



Programme of Action for

Universal Design



Ministry of Labour and Government Administration | Ministry of Children and Family Affairs | Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development
Ministry of Culture and Church Affairs | Ministry of the Environment | Ministry of Trade and Industry | Ministry of Transport and Communications
Ministry of Social Affairs | Ministry of Education and Research | Ministry of Foreign Affairs



MILJØVERNDEPARTEMENTET

Ministry of the Environment



Photo: Svein Magne Fredriksen

Coins and bills have been refined and improved over many years. Most people can tell the different denominations apart by touch, without having to look at them. New technology is based on standardized plastic payment cards, which cannot be differentiated in the same manner. Many people experience difficulty in using such cards.

Foreword

Norway utilizes a variety of instruments to enhance the participation and equality of disabled persons in society. These have traditionally comprised welfare benefits for living, medical treatment and rehabilitation, technical aids, housing and education. Today, increased emphasis is being placed on incorporating considerations relating to disabled persons into other areas as well. Particular attention is being focused on the challenges associated with planning and design of physical areas, transport and information. Achieving improved accessibility to the physical environment for all members of society has become a primary objective. Many of the measures launched are based on a special Programme of Action for Universal Design, a government programme in which eleven Norwegian ministries are taking part. This programme is administered by the Ministry of the Environment.

Børge Brende
Minister of the Environment

Front-page: The pavements in Vadsø demonstrate how conscious choice of materials helps to channel foot traffic and provides excellent accessibility for pedestrians of all types. The surfaces are in keeping with local tradition, utilizing durable local materials.

Photo: Svein Magne Fredriksen.



Photo: Svein Magne Fredriksen

UNIQUE OR UNIVERSAL

– An ideological and practical approach

In some contexts, the differences between people must be identified and emphasized in order to respect the rights of the individual or specific groups within society. Certain population groups are dependent on explicitly targeted services to ensure their safety, their inclusion in the community, or the fulfilment of other potential needs. Such services are provided, for example, to the youngest and oldest members of society through day-care facilities and senior centres, and a framework is in place to allow the Sámi people to develop their identity, language and culture on a par with the ethnic Norwegian population. Under other circumstances, however, being defined as a group with special needs is associated with marginalization and isolation. This problem emerges clearly in the debate regarding use of policy instruments to increase the participation of women in certain spheres of working life.

For people with disabilities, there is an inherent dilemma in, on the one hand,

the need to be respected as different and, on the other, the need to be acknowledged as a member of mainstream society, with all the rights and opportunities this implies. Ensuring respect for the unique entails furnishing the technical aids, medication and other fundamentals needed to compensate for a disability. Acknowledgement as a member of mainstream society implies that persons with disabilities will naturally be able to avail themselves of the services offered by, and opportunities to participate within, the community as a whole. At the same time, this must be achieved without introducing a greater number of special measures than is strictly necessary. Such measures should only be considered as a last resort when all other avenues have been explored. The primary aim must be to develop general solutions that fulfil the needs of all user groups. The unique should be incorporated into the general, leading to solutions characterized by universal applicability.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

Photo: Svein Magne Fredriksen



Public transport conveyances need considerable improvement to increase accessibility for all passengers. The low-floor trams in Oslo offer easily negotiable platform areas and are simpler and safer to board and exit.



– rational solutions that promote equality, enhance society and encourage good design

The view that conventional solutions should cover the needs of a broad segment of the population is not a new one. A number of concrete measures have been implemented as part of the effort to arrive at more wide-ranging, rational solutions. Launched in 1986, the Norwegian State Housing Bank's life-span housing concept offers expanded design features for disabled persons, and has given rise to a considerable volume of accessible housing in the ordinary housing mass. Life-span dwellings are found in virtually all types of residential buildings, and do not deviate in appearance from other dwellings. Research has shown that this type of housing does not cost more than other housing, while its life-span features carry clear social economic benefits. Within the day-care and primary school sector, the task of creating a pedagogical framework encompassing all children has come far.

The universal design strategy is a means of delineating and clarifying this line of thinking. It can be used to facilitate the achievement of genuine "for all" solutions. At the core of this strategy lies the essential need for a high functionality that incorporates considerations pertaining to people with impairments. In so far as possible, products, buildings and outdoor areas that are open to public use shall be designed to be accessible to all. Although our success in this sphere will be limited by our technology and expertise, it is precisely these same factors that will ultimately allow us to move forward. Beneficial use aspects must be developed in conjunction with aspects such as safety, sustainable development, aesthetics, and financial viability. The universal design strategy is not intended to set an ultimate standard for quality, but rather to encourage planners to seek the best solution at any given time.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN

i Norwegian policy

Norwegian policy is aimed at providing satisfactory living conditions for all members of society, in all phases of life. The overall responsibility for public policies within the various sectors and population groups is distributed between the individual ministries. Each ministry has also been given partial responsibility within its own sphere of administration or sectors. Thus, a number of different ministries will be involved in the implementation of various policies adopted by the Norwegian Government and Storting (Norwegian national assembly). The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs has primary responsibility for national policy relating to children, while a number of other ministries are responsible for children's affairs within their particular spheres. This applies to the educational, planning, cultural and transport sectors, among others. The Ministry of Social Affairs has the primary responsibility for national policy relating to persons with disabilities. The principle of sectoral responsibility ensures that virtu-

ally every ministry is involved in the effort to develop satisfactory living conditions for persons with impairments.

In this situation it is necessary to maintain a comprehensive overview over the needs of and solutions for defined groups within the population, and at the same time be able to identify perspectives that can lead to rational, beneficial solutions for all citizens while fulfilling other central policy objectives.

Air pollution involves environmental policy as well as health policy. Enhancing air quality reduces the health problems of those suffering from allergies, diminishes health risks for the population at large and is in keeping with the general policy to clean up the environment. It is vital to protect children as they are growing up, and various parties are cooperating to provide this group in particular with open spaces featuring the best possible air quality.

The pedestrian shopping avenue in Hamar offers excellent accessibility to users, summer and winter alike. The pavement is divided into zones using cut natural stone and wrought-iron decor. The project received the Prize for Accessibility awarded by the Norwegian Association for the Blind and Partially-sighted. The area was designed by Landskapsarkitektene 13.3 as.



The Tønsberg Library unites modern architecture with easy access and use. Cultural artefacts from the Middle Ages are both protected and made available to the public. The library was designed by Lunde and Løvseth Arkitekter AS, and has been awarded a number of design prizes.



The "ideal man" is oversimplified as a basis for planning.

Photo: Svein Magne Fredriksen



Solutions created for specific user groups often possess qualities appreciated by many. This wheelchair ramp at Sjøstrand beach provides easy, safe access to the ocean, and many beachgoers enjoy using it.

The Government has chosen to highlight perspectives such as these, for example by referring to use of the universal design strategy in various Reports to the Storting as well as other political documents. Universal design has become a catchword for how to deal with considerations relating to disabled persons and other population groups within the principle of sectoral responsibility.

The discussion regarding future policy relating to persons with disabilities encompasses three primary areas: improving the welfare state through adjustment in social welfare benefits, enhancing equality by means of anti-discrimination legislation, and increasing efforts from societal spheres outside the health and welfare sector. This discussion must be viewed within the context of an ongoing international process, in which schemes introduced in other countries and decisions taken in international fora also exert an influence on the debate and policy in Norway. Both the United Nations and the Council of Europe have implemented rules regarding policy and instruments that Norway

has agreed to honour. Moreover, the European Union is devising treaties and directives in several spheres that may have an impact on policy areas in Norway. This applies not least to the transport sector. Increasing attention



Photo: Svein Magne Fredriksen

The interactive Arctic experience centre Polaria, under the auspices of the Norwegian Polar Institute, combines high-profile architecture with state-of-the-art functionality for visitors. The building is designed by JAF arkitekter.

is being concentrated on instruments that supplement the efforts of the health and social sector. And the overall improvement of general measures is being given greater weight.

PROGRAMME OF ACTION for universal design

The Programme of Action for Universal Design was implemented in 2002 to strengthen the development and utilization of solutions that are functional for all. In its initial phases, the programme is aimed at further specifying the implementation of the universal design strategy in public policy and integrating this line of thinking into government instruments. The programme has been devised by all ministries with spheres of responsibility that include measures directed towards a broad segment of the population. The Ministry of the Environment serves as the secretariat and coordinator of the programme.

The objective of the programme is to enhance equality and increase access to physical surroundings in public spaces. The universal design strategy is to underlie the focus and orientation of Reports to the Storting, government guidelines and technical advisory services at all levels. To achieve this,

efforts must be concentrated on increasing the knowledge of decision-makers and government administration employees as regards these issues, as well as on introducing research and development initiatives. Some insight will be gained as a result of ongoing development and production, for example of dwellings, out-door areas and teaching materials in school. In general, however, expertise will be acquired through ordinary R&D programmes, in keeping with the overall tenet that broad-based functionality for the population at large must be incorporated as a part of the whole.

This bus shelter features good design, a top environmental profile, and is based on modular components that enable users to tailor it to local conditions. The shelter successfully satisfies information as well as accessibility needs. It was awarded the 2001 Good Design Award by the Norwegian Design Council, and was designed by accendo produktutvikling and Norfax AS



Felix Fabula 1 teaching materials are utilized by all of Norway's first and second graders. The three original booklets have been supplemented with versions available on a sound cassette, a CD with large letters and a soundtrack, a sign-language video and in Braille. Today, new technology makes it possible to provide the basic publication and several of the supplementary versions in a single solution.



Photo: Stein Nørve, Læringscenteret



Photo: Husbanken

The Stadionparken residential area in Bodø consists of dwellings featuring life-span design. The area is divided into a number of housing societies, and also offers a day-care facility and a nursing home.
Architect :
Arkitektstudio a.s.

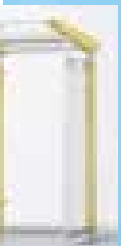


Photo: Norfax AS

Certain problems, however, will require targeted research and more systematic development processes. A number of activities are underway to follow up the policy relating to better living conditions for all, and as well to ensure "full participation and equality", which is the primary goal of the policy for disabled people. Plans of action covering specific areas, such as ICT, have also been launched. The Programme of Action for Universal Design will take these activities into account, and will at the same time be employed to rationalize the efforts of various public agencies, professional communities and organizations.

Norway takes part in a variety of international fora and networks in which universal design is, or may become, a key topic. There is a need for two-way exchange of views and information within the context of Nordic, European and international cooperation. It is crucial to continue to promote development in this sphere, and to ensure that practical use is made of experience gained at the international level.



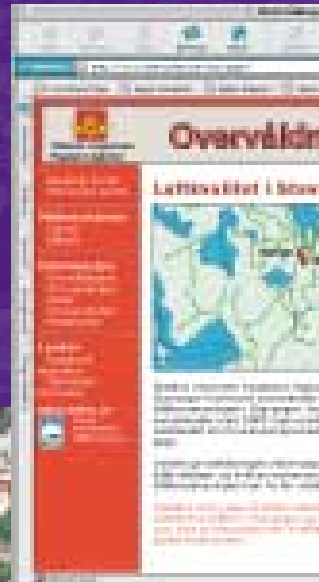
The Internet as an information channel plays an increasingly significant role in the exercise of democracy and public administration. The Internet is important to all users, and the expanded utilization of this technology may have new potential applications for many different groups. The website of the Norwegian Pollution Control Authority was selected as Norway's best official website in 2002. One of the evaluation criteria for the award was accessibility for persons with disabilities in conformance with international standards. The website was designed by Enzo FingerDesign AS, Gazette AS and the Norwegian Pollution Control Authority.



For more information:
<http://www.universell-utforming.miljo.no>

Poor air quality has a direct impact on health, and limits the amount of time many allergy sufferers are able to spend outside.

Efforts are underway to reduce local air pollution and promote information to the public. Several Norwegian cities maintain ongoing air quality alerts in areas where many people congregate.



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The efforts of Kristiansand municipality to promote public participation and systematic planning have paid off in terms of increased accessibility and functionality for a wide spectrum of its inhabitants. In 2002 Kristiansand was the recipient of both national and Nordic awards for accessibility and superior environment.



Photo: Norsk Designråd

Universal design is aimed at decreasing the use of special technical aids. However, certain kinds of equipment will always be necessary, and further refinement and generalization through good design is desirable. The Chairborne wheelchair can be used onboard aircraft and collapses to fit into the overhead rack. The chair was awarded the 1999 Good Design Award by the Norwegian Design Council, and is designed by Abry Industrial Design AS and Composite Technique AS.

The building housing the Vestlandske Kunstindustri Museum (West Norwegian Museum of Applied Art) in Bergen dates back to 1896. During rehabilitation, the main entrance was moved from the landing of the great staircase to street level at the base of the stairs. This enhances accessibility and allows better utilization of the interior square footage. The rehabilitation operation has been under the guidance of Arkitektgruppen CUBUS AS.

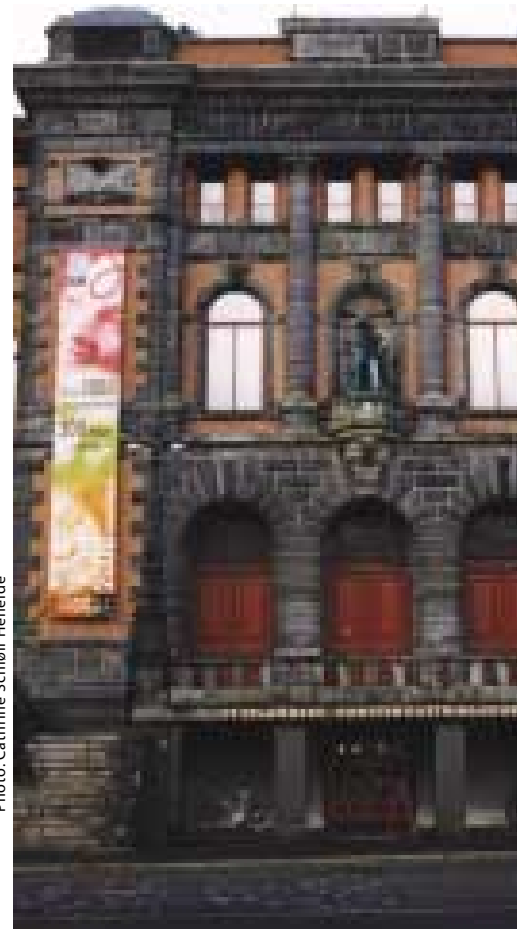
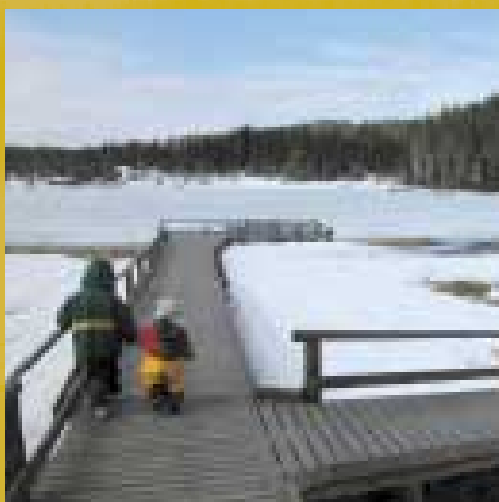


Photo: Cathrine Schiell Heneide

Photo: Svein Magne Fredriksen



The Liatjønna recreational area in Mosvik, Northern Trøndelag provides top-notch functionality, and is extremely well-suited for activities for all. In 2001, the authorities of Northern Trøndelag named this project Recreational Area of the Year.



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