



Riksrevisjonen

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The Office of the Auditor General's investigation
of opportunities for persons with functional
impairments to participate in society

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SUMMARY

Background and goal of the investigation

Full participation and equal opportunities for everyone regardless of functional ability has been a goal since the early 1990s. It has also been pointed out that social barriers are the cause of lack of access.

The goal of the investigation was to find out whether persons with impaired functional abilities have access to public buildings, transport and outdoor areas on a par with other citizens, and how government policy instruments in this field are administered.

Method

The lines of inquiry have been pursued on the basis of data collected through document analysis, questionnaire surveys, statistics, interviews, group interviews and inspections.

Results

The investigation shows that people with disabilities have inadequate access to key social arenas, and that this applies to people with visual and hearing impairments as well as those with impaired mobility. In the public buildings, public transport and outdoor areas sectors, there are significant discrepancies between the stipulated goals for accessibility and universal design and the results of the investigation.

As regards public buildings, the investigation shows that none of Statsbygg's properties fully satisfy all the universal design requirements. A questionnaire survey among Norwegian Labour and Welfare Service (NAV) offices showed that many offices do not meet the ambitions for universal design set out in the Labour and Welfare Administration Act. For example, 38 per cent of the offices have no parking facilities for the disabled, 86 per cent lack guide lines for the visually impaired in public areas, and 67 per cent lack induction loops for people with hearing aids. The investigation also shows that people with disabilities find it difficult to use buses or trains. The most important reasons for this lack of accessibility are differences in height between the means of transport and the stop or platform, as well as inadequate information. As regards outdoor areas, the investigation shows that few municipalities (13 per cent) have taken accessibility and universal design into account in their planning and guidelines, despite the fact that there have been national goals in this area for nearly ten years.

User participation is an express ambition for work on accessibility and universal design. The investigation shows a positive development in this context in recent years, while user organisations still believe there is room for improvement. The user organisations often find that they are consulted too late in the processes, that the deadlines for making submissions are often short, and that user involvement in the preparation of new action plans is limited.

The implementation of policies for people with disabilities is based on the principle of sector responsibility. The ministries involved generally lack information about status, developments and goal attainment in relation to accessibility. Few relevant indicators and reliable statistics are available, and this is a clear limitation in relation to assessing goal attainment. The concrete improvements in accessibility that can be expected as a result of endeavours in individual areas have also only been specified to a small extent. It is a precondition for improved accessibility that the ministries systematically follow up the situation and implement measures in their respective sectors. Better coordination across sectors is also necessary in order to achieve improved results in this field.