



# The rights of people with disabilities around the world

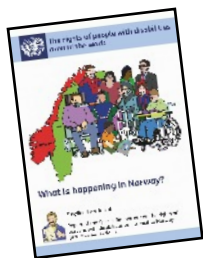


## What is happening in Norway?



EasyRead version of:

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her visit to Norway (A/HRC/43/41/Add.3)



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Hard words are in **bold**.

These words are explained in a list at the end of this report.

# 1. About this report



Every year the **Special Rapporteur** on the rights of persons with disabilities writes reports. Her reports tell the **United Nations** about **human rights** and people with disabilities.



The Special Rapporteur is Catalina Devandas. She helps countries understand how to make sure people with disabilities can get their human rights.



The United Nations is a group made up of 193 countries. They work together to make the world a safer and better place for everyone.



This is an Easy Read version of the report about her visit to Norway in October 2019.



The government invited the Special Rapporteur to visit their country. She met Ministers, government officials, people with disabilities and their organisations.



She visited hospitals, schools and services that support people with disabilities.



The Special Rapporteur says thank you to everyone who helped her understand about rights and people with disabilities in Norway.



Especially adults, young people and children with disabilities, who told her about their lives.



## 2. About Norway



### What is Norway like?

Norway is a country in Europe.



Norway is one of the richest countries in the world.



Most people live long and healthy lives and only a small number are poor.



Around 5 and a half million people live there. There are about the same number of women as men.



In 2013 the Government signed an international agreement called the United Nations **Disability Convention**. It says people with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else.



This means the Government must make sure people with disabilities get their human rights in Norway.



Everyone has **human rights**. Human rights mean you must be treated fairly, equally and with respect.



**How many people with disabilities live there?**

About 17 out of every 100 people aged between 16 and 66 years old have a disability.



More women than men have a disability.



**Sami** are **indigenous** people. The government think between about 7 and 13 thousand Sami in Norway have a disability.



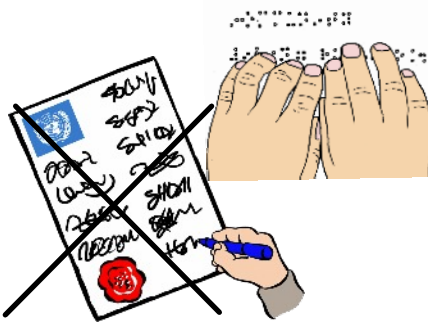


### 3. People with disabilities in Norway

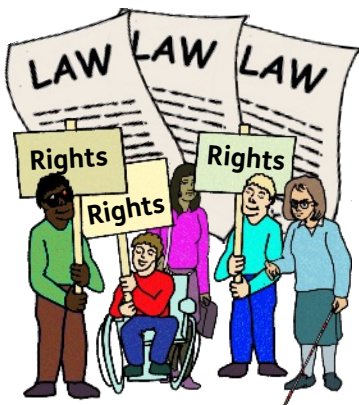
#### Using the law to protect people's rights



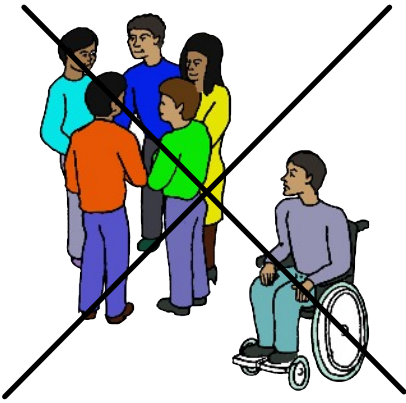
Norway signed most United Nations human rights agreements.



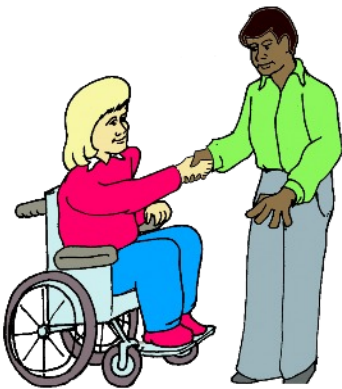
But it has not signed the agreement to make printed information **accessible** for blind people.



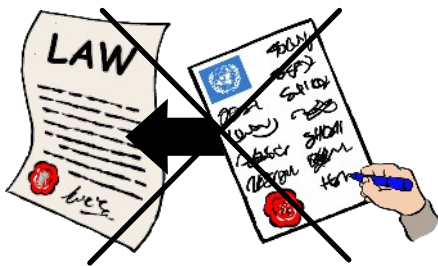
Although there is no one law just for the rights of people with disabilities, many other laws protect these rights.



The **Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act** says it is wrong to **discriminate** against someone because of a disability.



Local governments and businesses must do everything they can to make sure people with disabilities are treated equally and fairly in education, public services or employment.



But some laws do not give people all the rights the Disability Convention says they should have.



## **Making the Disability Convention work**

The **Ministry of Culture** must make sure all parts of the government work together to do the things the Disability Convention says they should.



Independent organisations in Norway check whether the government and public services use the Disability Convention and respect the **rights** of people with disabilities:



- the Equality and Anti-Discrimination **Ombud** speaks out about **equality** and fights all types of discrimination



- the **Parliamentary** Ombud and the Ombud for Children also look at how government plans and laws affect different groups of people with disabilities



- the Anti-Discrimination **Tribunal** supports people to complain about discrimination.



The Special Rapporteur is pleased the government has agreed an **inclusion** plan to help them:



- think about things that stop people with disabilities using the same buildings and services as other people



- have better ways to involve and include people with disabilities



- make sure local and national governments work better together



- give everyone equal rights in education, work, health, culture and leisure.



The government should say by the end of 2019 when these things will happen. But the Special Rapporteur was not informed if this is happening.



Norway has plans for building, housing, health, hate speech, children and older people. These also protect the rights of people with disabilities.

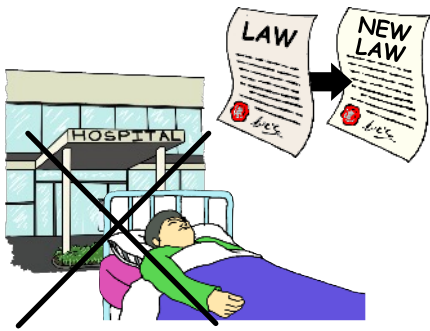


The Special Rapporteur says the government must think about the rights of people with disabilities in all its plans to make things better for them.

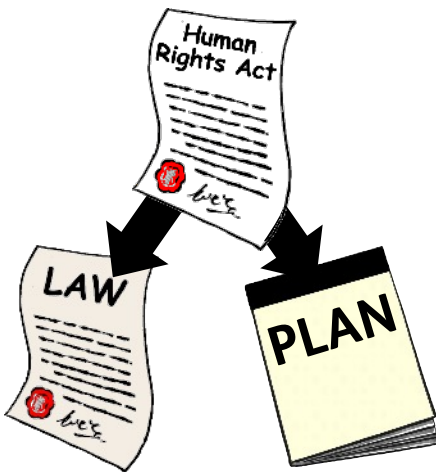


The Disability Convention should be part of Norwegian law. This means the government should:

- get rid of laws that discriminate against people with disabilities



- change laws that talk about people with disabilities as if they are ill or cannot do things properly. For example one law allows a court to decide to **sterilise** women with disabilities without asking them what they think. This is an operation that stops women and girls having babies



- make sure all plans and laws are based on human rights.

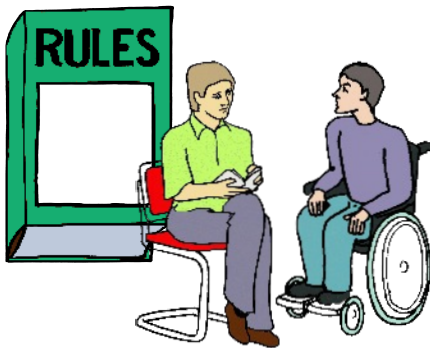


## 4. What makes things difficult?

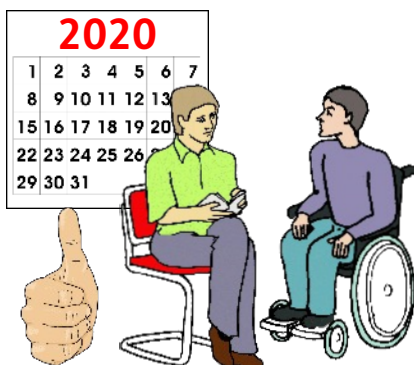
### Not having information about people with disabilities



The government collects information about people with disabilities between 20 and 66 years old. But they do not know about children and young people or older people with disabilities.



Norway has very strict rules about collecting and using personal information. This makes it difficult to plan services and support for people with disabilities.



The Special Rapporteur is pleased the government is going to collect better information about people with disabilities from 2020.



## Not having the same rights or using the same services as other people

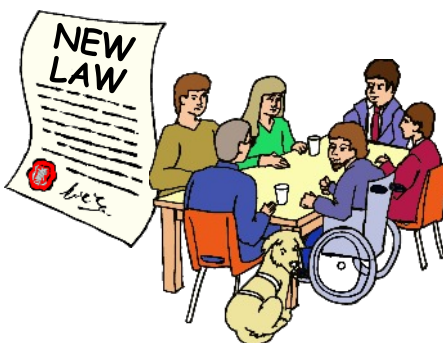
The Special Rapporteur found that **social protection**, support, work and education are better for people with disabilities in some parts of Norway than others.



This means some people with disabilities have to move away from their homes and families to get the services they need.

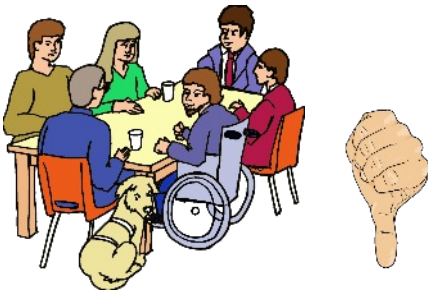


The government should act quickly to give people with disabilities the same rights wherever they live.

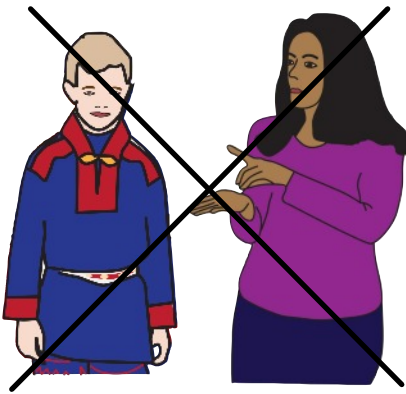


The Special Rapporteur is pleased that a new law says local governments must involve groups of people with disabilities in saying what services they need.





But people with disabilities told her this is not working properly and their ideas are often ignored.



Things are worse for indigenous Sami people. They cannot get support in their own language. People providing services do not understand their culture and beliefs. This means they often have to choose between having no services or moving away from their family and friends.



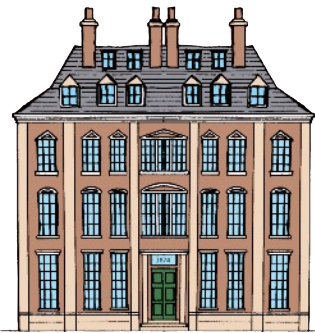
Sami people with disabilities are more at risk of bullying, **hate speech** and **abuse**. This is also worse for women with disabilities and people with learning disabilities.

# Accessibility

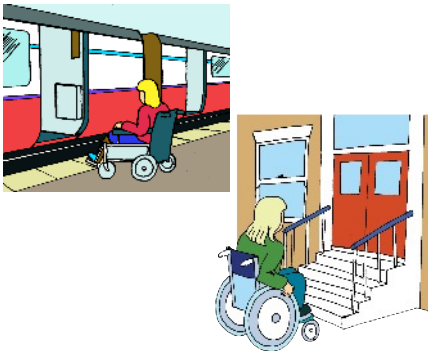
## Buildings and services



The government thinks it is really important to plan buildings and services that everyone can use. The law says all new buildings that the public use must be accessible by 2025.



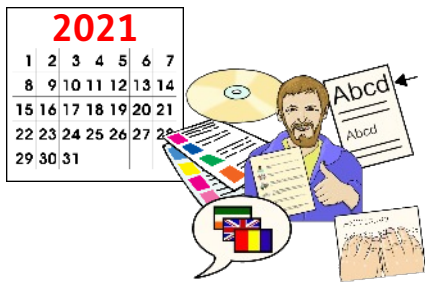
This does not include buildings that have already been built unless they are being brought up to date.



People complained that they could not access transport, work, schools, hospitals and other services or buildings.



The Special Rapporteur says the government should act quickly to change things before 2025.



## Information and communication

Norwegian law says all information and communication should be accessible from 2021.



The government is working to make information more accessible with **audio description** and **sign language interpreters** for the main television services.



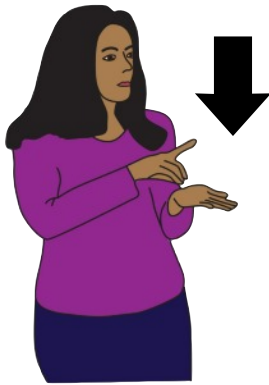
But the Special Rapporteur found that only 3 out of 10 public services have plans on how to make information and communication accessible.



Many government offices expect people to use the internet to get services. For example touch screens at hospitals or stations and websites to get information.



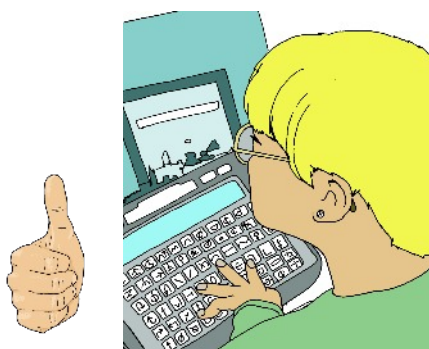
Many people with disabilities have problems doing this. Especially blind people, older people and people with learning disabilities.



Norwegian **sign language** is not an official language. And there are not enough sign language **interpreters** for deaf people.



The Special Rapporteur reminded the government that the Disability Convention says deaf people should learn and be able to use the sign language they choose.



The Special Rapporteur is pleased that the government is using more technology with people with disabilities in schools.

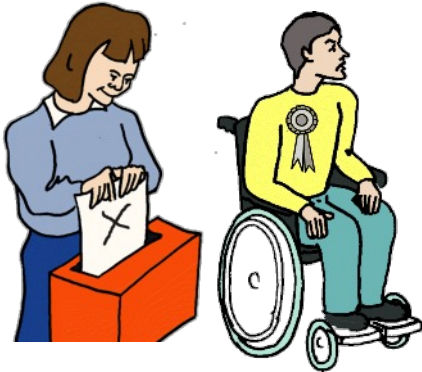


## 5. Human rights and people with disabilities

### Being involved

#### Being involved in politics

Politics means being involved in the way a country is governed. For example, **voting** or being part of local or national government.



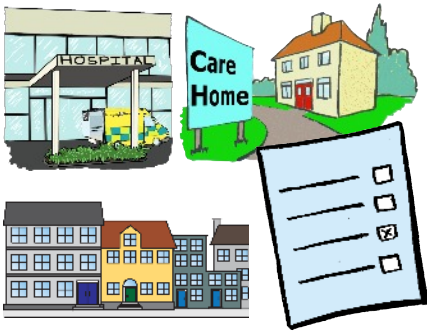
The law says people in Norway can vote from the year they are 18 years old.



Local governments must make sure people with disabilities can take part in elections.



This includes the right to:



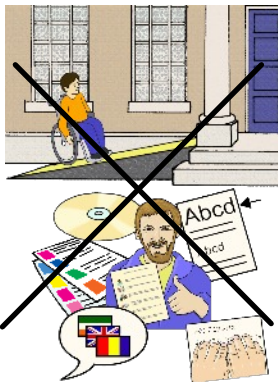
- vote at home, in a care home or hospital if you cannot get to the **polling station**



- have help to mark the voting paper



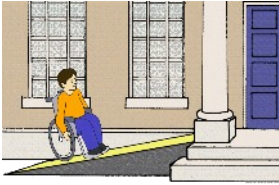
- extra help for people with severe disabilities to vote.



The Special Rapporteur heard it was difficult for some people with disabilities to get into polling stations to vote or have accessible information about the election or voting.



You cannot choose someone to go into the **polling booth** with you if you need help. This is important for people with mental health problems, dementia or learning disabilities.



The government is looking at how to make elections more accessible.



This is a chance to follow the Disability Convention and make sure people with disabilities can take part in local or national government and in decisions that affect everyone.



## Being involved in decisions

The Special Rapporteur is pleased that the government usually finds out what people with disabilities think about their ideas and plans.



The government gives organisations of people with disabilities money to be involved. These organisations are strong and well organised.



But people with disabilities said they are not involved in government reports about everything that affects them.



The Special Rapporteur said the government should now try to involve people with disabilities who often get left out. For example, autistic people or people with learning disabilities.



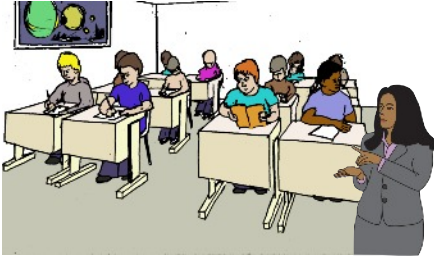
## Going to school or college

The law says children and students with disabilities have the same chance as other people to go to school or college.



All children up to the age of 15 years have the right to go to the school nearest their home. They also have the right to have all the support they need to learn.





If sign language is their main language children have the right to learn and use it at school.



The Special Rapporteur is happy that most children with disabilities go to school with other children. But she thinks too many children with disabilities still go to special schools away from other children.



The Special Rapporteur thinks it is difficult for children and their families to find out about and get the support they need to learn.



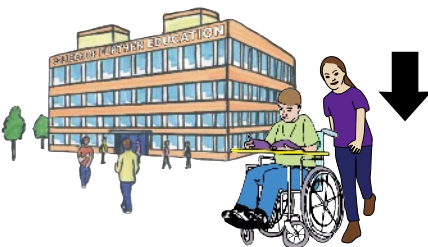
Many schools do not have trained teachers, equipment or the right buildings for children with disabilities.



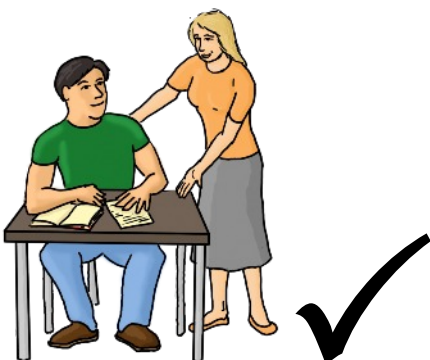
Sami children with disabilities cannot get the support they need to learn. Not many teachers speak their language or understand their culture.



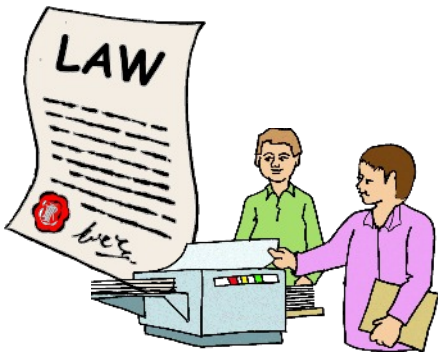
Children with disabilities are also more likely to be bullied at school.



As children with disabilities get older they often do less well at school. Young people with disabilities are less likely than other young people to go to college or university.



The Special Rapporteur thinks local and national governments should work together to make it easier for children and young people to get the support they need to learn.



## Having a job

The law in Norway says people with disabilities must have the same chance to work as other people.



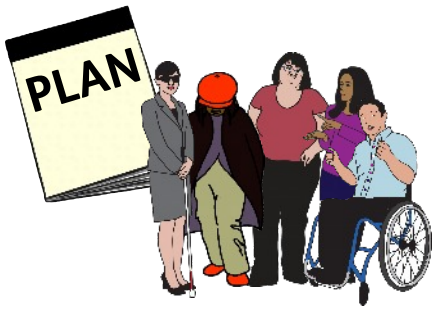
Employers must keep to the Disability Convention and make any changes people need to help them get and keep a job. Employers must make sure people with disabilities do not face discrimination for one or more reasons. For example because they are a woman and have a disability.



About half as many Norwegian people with disabilities have a job than people without disabilities.



More people with disabilities between 25 and 39 years old have a job than younger or older people with disabilities.



A new government plan says public offices must employ at least 5 people with disabilities for every 100 workers.

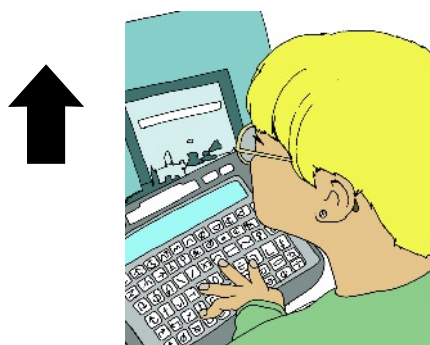


National and local governments work together to help more people with disabilities get jobs. They give people extra help to get a job, jobs for a short time to get experience, and money towards their wages.



The Special Rapporteur was pleased to see these things in Norway. But she feels the government should do more to:

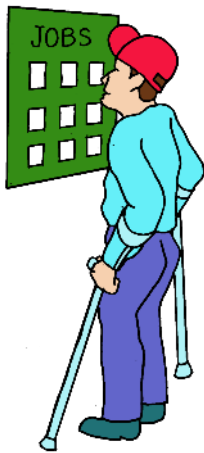
- find out if people with disabilities get jobs when they finish work training courses



- have more workplaces for people with disabilities



- give better support to get jobs to people with learning disabilities, mental health problems and severe disabilities



- look at other ways to help people with disabilities get jobs and earn money to support themselves. Especially younger people with disabilities and people with learning disabilities.



## Social protection

**Social protection** is things that give everyone the same chances in life.

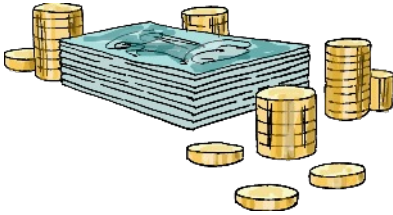
For example:

- having enough food





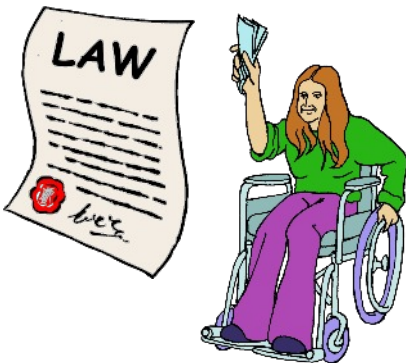
- basic healthcare



- money to help pay for things if you cannot work or earn enough.



There is very good social protection for people with disabilities in Norway.



The law says people with disabilities should get **benefits**.

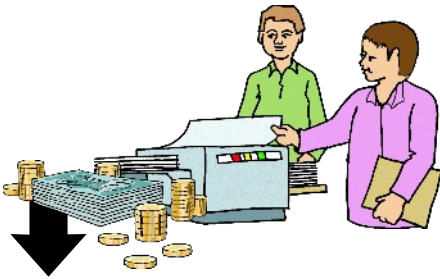


Benefits include money for:

- care and support



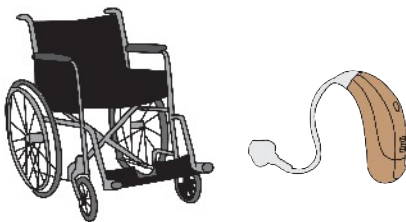
- people between 18 and 67 years old who cannot work because of their disability



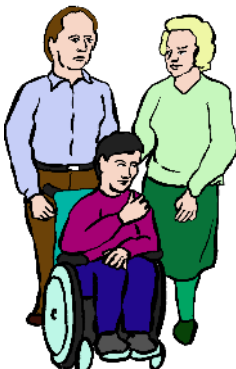
- people with disabilities who work but cannot earn as much as other people



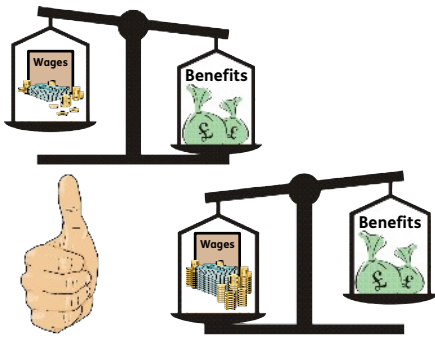
- healthcare



- equipment



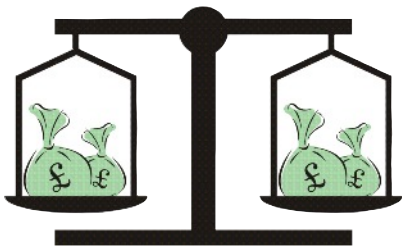
- parents of children with disabilities.



The Special Rapporteur likes the way disability benefits in Norway can easily go up or down depending on how much money a person earns.



But many people with disabilities have only benefits to live on. They have less money to spend than people without disabilities. They often have to pay for extra things because of their disability.



The Special Rapporteur asked the government to look at ways to make this fairer.



## Living independently in the community

In the past many people with disabilities lived in large hospitals or **institutions** away from their homes and families.

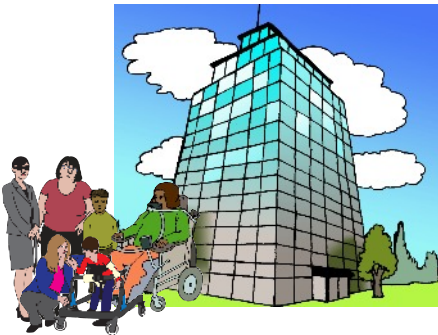




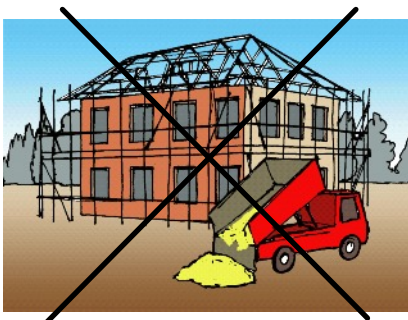
About 30 years ago the government closed many of these places and people moved to their own homes in the community.



But the Special Rapporteur thinks too many people with disabilities still live in nursing homes or care homes. This includes children with disabilities.



She is worried that many people with learning disabilities live in flats in buildings where only people with disabilities live.



The government should stop building new services to care for adults and children with disabilities away from their homes.



Local governments must make sure people with disabilities have the services and benefits they need to live independently.



The law also says that anyone under 67 years old who needs support because they have a disability can have money to choose and pay for this. This includes parents of children with severe disabilities who are living at home.



The Special Rapporteur is pleased with these ideas but found people in different areas get different support and services. Some people have to move to get the support they need. This takes away their choice about where to live.



She thinks it is difficult for some people with disabilities and their families to find out about services and get the right support.



The national government must make sure local governments build housing for people with disabilities to live independently in the community.



They should give parents of children with disabilities the support they need to care for them at home.



## Health

The law in Norway says everyone has the right to good health.



The government has enough money to run good health care services. Most health care is almost free for everyone.



The government tries to make health services accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. But it is still difficult for people with disabilities to get the health care they need.

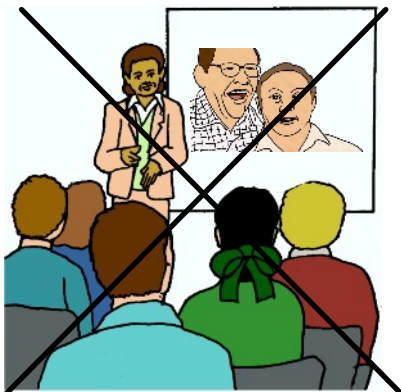


The Special Rapporteur found that:

- people with learning disabilities get poor services in many local areas



- many people with learning disabilities who live in care homes or have home care get poor healthcare.



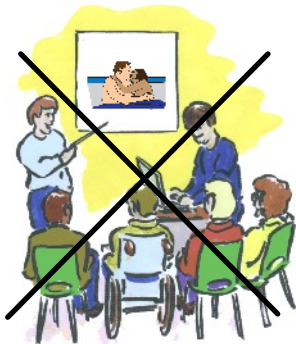
This often happens because staff are not trained to understand people's different health problems or cannot communicate with them. People also get support from lots of different staff who might not share information they need to.



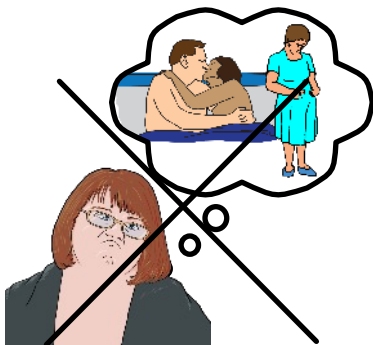
Things are difficult for indigenous people. Health staff cannot communicate with Sami people or give them healthcare that is right and safe for them.



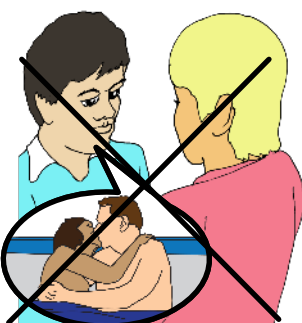
Sami people do not like using an interpreter to talk to health staff. It means someone from their community knows very personal things about them.



People told the Special Rapporteur that **sexual and reproductive health** education does not work for many young people with disabilities.



Other people think they do not need to know about sexuality, pregnancy, motherhood or abuse.



This means they are at risk and do not know how to talk about or deal with these things.

## Being involved in decisions about mental health and social care



Laws about mental health and social care in Norway allow services to force people with learning disabilities, mental health problems, autism or dementia to have treatment they do not agree to.

This can happen if doctors think the person:



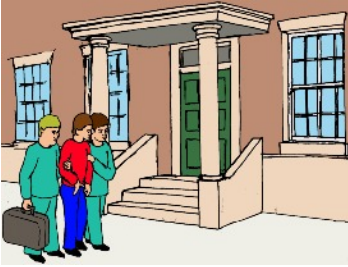
- needs the treatment,



- cannot decide for themselves to agree to treatment, or

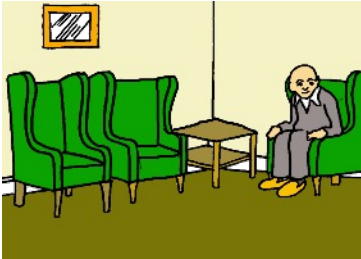


- is a danger to themselves or other people.



People with disabilities can be:

- forced to stay in hospital



- kept away from other people



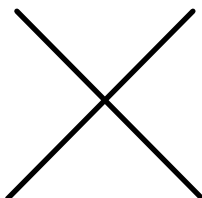
- **restrained**



- forced to have medicine



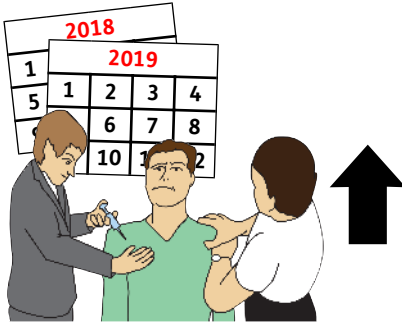
- forced to go to hospital as a day patient.



All this is wrong.



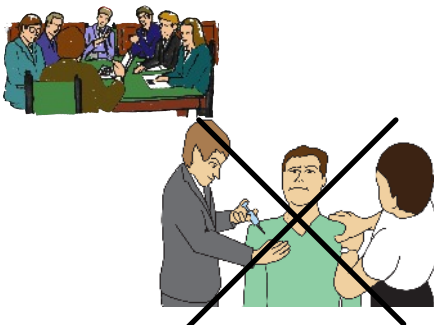
The government is trying to stop this from happening.



But the Special Rapporteur found more people are being forced to have treatment each year.



Some local governments make really poor decisions about forcing people with learning disabilities to have treatment or care.



The Special Rapporteur says things will only change if all services think about human rights and the government looks at how to end forced treatment.





This can only happen if there are more community services and better support for people to make decisions about their treatment and care.



The Special Rapporteur saw 2 very good examples of mental health services that do not force people to have treatment.

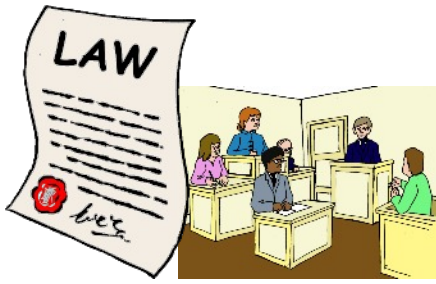


The Disability Convention says governments must give people the support they need but respect their choices about their own lives.

## Legal capacity



**Legal capacity** is the right of anyone over 18 to make legal decisions and to have them respected.



The law in Norway says the local government or a court can choose a **guardian** to make decisions with or for another person.



Local **governors** can choose someone to help people with disabilities to manage money and everyday decisions.

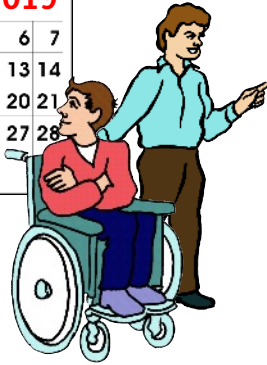


Governors can do it without their permission if they think the person cannot agree to it.



A court can also choose a guardian to act for someone with disabilities if the court thinks they cannot make decisions for themselves and the person do not want to have help. When a court choose the guardian, this takes away their choices and the right to make decisions.

October 2019						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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Many lawyers and families ask for the help of guardians. In October 2019 over 17 thousand people with disabilities had guardians they had not agreed to.



The Special Rapporteur found many guardians are lawyers who make decisions for too many people and do not get to know what is important to them.



Norway did not agree to the part of the Disability Convention that says governments should get rid of all laws that take away a person's right to make or be involved in their own decisions.



The Special Rapporteur believes this is wrong but is happy the government were able to talk to her about it.

She said the government should look at ways to:



- find out what the person wants and support them to make decisions



- work out what the person would have wanted based on what is important for them, if other people cannot understand what the person wants



- give people the chance to say what they would want to happen if they cannot make decisions for themselves in the future.



The Special Rapporteur wrote another report about legal capacity. It has more information about how to do this well.

## Working with the United Nations and other countries



- Norway gives a lot of help and money to other countries. This includes people with disabilities



- the government gives money to projects that include and support the rights of people with disabilities



- the Special Rapporteur is happy that the government involves people with disabilities and their organisations in planning these projects



- Norway must check that projects in other countries do really help people with disabilities. And that the United Nations includes people with disabilities in all their projects.



## 6. What happens next?



The government has done lots of things to help people with disabilities get their rights in Norway.



Now the government must make sure:

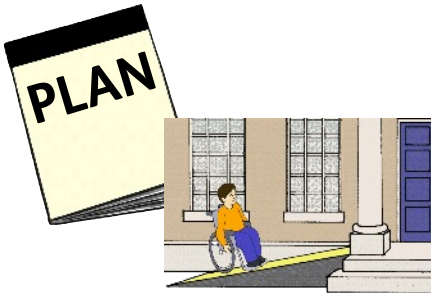
- they have good plans and laws for the future
- people with disabilities get more services close to where they live. These should include good support, healthcare, schools and places to live.







- make sure people who work for the government and other services know how to use the Disability Convention



- start work as soon as possible on the plan to include people with disabilities and make services and buildings accessible to everyone.



## 2. Better information

- collect information about people with disabilities who are younger than 20 and older than 67 years



- keep working on better ways to collect information about the number of people with different disabilities.



### 3. How other people think about people with disabilities



- make sure the national and local governments work together to use the Disability Convention. This includes listening to groups of people with disabilities and giving them enough money to do this work

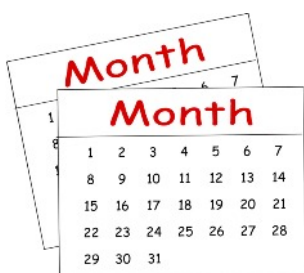


- make sure Sami people with disabilities have support from services that speak their language and understand their culture.



### 4. Doing the same things as other people

- keep working on the plan to make streets, buildings and transport better for all people with disabilities



- say when these changes will happen in all parts of Norway and set aside money to pay for them



- make internet services accessible to people with disabilities, including older people



- use Norwegian sign language as an official language. Help deaf people to learn it and use it and make sure there are enough sign language interpreters.



## 5. Being involved

- change the law about election so people with disabilities can have someone they choose to help them to vote



- make sure information about elections is accessible for all people with disabilities



- make it easy for people with disabilities to get into buildings and vote



- support men and women with disabilities to be elected into local or national government



- follow the Disability Convention and support organisations of people with disabilities to be involved in public life. This includes autistic people, people with a learning disability or mental health problem and other groups who often get left out.



## 6. School and college

- make sure all education services work together to help children with disabilities get good support to keep learning



- give each child with disabilities the support they need to learn with children without disabilities



- make changes to books, teaching information and the way they are taught to support children with disabilities to learn. This includes using Sami languages



- make it easier for students with disabilities to study at college and university.

## 7. Work and having a job

- make sure employers keep to Norway's plan for including people with disabilities. This includes the rule that says public services must employ 5 people with disabilities in every 100 workers





- find out how much it costs the government and how it affects communities when people with disabilities cannot get jobs

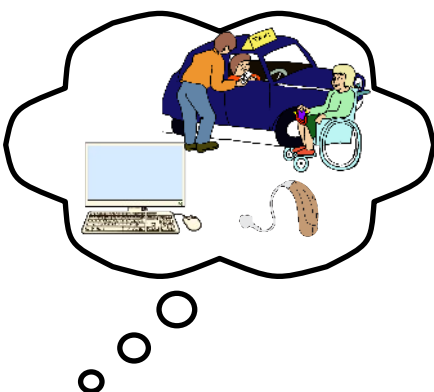


- make sure local governments have enough money and staff to make sure people with disabilities get jobs when they finish work training courses.



## 8. Social protection

- act to stop people with disabilities being worse off than other people



- think about the extra things people with disabilities have to pay for.

## 9. Living independently in the community

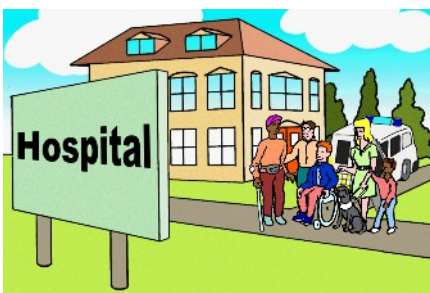


- change the law so people over 67 years old can also have money to choose and pay for their support



- have clear plan to set up more services in the community. So children and adults with disabilities can live in their houses, and not in residential homes.

## 10. Health



- build more services in the community so people with disabilities can get good healthcare near their homes



- use accessible information to teach young people and women with disabilities about sexual health and their rights

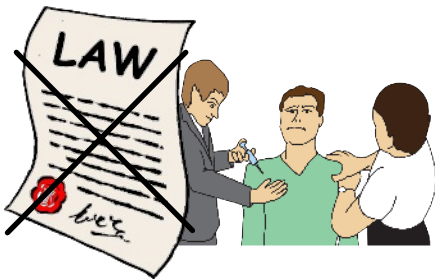


- train health staff to communicate with Sami people and give them healthcare that is right and safe for them.

## 11. Making choices about mental health and social care



- change the law so people with disabilities, mental health problems and dementia have the right to make their own decisions, with as much support as they need

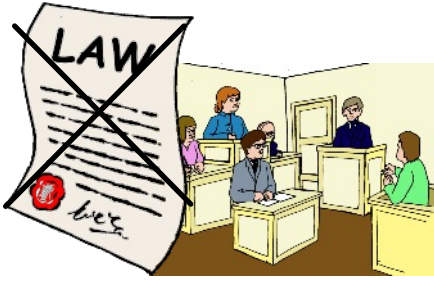


- get rid of laws that take away a person's right to make their own decisions and be forced to have treatment they do not want



- learn from services that understand how to support people with disabilities and to be involved in their own decisions without using force. Spend money to help other services do this.

## 12. Legal capacity



- get rid of laws that take away a person's right to make decisions for themselves



- have new laws that say people must find out what is important to a person and support them to make or be involved in decisions



- involve people with disabilities in **research** into how different types of support help them understand, make, and communicate their own choices



- make sure all people with disabilities, including people with learning disabilities or mental health problems, have support to be involved in decisions





- train people with disabilities, their families, public services and staff about legal capacity and people's right to have support to make decisions.

### 13. Working with the United Nations and other countries



- check that projects they give money to in other countries do help people with disabilities.



- find out how other countries and the United Nations are including people with disabilities.



## 8. What the words mean

**Abuse** - be cruel or violent towards another person.

**Accessible** – easy to use or understand.

**Audio description** – when someone describes what is happening to help blind people.

**Benefits** - money the government gives to people who need help because they have a disability or cannot work.

**Convention** – a legal agreement between different countries.

**Dementia** – is an illness that affects the brain and memory and can make people confused. It gets worse over time and mostly affects older people. But younger people can get it too.

**Discriminate** – to treat someone badly or unfairly because of who they are. For instance because of their disability.

**Equality** – having the same rights and chances as other people.

**Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act** – a law that says it is wrong for some people to have fewer rights or chances, or be treated worse than other people.

**Governor**- the person who acts for the government in a place or local area.

**Guardian** - someone who takes on another person's rights, including taking decisions for them.

**Hate speech** - when someone says something rude, threatening or abusive to another person because of who they are. For example, because of their race or because they have a disability.

**Inclusion** – being involved and able to take part in things that other people do.

**Indigenous people** - the people who originally settled in a country or area. Not those who moved there later and often have more power and control.

**Institution** – a building or place where certain people are kept away from their families or other people. This happens for many children or adults who have a disability.

**Internet** - a worldwide system of computer which allows one computer to communicate with and get information from other computers.

**Interpreter** – someone who helps people to communicate by translating one language into another language when someone is speaking or signing.

**Legal capacity** - means that anyone over 18 years old can make legal agreements or decisions.

**Ministry of Culture** - the part of the Norwegian government that controls plans and rules for things like art, theatre, music, TV, radio, newspapers and sport.

**Ombud** - an independent person who looks into complaints against parliament, the government or public organisations.

**Parliamentary** - things parliament does to speak for the people, make laws, and check what the government does.

**Polling station** - a building like a school or community centre, where people go to vote in an election.

**Polling booth** - a private area where people write their vote in an election.

**Research** - a planned and organised way to answer questions and find things out.

**Reproductive health** - the right to decide whether or not to have children and support to have healthy children.

**Restrain** - when staff stop someone doing something or make them do something they do not want to do. This includes holding, taking medication or keeping the person away from other people.

**Rights** - a rule about what every person is allowed to do or have. For example, the right to vote, use services or have an education. Rights should not be taken away from people. Many rights are put into laws to give people extra protection.

**Human Rights** - basic rights and freedoms that should happen for every person in the world. For example to be treated fairly, equally and with respect.

**Sami** - indigenous people from Norway, Sweden, Finland and some parts of Russia.

**Sexual health** - the right to enjoy safe sexuality and keep well and healthy.

**Sign language** - a way for deaf people to communicate making signs using their hands and other body movements.

**Social protection** – things that give everyone the same chances in life. For example, having enough food, basic healthcare, going to school or money to help pay for things.

**Tribunal** – an organisation that can settle an argument between a person and the government or a public organisation.

**Vote** – an organised way to choose people to be part of local or national government.



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