Labour Research Institute (AFI), pp. 47-48.

- 85 studies, of varying quality, were conducted on the subject. Still, the knowledge production is fragmented, and there were no studies of the IA Agreement as a whole.
- Key success factors are good management and collaboration at the workplace.
- There is a need for more coordination of efforts at an individual level and of efforts at a structural level. There are no clear conclusions as to how this should be organised in the Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav).
- Many measures have a positive effect, for example regarding stricter duties for employers to follow up employees on sick leave.

However, there were few good studies of effects that might be operationalised by the parties in the Agreement, and there were few good studies of actual processes in the workplace. There was a general lack of comprehensive analysis of the topics of the IA Agreement or of the measures in the Agreement and their effects. How to balance the aim of increased employment of seniors and persons with disabilities with the aim of reducing the level of sick leave remained unresolved.

In the subsequent Agreement, from 2019-2024, the target of increased inclusion of persons with disabilities was discontinued.¹⁰¹

4.1.3 Measure 3: the Active Equality Efforts and Reporting Duties (*Aktivitets- og redegjørelsesplikten*)

The active equality efforts (*Aktivitets- og redegjørelsesplikten*, commonly abbreviated to ARP) were first introduced in 2002, but only for gender equality.¹⁰² These duties have existed for disabilities since 2008. Currently, the duties for all grounds of discrimination are described in the Anti-Discrimination and Equality Act (EADA),¹⁰³ Section 26.

The current duty to make a publicly available statement about these efforts was introduced through the EADA, Section 26a, in effect from 1 January 2018. All employers in the public sector have a duty to make these efforts and to issue a statement about them in their annual reports. In the private sector, all enterprises with 50 employees or more have this duty. The duty also covers enterprises with 20 to 50 employees if the relevant trade union or the management demands it (EADA, Section 26(2) and Section 26a).

The duties resemble the risk management procedure in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive: assess risks of discrimination in the workplace; analyse the reasons behind the risk; develop measures and put them into action; and assess the results of the measures.

The risk assessment should include all grounds of discrimination, and the following should be investigated: recruitment; wages and work conditions; promotion and

¹⁰¹ Norwegian Government, '[The IA Agreement 2019-2022: Letter of Intent regarding a more inclusive working life. A working life with room for everyone](#)'.

¹⁰² Act of 9 June 1978 on Gender Equality, Section 1 a. (*Lov av 9. juni 1978 om likestilling mellom kjønnene (likestillingsloven)*). The historical development is described by Strand, V.B. in the Norwegian Encyclopedia, '[Aktivitets- og redegjørelsesplikten](#)' (Active Equality Efforts and Reporting Duties).

¹⁰³ Act of 16 June 2017 no. 51 relating to equality and a prohibition against discrimination ([The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act](#)).

professional development opportunities; accommodation; the possibility of combining work and family life; and prevention of harassment.

All the steps should be performed continuously and in dialogue with the trade union representatives (EADA, Section 26 (3)). Civil society organisations or individual representatives of protected grounds of discrimination are, however, not mentioned.

Both the Anti-Discrimination and Equality Ombud (LDO) and the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) provide guidance on how to perform these duties.¹⁰⁴

The Institute for Social Research (Institutt for Samfunnsforskning or ISF) together with the Law Faculty at the University of Oslo, assessed the statements made by the 50 largest enterprises in a report published in January 2023. The main findings that are relevant for disability were as follows:

- Most enterprises connect the ARP to other reporting duties, such as GRI standards, which involve numbers and statistics regarding diversity and inclusion.
- The importance of quantifying the impact of equality efforts is mentioned, but the degree to which this is incorporated in key performance indicators varies.
- To quantify the impact of equality efforts, surveys within the enterprise are often used, and publication of the results is used to evaluate the degree of discrimination in an organisation over time.
- Most enterprises involve their employees in the process, mainly through existing organs and communication channels, such as human resources coordinators, working groups and mandatory meetings with the trade unions.
- The enterprises focus on general or hypothetical barriers relating to discrimination, such as bias and prejudice, for example through unjustified requirements for positions. The enterprises describe specific challenges within the company to only a limited degree.
- Lack of accommodation within a company is mentioned as one general challenge, but it is unclear to what extent this includes universal design of the workplace.
- A working environment and culture that excludes people, for example through harassment and bullying, is also mentioned as a potential problem.

There are few sanctions if an employer does not fulfil this duty. The annual report may not be accepted by the accountant, since making such a report is part of the mandatory financial report.¹⁰⁵ The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud has, as part of its duty, to monitor the equality efforts and provide guidance when required, within the limits of its annual budget.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, '[Arbeidsgivers aktivitet- og redegjørelsesplikt](#) (Active Equality Efforts and Reporting Duties for Employers)', and the Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir), '[Aktivitets- og redegjørelsesplikt \(ARP\) for arbeidsgivere](#)' (Active Equality Efforts and Reporting Duty).

¹⁰⁵ Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, Section 26a(2) and the Act relating to Annual Accounts of 17 July 1998 no. 56 (in Norwegian only) ([Lov av 17. Juli 1998 nr. 56 om årsregnskap m.v. \(regnskapsloven\)](#)).

¹⁰⁶ [Act of 16 June 2017 no 50 relating to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud and the Anti-Discrimination Tribunal \(Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud Act\)](#) (*Lov av 16. Juni 2017 nr. 50 om Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet og Diskrimineringsnemnda (diskrimineringsombudsloven)* (in English), [Section 5](#)).

4.2 Factors influencing the employment rate of persons with disabilities

The rate of employment for persons with disabilities remains quite stable, which seems to indicate that the measures have a limited effect.

One exception is young persons, among whom the rate of receiving a disability benefit has doubled in 15 years (see Subsection 4.1.1). The main explanation provided by research is that these young people often have complex situations, including health, social skills, lack of education, etc. and that a disability benefit provides a simpler solution for case workers involved.¹⁰⁷

Research has also shown that the level of employment of persons with disabilities is linked to the level of unemployment and need for manpower in the labour market.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ For example, Bragstad, T. (2023) and Myhre, A. (2021).

¹⁰⁸ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), p. 44.

5 Future plans and overall assessment

5.1 Planned reforms

At the time of writing, the IA Agreement is being renegotiated.

The Government has launched the idea of a mandatory certification in diversity management, which is envisaged in connection with both the active equality efforts in the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act and the duties in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive regarding an employer's own workforce. After receiving feedback during a public hearing in 2022, the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Fisheries concluded, based on the input that it had received, that it should explore the idea further.¹⁰⁹

However, this measure was not mentioned in the annual report on equality presented to Parliament by the Minister for Culture and Equality in April 2024,¹¹⁰ and there is no further information on whether it will be implemented.

On September 2024, the Government presented to Parliament a white paper entitled, 'A strengthened work norm: Effort to achieve a higher level of employment and fewer people on welfare benefits'.¹¹¹ This white paper describes the Government's plans to increase the level of employment in the population, and to have fewer persons living on social benefits.

In its Chapter 2.2, on barriers for persons outside employment regarding participation in the labour market, the paper describes barriers for the employee as 'health and knowledge challenges, as well as family situation and care responsibilities, housing situation, and psychosocial difficulties'. Barriers for employers are listed as 'attitudinal, knowledge-based, financial, administrative, formal or structural'.

The planned measures are divided into five main categories:

- Strengthening the use of work-related measures, for example through increased information to employers and employees about different types of assistance provided by the Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav).
- Strengthening the follow-up of employers and employees by Nav, with the aim of subsequently providing different types of assistance adapted to the needs of both employer and employee.
- Strengthening and improvement of the long-term labour inclusion schemes, both in ordinary workplaces and in sheltered workplaces.
- Enabling the public sector to include more persons outside employment, for example through pilot projects in municipalities and exploration of further and stronger measures for inclusive recruitment.
- Contributing to a labour market that is more adapted to persons with a disability and/or reduced ability to work through, for example, increased use of part-time

¹⁰⁹ Norwegian Government, '[Prop. 131 LS \(2022–2023\)](#)', (Proposal to Parliament 131 LS (2022–2023), chapter 7.8.1.

¹¹⁰ Minister for Culture and Equality, '[Likestillingspolitisk redegjørelse 2024](#)' (Equality Policies Update to the Parliament 2024).

¹¹¹ Norwegian Government, '[Meld.St.33 En forsterket arbeidslinje](#)' (White paper to the Parliament, Meld.St.33 A strengthened work norm).

positions and increased cooperation between the health sector and institutions promoting a good working environment.

5.2 Potential impact of planned reforms

In the white paper proposing measures for increased inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market, equality is mentioned only as a possible *result* of increased employment, not as a key part of increased inclusion in the labour market.¹¹² The UN CRPD is mentioned only six times throughout 171 pages, and mainly when long-term sheltered workplaces are discussed.

Universal design is not mentioned at all, nor is the duty to provide reasonable accommodation as part of the prohibition against discrimination, cf. Directive 2000/78/EC, Article 5.

There is no mention of the duties of active equality efforts and the duty to make a statement (ARP) in the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act, sections 26 and 26a, nor of the very similar duties in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive.

As a result, it appears doubtful whether the Government has truly understood the concept of 'disability' in the CRPD and the consequences that this should have when creating measures to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market, or that equality should be a key feature of any strategy to increase employment of persons with disabilities. The approach seems to focus on the individual, instead of focusing on structural barriers and how these may be overcome. While barriers are listed, the measures appear to take account of the consequences of them to only a limited degree.

In addition, the description of several of the proposed measures is rather vague, and none have numerical or otherwise specific targets.

There appears, therefore, to be little likelihood that these measures will have much effect.

A lack of consultation with, and research on the perspectives of, the people concerned appears to be a general feature of the white paper and the IA Agreement, as well as performance regarding the active equality efforts.

5.3 Key lessons from national measures

The level of employment of persons with disabilities remains rather stable, as is indicated in the statistics in Section 2.

Regarding the IA Agreement, some of the key lessons were that the rate of absence due to illness decreased after the enterprises entered the agreement, while the Agreement's effects with regard to persons outside employment were poor.¹¹³ A key effect of the Agreement is to increase and improve collaboration between the state,

¹¹² Norwegian Government, '[Meld.St.33 En forsterket arbeidslinje](#)' (White paper to the Parliament, Meld.St.33 A strengthened work norm), p. 8.

¹¹³ Ose, S.O., Bjerkan, A.M., Pettersen, I., Hem, K.-G., Johnsen, A., Lippestad, J., Paulsen, B., Mo, T.O. and Saksvik P.Ø. (2009).

the employers' associations and the trade unions, together with a sharing of the burden of responsibility.¹¹⁴

5.4 Key lessons from evaluation and monitoring of measures

Evaluations of the measures have pointed out some positive effects, for example of strategic efforts with numerical aims and clear signals from senior management, as described in Section 3 concerning the joint inclusion effort in the public sector. Other key findings are that all the schemes have a substantial potential that is realised only to a small degree. A more comprehensive, strategic approach, with a focus on inclusion and pre-emptive measures, is required. Measures need to be adapted more to the individual, and should include cooperation between the individual, the employer and the public administration.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud points to the following barriers for persons with disabilities regarding employment:¹¹⁵

- lack of universal design of workplaces;
- lack of reasonable individual accommodations;
- prejudice and stereotypes, such as assumptions that a disability must imply a reduced ability to work; and
- lack of implementation of the duties on employers to make proactive and systematic equality efforts (the third measure described in this report).¹¹⁶

Still, none of the three main measures for inclusion in the labour market described in Section 4.1 do very much to address these barriers, as several findings in the evaluations also point out:

- One evaluation of the IA Agreement concluded that there was a need for more coordination of efforts made at an individual level and at a structural level.¹¹⁷
- Research on the AAP scheme has highlighted a greater need to base assessment of individuals on principles instead of standardised answers or ad hoc assessments, and to increase the level of self-determination for, and involvement of, the individuals concerned.¹¹⁸

Whether in the Labour and Welfare Administration's work with individuals¹¹⁹ or the negotiation of the IA Agreement,¹²⁰ there is a lack of participation from persons with disabilities.

¹¹⁴ Ose, S.O., Bjerkan, A.M., Pettersen, I., Hem, K.-G., Johnsen, A., Lippestad, J., Paulsen, B., Mo, T.O., Saksvik P.Ø. (2009).

¹¹⁵ Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, '[Funksjonsevne](#)' (Disability).

¹¹⁶ Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, '[The activity duty and the duty to issue a statement](#)'.

¹¹⁷ Frøyland, K., Nordberg, T.H. and Nedregård, O. (2018), pp. 47-48.

¹¹⁸ Eriksen, A. and Eriksen, E. O. (2023), 'Rettsikkerhet gjennom begrunnelse: Nav og den offentlige bruken av fornuft' (Access to justice through explaining the reasoning behind a decision: Nav and the public sector use of common sense), *Tidsskrift for velferdsforskning* 26(4), pp. 1-14, and Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., demark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), pp. 51-53.

¹¹⁹ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), pp. 65-71.

¹²⁰ Fri Fagbevegelse (2018), '[Funksjonshemmede krever å bli hørt når ny IA-avtale skal spikres](#)' (Persons with disabilities demand to be heard when a new IA Agreement is negotiated).

As described in Section 4.1, evaluation reports on the available research point out a lack of information as to how the persons concerned experienced the effects,¹²¹ as well as a lack of research from institutions other than the Labour and Welfare Administration (Nav) itself¹²² – and a lack of interdisciplinary research, especially research that includes health sciences.¹²³

The importance of strategic work, and of good management and collaboration in the workplace, have been noted as key success factors in the evaluation of the IA Agreement. This should indicate that the duty on employers to make active equality efforts, and to report on these, is an important supplement to the IA Agreement. However, it is not mentioned in any of the agreements.¹²⁴

Access to justice is an issue of concern, both for persons who are receiving assistance and/or benefits from the Labour and Welfare Administration¹²⁵ and for employees who are not receiving reasonable accommodation or experiencing other types of discrimination.¹²⁶

Based on the above, together with the evaluation of the measures in Section 4.1, the key lessons are as follows:

- There is a lack of coordination, especially between measures for equality and measures for inclusion in the workplace.
- There is a general lack of participation and research on the perspectives of the persons with disabilities.
- The equality perspectives are generally lacking, except where the Ministry for Culture and Equality or the Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) are coordinating the efforts. The main approach in the IA Agreement, in the Labour and Welfare Administration and in the Government's latest plans for increasing the level of employment appears to be that the individual should be helped; it does not entail addressing the barriers and prejudice that people experience. This may be said to involve an individualisation of the problem and an approach that is focused on welfare instead of equality.
- Access to justice for individuals in respect of employers and the Labour and Welfare Administration is an issue of concern, regarding both decision-making processes and effective remedies.

¹²¹ Ose, S.O., Bjerkan, A.M., Pettersen, I., Hem, K.-G., Johnsen, A., Lippestad, J., Paulsen, B., Mo, T.O. and Saksvik P.Ø. (2009), and Ose, S. O., Dyrstad, K., Slettebak, R., Lippestad, J., Mandal, R., Brattlid, I. and Jensberg, H. (2013).

¹²² Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), p. 49.

¹²³ Sadeghi, T., Bakkeli, V., Bråthen, M., Hansen, H. C., Gjersøe, H. M., Köhler-Olsen, J. F., Karlsen, E., Ødemark, I. L. and Thørrisen, M. M. (2024), p. 97.

¹²⁴ All previous IA Agreements are available at:
https://www.regjeringen.no/no/tema/arbeidsliv/arbeidsmiljo-og-sikkerhet/inkluderende_arbeidsliv/ia-tidligere-avtaleperioder/id2340065/.

¹²⁵ Eriksen, A., and Eriksen, E. O. (2023). pp. 1-14.

¹²⁶ Strand, V.B. and Hellum, A. (2022), '[Håndhevingslabyrinten – Om individuelle klagere i diskrimineringsvernets nye håndhevingsstruktur](#)' (The labyrinth of enforcement – About individual complainants in the new framework of the protection against discrimination), *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* Vol. 39 iss. 2. ISSN 0800-336X.

- While systematic efforts and numerical targets are pointed out by several sources as key factors for success, there are few clear numerical targets at either a national level or an individual workplace or enterprise level.
- Research points to clear aims and duties, and priorities that are made clear throughout the organisation from top to bottom, as key success factors.¹²⁷ However, while there is a duty on most employers to make active equality efforts, the content of these initiatives regarding disability remains vague, and there are no effective sanctions for employers who do not perform well in terms of meeting these duties.

¹²⁷ Frøyland, K., Nordberg, T.H. and Nedregård, O. (2018), pp. 47-48.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Recommendations for Norway

- The CRPD must be a core part of decision making, and the perspectives of persons with disabilities and/or long-term health issues need to be systematically included.

This includes all types of measures, from assistance to individuals from the Labour and Welfare Administration and individual accommodation in the workplace to research on barriers and the effects of measures and involvement in political processes such as negotiations on the IA Agreement.

The mandatory involvement of trade unions in the Active Equality Efforts should be supplemented either by civil society organisations representing persons with disabilities or through the provision of systematic training for trade union representatives on the CRPD, or both. Anyone making decisions regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment should receive basic training in the core principles of the CRPD.

- Bias and structural discrimination need to be addressed through proactive measures, and these must set clear targets and be monitored effectively.

- Employers

The duties in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive correspond to a large degree with the active equality efforts but are more detailed. Coordination and clarification of these duties, together with adequate training of the accountants who assess the annual reports, might be an effective way to improve the effectiveness of these efforts.

- Public administration and welfare services

A corresponding effort needs to be made in the public administration. There is already a duty to make active equality efforts in the public sector, but there is significant potential for improvement regarding assessment of the risk of bias and discrimination and assessment of access to justice.

If both the private and public sectors investigate the risks and consequences regarding disability equality in relation to their own activities, this might also provide a knowledge basis for negotiating IA Agreements that would have a significant impact. This should include setting national-level targets for the employment of persons with disabilities and/or those with reduced ability to work.

- Access to justice for persons with disabilities must be improved.

Persons with disabilities are often in a position of dependency both in relation to the public administration and to employers. However, making a complaint to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Tribunal is difficult, and the Tribunal has no authority over the public administration outside its role as

an employer. In addition, the Tribunal does not systematically use the CRPD as a source for interpretation, nor can it assess any legislation other than the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act.¹²⁸

Research on access to justice might be a good place to start, especially if individual complaints are viewed in connection with structural discrimination and proactive measures.

6.2 Recommendations for the European Commission

There can be neither financial nor social sustainability without disability equality. The main recommendation is, therefore, to provide clear duties and guidelines for enterprises reporting on social sustainability in accordance with the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) regarding different types of disability, building on the CRPD.

This should include inclusive job design, recruitment and promotion, general and individual accommodation, ICT in the workplace, etc.

It should also include participation as part of the stakeholder involvement in assessing risks of human rights violations and discrimination, as required by the CSRD. When developing guidelines for such involvement, it should be taken into consideration that trade unions are not necessarily good representatives for persons with disabilities, especially not for those who are outside employment. Persons with disabilities and their civil society organisations must be considered stakeholders themselves.

¹²⁸ Løvdal, L. (2022), [Norway – Country report Non-discrimination. European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination](#).

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