



What's the 'Problem' with Workplace Accommodation? A Disability Policy Journey Over Time

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RESEARCH



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ABSTRACT

To level the playing field in employment, the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities require state parties to ensure the provision of reasonable accommodation in the workplace. The international literature shows that barriers to workplace accommodation (WA) provision arise during recruitment, hiring, and retention. In this paper, we complement prior research by examining how WA is represented in policy documents targeting disability and employment in Norway over the past 50 years. Bacchi's policy analysis framework inspired the analysis and discussion. The analysis reveals a pattern over three time periods: 1) segregation, including the state applying a holistic approach and responsibility for WA; 2) integration, including an activation approach stimulating employer responsibility; and 3) inclusion, including holding employers more responsible. The results lead us to ask whether too much financial responsibility and work-inclusion efforts to increase employment among disabled people are currently left up to employers.

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Countries that adhere to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) are committed to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided to persons with disabilities in the workplace (UNCRPD 2006: Article 27). The aim of providing workplace accommodation (hereafter WA), according to the CRPD and other legislation (e.g., the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act), is to promote equal employment opportunities. For the individual, research shows that WA may be essential for work performance. For employers, WA provision is seen as a way to facilitate the recruitment and retention of qualified labour and increase productivity and for society, WA has been viewed as an important means of levelling the playing field in employment, as well as improving the quality of life of disabled people (Nevala et al. 2015; Padkapayeva et al. 2017).

The international literature has shown that the issue of WA has received significant attention from policymakers and, subsequently, researchers. Research has identified various types of accommodations, highlighting the barriers to and facilitators of WA provision (Nevala et al. 2015; Padkapayeva et al. 2017). The next step is to take a critical stance and examine how policies have represented the issue and the possible solutions.

In the present article, we use Norway as a case and draw on a document analysis of white papers presented to the Norwegian Storting (i.e., the Parliament) by different governments over the past 50 years. White papers may be understood as authoritative social-political documents (Breimo & Sandvin 2009) and are documents that the government presents to the parliament when it wants to introduce and discuss matters. The reports often concern plans that the Government is considering implementing, and which it wishes to discuss in the Storting with a view to possible future legislation, and/or may include political and economic analysis. The first white paper concerning disability was presented in 1967 (Report to the Storting No 88 (1966–1967)),¹ during what is known as the golden age of the welfare state (from 1945 until the mid-1970s), when there was an expansion of welfare services and benefits (Pedersen & Kuhnle 2017). Today, as a Nordic welfare state, Norway is still viewed as a generous and active state with extensive public service provisions (Pedersen & Kuhnle 2017; see also Kautto 2010; Sandvin, Vike & Anvik 2020), including an active labour market policy that aims to create equal opportunities in employment for disabled people. The current article aims to provide insights into how the understandings and responsibilities of WA have developed over time. We also draw out the implications for achieving the goal set in the welfare and labour policy of increasing employment among disabled people. To do this, our analysis is inspired by a discourse analysis developed by Bacchi (2006). In line with Bacchi (2009), we propose that how the policies represent a problem has implications for how it is handled. Governmental representations of WA are viewed as a ‘problematization’, signalling that ‘problems’ are considered to be forms of ‘construction’ (Bacchi 2015: 4). Problematization can be understood as ways in which ‘problems’ are produced and represented (Bacchi 2015: 5) by key social actors. According to this approach, we can identify the implications for how governments, through their policies, address what is seen as a ‘problem’ that ought to be ‘fixed’, as well as the efforts seen as important to achieve a solution.

To briefly contextualise the area of employment and disability in Norway before embarking on an exploration of how WA has been represented over time, we note that, despite the state’s efforts over the years to facilitate increased employment among disabled people, an estimated 40.6% of the disabled population (aged 15–66 years) is employed, compared with 73.4% of the general population (Statistics Norway 2020). From an all-time high of 45.3% in 2007 and 2008, the rate has dropped by almost five percentage points over the years. These persistent employment gaps between individuals with and without disabilities prevail across the world (Heymann, Stein & Moreno 2014). Among those who are employed, Norwegian labour force statistics show that most report that they have received physical or technological modifications to their work, task modifications, or scheduling accommodations. Nonetheless, 17% report that they have not been provided with what they need (Statistics Norway 2019) and a 2018 report states that this proportion has been the same for several years (Statistics

1 A Report to the Storting is a white paper presented to the parliament by the government.

Norway 2018). In its supplementary report from 2015 to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Norwegian Ombud raises concerns about the lack of WA provision. It is the Ombud that audits the authorities' compliance with their obligations under the CRPD. The Ombud refers to a 2014 review of decisions in 27 complaint cases about individual accommodations in working life in the period from 2007 to 2013 (LDO 2015). The review shows that the Ombud found a breach of the law in nine cases. In its remarks to Norway, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities highlights its concerns about the limited effort to promote the inclusion of disabled people in employment and about prevailing discriminatory practices, including the lack of WA provision (CRPD 2019). A comprehensive body of international literature echoes these concerns, showing that disabled people may encounter barriers to being provided with adequate accommodations in recruitment, hiring, and retention (Nevala et al. 2015; Padkapayeva et al. 2017; Vedeler & Schreuer 2011). A lack of employer training and education has been identified as a recurring challenge (Breimo, Anvik & Olsen 2021; Padkapayeva et al. 2017).

METHODS AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Workplace accommodation has been highlighted as an important answer to the issue of how to increase employment among disabled people, both by policymakers and experts, and has been emphasised in political documents such as white papers. To investigate how governmental understandings of WA responsibility may have changed over time, we apply a critical analytical approach inspired by Bacchi's perspective of how a 'problem' is represented and understood in policy and political analyses. Bacchi builds on Foucault and develops a problematisation analysis of how accepted practices are embedded in established governmental assumptions and notions (Bacchi 2015). Bacchi describes her approach as *What's the problem represented to be* (WPA) (Bacchi 2006), focusing on how policy contains within it a diagnosis and representation of a 'problem' (Bacchi 2006: 1). Inspired by Bacchi's WPR method, we approach governmental documents as texts produced for specific political purposes. Political texts can be viewed as a discursive tool seeking to 'embody and give effect to governmental ambitions' (Rose & Peter 1992: 175). This approach makes possible an analysis of what is considered significant political problems and solutions and, if relevant, what is undercommunicated or left out.

When investigating white papers from different eras, we identify how WA policy has emerged, been construed, presented and represented in policy over time. We chose to focus on white papers. The analysis is grounded in the question of how accommodation is understood as a policy object. We look at the problematisation underpinning the policy and what problem the policy is meant to address, how the measures proposed or implemented are formulated and who is assigned responsibility for the problem and its solution. By studying white papers over time, we are able to systematically grasp historical and political changes within this policy field.

As a basis for our analysis, we formulate two main questions for how to read and interpret political documents: 1) How is the relationship between disability and employment articulated? and 2) How is the division of WA responsibility between the authorities and employers presented, including the types of WAs the policy reports address? Based on these results, we discuss the patterns that emerge when we analyse the perception of and responsibility for providing WAs through half a century.

We follow the field of disability and employment over a period of 50 years, starting with a white paper from the late 1960s and concluding with a white paper from 2018. Please see Table 1 for an overview of the six selected reports. The analysis itself consisted of reading and comparing the chapters and the selected text sections and discussing the content with the analytical questions in mind. The aim was to identify patterns of similarities and differences between the statements regarding the problem perceptions and solution proposals set out in the white papers, which provided the results for what patterns we could identify when it comes to the responsibility for providing a WA. To categorise the types of WAs, we followed the categorisation developed by Padkapayeva et al. (2017): 1) physical/technological modifications, 2) workplace flexibility accommodations and 3) social accommodations.

WHITE PAPERS	PRESENTED TO THE STORTING BY WHICH GOVERNMENT	SELECTED SECTION FOR ANALYSIS AND THE MAIN FOCUS OF THE REPORT
Report to Storting No 88 (1966–1967) <i>On the development of care for disabled people</i>	Presented to the Storting by a coalition government consisting of the Conservative Party, Centre Party, Christian Democratic Party, and Liberal Party Recommendation of the Ministry of Social Affairs of 23 June 1967	Introduction & Chapter 5 ‘The Government hereby presents a report to the Storting on issues linked to disabled people, on measures that have already been implemented and on the guidelines that should be complied with in future work in this area’ (3). ²
Report to the Storting No 23 (1977–1978) <i>Disabled people in society</i>	Presented to the Storting by a Labour Party government Recommendation of the Ministry of Social Affairs of 26 August 1978	Introduction & Chapter 8 ‘By elucidating various aspects – health, education, work, housing, leisure time – of a person’s life situation, the report aims to see the individual in a comprehensive and overall context. The aim has thus not been to focus on the disability as such. Underlining the similarities between disabled and able-bodied people has been more important than highlighting differences, concerning their fundamental needs, possibilities and human rights. Changing and improving the situation of disabled people is therefore closely linked to the general development of society and cannot be seen or understood independently or isolated from it. Attitudes, ideologies and views of humanity are vital to how quickly the goals can be achieved’ (5).
Report to the Storting No 39 (1991–1992) <i>Rehabilitation and employment for vocationally disabled people</i>	Presented to the Storting by a Labour Party government Recommendation of the Ministry of Government Administration and Labour of 10 April 1992	Introduction & Chapter 6 The white paper provides ‘an overall assessment of sickness absence, rehabilitation, disability pension and strategies to promote the integration of vocationally disabled people/disabled people in the labour market. The policy and measures presented in this white paper herald the start of further policy development in this area’ (8).
Report to the Storting No 40 (2002–2003) <i>Dismantling of disabling barriers</i>	Presented to the Storting by a coalition government consisting of the Conservative Party, Christian Democratic Party and Liberal Party Recommendation of the Ministry of Social Affairs of 13 June 2003	Introduction & Chapter 5 ‘In this white paper, the Government presents strategies, goals and measures in its policy for people with functional impairments. People with functional impairments still face barriers that prevent equal opportunities for activity and participation. Disability arises in the gap between the individual’s preconditions and the requirements made by society. A policy for dismantling disabling barriers must improve the individual’s possibilities while also making society more accessible’ (5).
Report to the Storting No 9 (2006–2007) <i>Work, welfare and inclusion</i>	Presented to the Storting by a coalition government consisting of the Labour Party, Centre Party and Socialist Left Party Recommendation of the Ministry of Labour of 3 November 2006	The entire report ‘In this white paper on labour market inclusion and welfare, the Government reviews measures aimed at persons of working age who experience problems in gaining entry into working life, or who are about to drop out of working life’ (15).
Report to the Storting No 13 (2018–2019) <i>Opportunities for all</i>	Presented to the Storting by a coalition government consisting of the Conservative Party, Progress Party and Liberal Party Recommendation of the Ministry of Finance of 1 March 2019	Introduction, chapters 3 and 8 ‘This white paper addresses (among other things) inequality and low income in Norway, and the significance of the labour market and welfare schemes for distribution and opportunities. The white paper also sets out the Government’s efforts towards social sustainability and on combatting inequality and the consequences of inequality’ (5).

The selected white papers all deal with the issue of disability, employment and WA, including a focus on recruitment, hiring and retention. Whereas some white papers have taken a broader approach to the topic (for example, including various aspects such as health, education, work, housing and leisure time) the last two white papers address the situation of disabled people alongside that of other marginalised groups who experience problems in entering employment or dropping out of working life. Moreover, we note that the white papers have been recommended by different ministries, which means that they may refer to or address different policy areas.

We have not included a white paper that was presented to Storting in 1996 ([Report to Storting No 34 1996–1997](#)) in the analysis. Although it addresses the situation of disabled people, the white paper primarily reviews the government’s action plans from the 1990s and does not address the area of employment and WAs. Nor have we included these or other official reports (NOUs) or action plans (such as the Job Strategy for People with Disabilities, Ministry of Labour 2012). Because our focus has been limited to examining how the phenomenon of disability, employment and WAs have been interpreted and addressed and not the actions taken, we chose to focus on white papers that express the policy the government wants to pursue ([Sandvin & Breimo 2022](#)).

Table 1 Overview of the white papers selected for analysis.

2 A professional translator helped translate the quotes from the white papers.

HOW DO THE WHITE PAPERS ARTICULATE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISABILITY AND EMPLOYMENT?

Report to the Storting No 88 (1966–1967) was the first white paper to address the situation of disabled people. It refers explicitly to the labour shortage and responsibility entrusted by the constitution (Article 110) to the authorities ‘to create conditions under which every person capable of work can earn a living through their work or enterprise’ (36). The white paper focuses on the authorities’ responsibility to facilitate participation in employment for disabled people. Ordinary measures for high and stable employment are seen as favourable for all, including disabled people. The white paper notes that ‘the number of people on disability benefit has now reached almost 100,000. It must be assumed that many of them could have been employed if rehabilitation had provided a suitable offer of assistance’ (36). An understanding of the relationship between disability and employment is illustrated in the following quote:

A disability can be of a physical, mental or social nature and to a greater or lesser extent restrict people’s choice of vocation or make it difficult for them to find a suitable workplace. In relation to the labour market, however, it is the employee’s abilities, interests, knowledge and work experience that count most. The right choice of workplace can make a disability insignificant (30).

Although the overall policy objective is to get disabled people into ordinary employment, the white paper also addresses vocationally disabled people, those unable to adapt to ordinary working life, who are ushered into enterprises for vocationally disabled people that provide work training or, for some, offer a permanent, segregated workplace. The policy field is characterised by a top-down, state-initiated approach. The white paper does not address the municipal level or employers’ roles and responsibilities in the accommodation process.

A decade later, another white paper to the Storting on disabled people in society was presented: Report to the Storting No 23 (1977–1978). The proportion of disabled people outside the ordinary workforce is described as being too high. More emphasis is placed on preventive measures in the ordinary labour market to reduce dropout among those who have an impairment. A new Working Environment Act that emphasises employers’ responsibility to secure a safe working environment and strengthening the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority to monitor compliance with regulations are considered important actions to facilitate the retention of workers who have an impairment. Moreover, the white paper addresses the need for improved in-house rehabilitation. To improve employment opportunities for disabled people, interprofessional support is needed to ‘see the vocationally disabled person and his environment in context’ (64).

It is worth noting that both white papers emphasise that disabled people need WAs and training (and sheltered employment) *before* they can ‘find employment in the open market’ (Report to the Storting No 23 1977–1978: 62). In the subsequent white paper, known as the white paper on rehabilitation (Report to the Storting No 39 1991–1992), integration is highlighted more clearly: ‘Through this white paper, the Government wishes to show a stronger commitment in general to integrating disabled people into ordinary working life. This is related to the general normalisation and integration principles that provide the basis for policy design for disabled people in many areas of society’ (84).

The notion of workfare (in Norwegian, ‘arbeidslinja’) became a key concept in Norwegian politics in the 1990s, reinforcing the activation approach, which came to dominate employment policy over the following decades. Paid work is viewed as an unconditional benefit, and full employment is viewed as a goal (Hammer & Øverbye 2006). The activation policy implies that those receiving financial support of one kind or another from the public sector are obliged to participate in activation measures to participate in income-generating work. In Report to the Storting No 39 (1991–1992), this approach is evident: ‘Rehabilitation and other benefit schemes for people of working age must be improved to ensure that the most sensible choice for all parties is workfare rather than welfare. This is the type of improvement this white paper seeks to address’ (3, emphasis in original). Strategies for integrating disabled people into ordinary working life are explicitly emphasised. Integration is seen in the light of the Working Environment Act, and more weight is given to the role and responsibility of employers. Unlike before, rehabilitation is described as a process in which vocationally disabled people are deployed in ordinary working life (known as ‘place then train’, in contrast to the previous ‘train

then place' approach). The white paper also addresses employers' responsibility to pay disabled people ordinary wages for ordinary work.

A decade later, the last white paper to concentrate solely on the situation of disabled people was presented (Report to Storting No 40 2002–2003). Subsequent white papers have taken a broader approach, including other marginalised groups. As its title demonstrates, this white paper stresses the need to implement measures to reduce disabling barriers. Participation in working life is emphasised as the most significant gateway to participation in society. Measures to accommodate the workplace and monitor compliance are thematised: 'The newly adopted amendments to the Working Environment Act will mean that the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority will be assigned a clearer role in ensuring that enterprises accommodate the workplace such that employees with a reduced capacity for work can retain their employment relationship' (61).

Just a few years later, a white paper on welfare, employment and inclusion was presented to the Storting (Report to Storting No. 9 2006–2007). Although the prospects of the labour market were considered good at the time, the white paper expresses concern about the difficulties of marginalised groups in gaining access to the labour market and the exclusion of employees. It addresses the high rate of sick leave and disability pension recipients. It also refers to the relatively new agreement on inclusive workplaces, which entered into force in 2001, with the objective of 'improving the working environment, enhancing presence at work, preventing and reducing sick leave, and preventing exclusion and withdrawal from working life' (*The IA Agreement 2014: 1*; see also *Mandal & Ose 2015*). It also points to the Working Environment Act and employers' responsibility to provide WAs. One of the promises made in the white paper is that the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion will propose a bill on antidiscrimination and accessibility (an act enacted in 2008).

More than a decade later, Report to the Storting No 13 (2018–2019) also took a broad approach to the societal challenge of facilitating equal opportunities in employment for all members of society who are of working age. This report explicitly focuses on the situation of young people, immigrants and disabled people. Like previous reports, it also expresses concern about the growing number of people on health-related benefits. It addresses the issue of 'the benefit trap': 'Such benefit traps are unfavourable. They can have a significant negative impact on the labour supply and undermine the individual's possibility of improving their financial situation by utilising their work capacity' (73).

HOW DO THE WHITE PAPERS PRESENT THE DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE WA POLICY AREA?

In the first white paper, a financially strong state emerges as the key actor taking charge of the entire field of disability, employment and WA. Grants and loans are made available to employers and employees to facilitate employee participation. The approach taken in the early white papers shows recognition of the need to apply a holistic approach to accommodate disabled people in employment, not only in addressing technical aids for employees and grants for employers but also in acknowledging the need for transportation and housing support. In the past two decades, as legislation more explicitly set out employer responsibility regarding WA provision, the financial burden seems to be distributed to employers, although technical aids are provided by regional assistive technology centres and wage subsidies are available to employers if they have employees with a reduced work capacity. For an overview of WAs in the reports from 1966 to 2019, please see [Appendix 1](#).

Report to the Storting No 88 (1966–1967) barely mentions employer responsibility and instead mainly discusses government agencies' responsibilities. The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority's role in the prevention of occupational disability is addressed, referring to the Act on Occupational Safety (of 7 December 1956) on protection against dismissal. Furthermore, it emphasises the role of general employment services in facilitating increased employment, an emphasis that continues in Report to the Storting No 23 (1977–1978). This white paper also expresses the need for better cooperation between different professional groups, agencies, and levels (public services) to enhance employment among disabled people. In this report, in-house rehabilitation receives greater attention. The report points to the new Working Environment Act, which 'addresses consideration for disabled employees, including requirements relating to the design and arrangement of passageways, sanitary facilities, technical devices, and equipment, etc. to ensure that the enterprise can employ disabled people' (64).

Report to the Storting No 39 (1991–1992) thematises the difficulty of integrating vocationally disabled people in the public sector, compared with the private sector, based on legal constraints applied to public employers. Moreover, it states the following:

If the labour market in general – and employers in particular – are to be mobilised to utilise the great potential inherent in safeguarding and rehabilitation activities, statutory obligations would seem a natural measure to that end. Chief responsibility for rehabilitating employees already rests with employers under Section 13 of the Working Environment Act (72).

Report to the Storting No 40 (2002–2003) explicitly reviews the relationship between the authorities and employers in the section dealing with the inclusive workplace agreement. It states, ‘The workplace shall be the main arena for preventing sickness absence and exclusion, and for getting more people with functional impairments into work’ (58). The same report addresses the social partners’ and individual enterprises’ joint efforts to facilitate the inclusion of more disabled people in employment: ‘The letter of intent regarding a more inclusive working life is one of the many measures the Government will employ to achieve inclusive workplaces’ (58). The including working life (IW) agreement has three subgoals, in which the second concerns the recruitment, hiring and retention of disabled people. According to the white paper, ‘The IW agreement is one of the most important measures for developing and improving the working environment’ (59). In addition, Report to the Storting No 40 (2002–2003) states the following:

The newly adopted amendments to the Working Environment Act will mean that the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority will be assigned a clearer role in ensuring that enterprises accommodate workplaces such that employees with a reduced capacity for work can retain their employment relationship (...) The Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority will implement sanctions for enterprises that are unwilling to follow up. (62)

Report to the Storting No 9 (2006–2007) emphasises employers’ responsibilities to prevent exclusion and facilitate vulnerable employees. It points to the different measures available to the authorities, such as supervision, orders, coercive fines and halting of work. The establishment of new local welfare and employment agencies is expected to strengthen and improve the interactions between local governments and workplaces.³ Wage subsidies are described as making it profitable to employ and retain people who, for various reasons, have a permanently reduced capacity for work. Employers are key players:

According to the Working Environment Act, employers are responsible for expediting efforts to facilitate the working environment and accommodation work. Many amendments have been made to the Act in recent years to clarify and, in part, expand employers’ and employees’ obligations and tasks towards creating a preventive and inclusive working environment, most recently through the adoption of the new Working Environment Act in 2005. (233)

In the Report to the Storting No 13 (2018–2019), the government launched a new measure to facilitate increased employment participation among disabled people. In connection with the signing of the last agreement period for the *Letter of Intent Regarding a More Inclusive Working Life, A Working Life with Room for all 2019–2022*, the subgoals from the previous letters of intent were removed. The goal of the new IW agreement is for enterprises to create good inclusion arenas within the context of working life by making good, systematic efforts to reduce sickness absence and dropout. Thus, previous subgoal 2 – to prevent dropout and employ more people with functional impairments – is no longer included in the scope of the agreement. Responsibility for the work on recruitment and employment of disabled people is assigned to the inclusion initiative (cf. Report to the Storting No 13 2018–2019). Only one specific goal is outlined in the inclusion initiative, namely that 5% of all new state employees must be people with functional impairments or gaps in their CV. The white paper states the following:

³ In short, the so-called NAV reform was a merger of three public agencies, i.e., the former social security agency, the employment services and the municipal social services. It was initiated in 2006 and implemented until 2011. It was the largest reform in work and welfare seen in recent times, where municipalities and the state worked together to provide services. For more information, see, e.g., Christensen, Fimreite and Lægheid (2014).

A high rate of employment and low unemployment are important goals for the Government's economic policy, and the Government would like to take advantage of the positive development in the labour market to get more people outside the labour market into ordinary jobs. The Government has therefore launched a national inclusion initiative, where public and private actors will join forces to get more people with disabilities or gaps in their CVs into permanent ordinary jobs. (136)

This inclusion initiative was called *inkluderingsdugnaden*. When this initiative was terminated in 2022 because of a lack of intended results, no national policy ambitions to create equal opportunity in employment for disabled people have been created to fill its spot.

OVER TIME, HOW DO WHITE PAPERS PRESENT AND REPRESENT WA?

Looking at the political texts, we argue that the relationship between disability and working life represents different historical phases: the first phase running from 1960 to 1980, the second from 1980 to 2000, and the last from 2000 to 2020. The first phase sets out the problem – that is, the reason that the person in question is not in employment, specific to the individual disabled person – as illustrated by a quote from the first white paper: 'A disability can be of a physical, mental or social nature and to a greater or lesser extent restrict people's choice of vocation or make it difficult for them to find a suitable workplace' (Report to Storting No 88 1966–1967: 30). We characterise the policy in this area as **segregating** in the sense that the efforts and measures aimed at this group largely take place outside the ordinary labour market. This is illustrated by the wording of the problem as the difficulty of placing the individual disabled person in work. The solution is deemed to be to initially train/rehabilitate the person outside ordinary work through various enterprises and measures organised by the authorities and, subsequently, when and if the individual is capable of it, to be *placed* in ordinary work.

The understanding of disability changes in the second phase, from a focus on the individual and it being something you *are* to an understanding of a disability as something that arises in the gap between individual preconditions and the barriers created by society. We describe the policy, which is illustrated by the white paper on rehabilitation (1991–1992), as **integrating**, where workfare is an important element and where the emphasis is placed on activation. The benefits and measures from the public welfare administration are based on the clear goal of income-generating activities and a greater degree of testing out ordinary work. The understanding of work qualification also changes during this phase, from 'train then place' to 'place then train'. This underlines that training and qualification for work should take place within the scope of ordinary work, not through segregated services or measures. During this phase, the focus increasingly is placed on methods and tools that can be used to integrate vulnerable groups into ordinary work rather than on the individual's reduced capacity.

In the final phase, we find descriptions of **inclusive** policy, where the goal is to include everyone. The title of the last white paper, 'Opportunities for all' (2018–2019), illustrates this, and the report focuses on diversity and opportunities. The IW Agreement and strengthened legal protection and obligations are highlighted in the 2006–2007 white paper as important political means of building more inclusive workplaces. Inclusion should take place within the scope of ordinary work, and the measures linked to work inclusion should, to a much greater extent, be channelled directly to the workplace.

Although policy during this first period is characterised as segregating, the **authorities' overall responsibility** also clearly emerges. What is described as the golden age of the welfare state, which started after World War II and lasted until the mid-1970s, also influences the descriptions of a generous and active welfare state policy in the first two white papers. We describe the policy in the area as comprehensive. The authorities' overall responsibility is made clear concerning care for disabled people and WAs. Measures and policy instruments are initiated by the central government and implemented through labour market bodies, specialist services, professions, employment services, rehabilitation institutes, sheltered enterprises and so forth. The roles, obligations and responsibilities of municipalities, employers and employees/applicants are not highlighted to any great extent.

During the intermediary period, responsibility for the policy area is pushed more onto employers, which we observe as a **shift in responsibility**. Employers are encouraged to take greater responsibility for facilitating employment for vulnerable groups through various incentives, and

welfare policy and labour market policy are linked more closely together through the workfare approach and its focus on activating people who receive benefits from public authorities: 'rights are conditional on the willingness to work' (Report to the Storting No 39 1991–1992: 35). This intermediary period was characterised by a change in political direction (over the course of the 1980s) with a greater degree of liberalisation, tax cuts, and limitations to public spending (see Sandvin, Vike & Anvik 2020). Nonetheless, the policy still sets out that this area is the responsibility of the public authorities. For example, assistive technology centres underwent significant development and expansion during this period in terms of scope and the extent of their responsibility for assistive technology and accommodations.

The latter period is marked by an increasing political focus on ensuring that the initiatives to include and retain vulnerable groups are implemented in the context of work. Both the problem and solution are described as largely the responsibility of employers, who are assigned more responsibility for follow-up and accommodations. Strengthening the Working Environment Act, antidiscrimination legislation and establishing the IW agreement are policy instruments that aim to help achieve inclusive workplaces. The tripartite collaboration between the state and social partners is an important factor in the division of responsibility between the authorities and employers. The workplace is now assigned a very clear role in the work on inclusion. Strengthening employers' WA obligation is a key instrument in this context. Policy instruments and schemes that previously lay outside the scope of ordinary work are increasingly the domain of the workplace and are specifically linked to different forms of accommodation for the individual employee (sign language interpreter, functional assistant, etc.). As we have shown, this latter period is marked by a stronger focus on the workplace as an arena for the inclusion of people at risk of being excluded from the labour market. It strengthens employers' responsibility for accommodations, while the authorities provide a means of supporting the work. At the same time as the responsibility for the policy area being reassigned to individual enterprises, the authorities' role as a control function has increased. The Labour Inspection Authority has been assigned an increasing amount of supervisory authority and the authority to impose sanctions. We ask here whether the latter period may be designated as a **fragmentation of responsibility**, as the responsibility for working life inclusion in general and WA, in particular, has shifted from the authorities to the workplace and employers.

CONCLUSION

The implications of our findings echo, to a large extent, the concerns and recommendations made by the Norwegian Ombud (2015) and UN Committee (CRPD 2019). The Ombud is concerned that there are shortcomings in the implementation and follow-up of legal regulations and guidelines regarding employment, as stated in Article 27 of the UNCRPD. There are shortcomings when it comes to the development and implementation of training and guidance on how employers should work proactively to promote the employment of disabled people, including WA provision. The lack of universally designed workplaces is regarded as a major obstacle by both the Ombud and UN Committee; in this case, the UN Committee has asked Norwegian authorities to develop measures to make the physical environment of workplaces universally designed. We would also like to note that, although people with psychosocial disabilities are often categorised in policy documents as disabled people and that there has been a recognition of their difficulties in accessing the labour market ever since the first white paper in the 1960s, the WA toolkit still includes only a few specific measures to accommodate employment for this group. In white papers, attention has primarily been directed at developing and improving physical/technological modifications and workplace flexibility accommodations. Here, we see less expressed effort in focusing on social accommodation.

To summarise, inspired by the *What's the Problem Represented to Be* approach (Bacchi 2006), we have analysed white papers over a 50 year time period, revealing how WA has been represented in policies targeting disability and employment. Three distinct time periods stand out and key concepts come into play while the WA toolkit has been developed. We have identified a period starting in the 1960s when the Norwegian state first expressed its ambition to level the playing field for disabled people by introducing many of the WA tools still relevant today. Although the employment approach also encompassed ordinary employment, several of the measures deal with getting vocationally disabled people into a segregated working life and making it easier for employers to retain employees who acquired an occupational injury. This segregated period, in which the state applied a holistic approach to employment participation, was replaced by an

intermediate period in which the focus shifted towards integration. Employers were assigned increased responsibility for WAs, a responsibility that intensified starting in the 2000s, in what we have referred to as the inclusion period. In the period between 2000 and 2020 we observe a further expansion of the WA toolkit and increased employer responsibility for WA provision. The objectives of the policies remain ambitious, but the responsibility to translate policy into practice rests to a greater degree on employers. From a general point of view, we observe how, in the white papers, an active and comprehensive welfare state asserts its influence to a greater extent through legislative means and audits.

Our journey through time, starting some 50 years ago, reveals that the overall responsibility for WA has been delegated from the authorities to the employers. This constitutes an obligation for employers, but it also means that each workplace is required to have extensive expertise in WA provision. Our historical analysis leads us to ask whether *too* much financial responsibility and work-inclusion efforts are currently left up to employers (Breimo, Anvik & Olsen 2021). This is a particularly important question to raise in light of the persistent low employment rate among disabled people.

Appendix 1 Overview of WAs in white papers from 1966 to 2019.

APPENDIX

Report to the Storting	i) Physical/ technological modifications (Assistive devices, built environment)	ii) Workplace flexibility accommodations (Job modifications, personal assistance services, scheduling accommodations, work locations, transportation)	iii) Social accommodations (Workplace culture, workplace supports, communication)
Report to the Storting No 88 (1966-1967) On the development of care for disabled people Presented to the Storting by a coalition government consisting of the Conservative Party, Centre Party, Christian Democratic Party and Liberal Party	<i>To employees:</i> Grants are available to cover technical aids (e.g., audio recorder, writing equipment for the blind, glasses, hearing aids). <i>To employers:</i> Grants or loans to acquire technical aids in the workplace.	Temporary wage subsidy (up to 24 weeks). Grants are available to acquire adapted transportation. Grants are available if moving is required to get a job and to access housing.	
Report to the Storting No 23 (1977-1978) Disabled people in society Presented to the Storting by the Labour government	Technical aids and adaptation of the workplace will be funded by National Insurance contributions ‘The new Working Environment Act addresses consideration for disabled employees, including requirements relating to the design and arrangement of passageways, sanitary facilities, technical devices and equipment etc. to ensure that the enterprises can employ disabled people’ (64).	Temporary wage subsidy for up to one year for work training candidates. A graded disability pension if work capacity is reduced by at least 50%.	
Report to the Storting No 39 (1991-1992) Rehabilitation and work for vocationally disabled people Presented to the Storting by the Labour government	Increase competence in the regional assistive technology centres about technical aids required in employment. Most of the aids the centres provide are not related to employment-related activities. The employer must pay for technical aids but if expenses exceed half of the National Insurance basic amount; National Insurance contributions may cover the rest. For those with reduced work capacity who find it hard to find work on their own, the National Insurance scheme will cover all technical aid expenses. Under section 6.7 Adaptation of workplaces, technical aids and information technology: ‘However, technical aids have not been used to any significant extent in workplace accommodation’ (94). This is explained by poor knowledge of workplace accommodation among help services, employers and employees alike. ‘The employment service does not provide grants for technical aids in the workplace’ (94), but the National Insurance scheme can do so to a certain extent. Competence in workplace accommodation through the use of technical aids will be clarified in the future organisation of assistive technology centres.	A graded disability pension if work capacity is reduced by at least 50%; a greater emphasis is needed on the use of this combination. May need a reduced work schedule.	Funding available for mentorship at workplace level through an integration subsidy scheme, which can last for up to 3 years.

Report to the Storting	i) Physical/ technological modifications (Assistive devices, built environment)	ii) Workplace flexibility accommodations (Job modifications, personal assistance services, scheduling accommodations, work locations, transportation)	iii) Social accommodations (Workplace culture, workplace supports, communication)
<p>Report to the Storting No 40 (2002–2003)</p> <p>Presented to the Storting by a coalition government consisting of the Conservative Party, Christian Democratic Party and Liberal Party</p>	<p>The employer is responsible for adapting the physical environment and for providing the technical aids required to do work tasks.</p>	<p>The employer is responsible for adapting working hours, work tasks and the necessary training to do the job.</p> <p>Functional assistance, previously a temporary measure, will be introduced as a permanent measure.</p> <p>No limit on the number of hours for interpreters.</p>	
<p>Report to the Storting No 9 (2006–2007)</p>	<p>The employment and welfare agency may provide support for technical aids, adaptations of machines and adaptation of the physical environment.</p> <p>Job seeker with a disability: through the ‘guaranteed follow-up’ scheme, a disabled job seeker can present documentation to the employer showing that practical challenges associated with workplace accommodation for disabled people; this will quickly trigger assistance from the persons responsible in the local area or from the assistive technology centre. This is contingent on the user and the assistive technology centre collaborating on the content of the guarantee certificate. This ‘guaranteed follow-up’ certificate is a document that can be enclosed with the job application. The document provides a contact person at the assistive technology centre and outlines relevant measures when expedient.</p> <p>According to page 235, the employer is bound through the Working Environment Act to undertake certain duties to ensure that the workplace accommodates disabled job seekers. Section 4–1(4) of the Working Environment Act sets out a general requirement that passageways, sanitary facilities, work equipment, etc. shall, to the extent possible and reasonable, be designed and arranged so that employees with disabilities can work at the enterprise.</p> <p>Reference is made to the new Act of 2004 (14). We have a new Working Environment Act that highlights and clarifies employers’ responsibility to prevent exclusion and make adaptations for vulnerable employees. Employers shall ensure that the working environment is fully satisfactory at all times. This also applies during reorganisations. We have means of ensuring that employers meet the requirements set out in the Working Environment Act, e.g., inspections, orders and sanctions such as coercive fines and halting of work.</p>	<p>The employment and welfare agency may provide support for reading and secretarial assistance for the blind and partially sighted, interpreting assistance for the hearing impaired and interpreting and accompanying assistance for the deafblind.</p> <p>According to page 103, transport assistance can be provided on various grounds. People who are dependent on using a particular means of transport, i.e., taxi to and from work, because of a disability may be entitled to a basic transport benefit. To be able to get to and from their place of work, assistance can be granted for the procurement of a car for people with permanent mobility problems. It is a condition for this benefit that the disabled person’s disability renders them unable to use public transport or that the use of public transport entails an unreasonable burden.</p>	
<p>Report to the Storting No 13 (2018–2019)</p>		<p>The wage subsidy scheme has been simplified to enable employers to use it more and to employ more people from vulnerable groups.</p>	

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