



Experiences and visions in local and national policies to transform universal design into practice in Norway

Kirsti Svinø

Senior Adviser



Bufdir

Agenda

- > Bufdir – role on universal design
- > Universal design – Norwegian context
- > Organizational framework
- > The Government Action Plan on Universal Design
- > How Bufdir cooperate with stakeholders to ensure continuous progress and attention on universal design
- > Knowledge on the level of and attention to Universal Design in Norway



Bufdir

Bufdir...

- > Is the government agency responsible for equality and non-discrimination
- > Answer to the Ministry of Culture and Equality, on issues related to equality

Works sector wide and is tasked to convey knowledge and analysis on the development of equality and discriminations regarding gender, **disability**, sexual orientation, gender identity- and characteristics, ethnicity and religion.

Bufdir is also working on achieving the governments' goal of a **universally designed society**



Universal Design

Universal design - two main definitions:

«Universal design» means designing or accommodating the **main solution** with respect to the physical conditions, such that the general functions of the undertaking can be used by **as many people as possible**, regardless of disability.

-Section 17 in the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act

“Universal design” means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable **by all people**, to the **greatest extent possible**, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. “Universal design” shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed

- Article 2 in CRPD

Universal design is a prerequisite for achieving the SDG



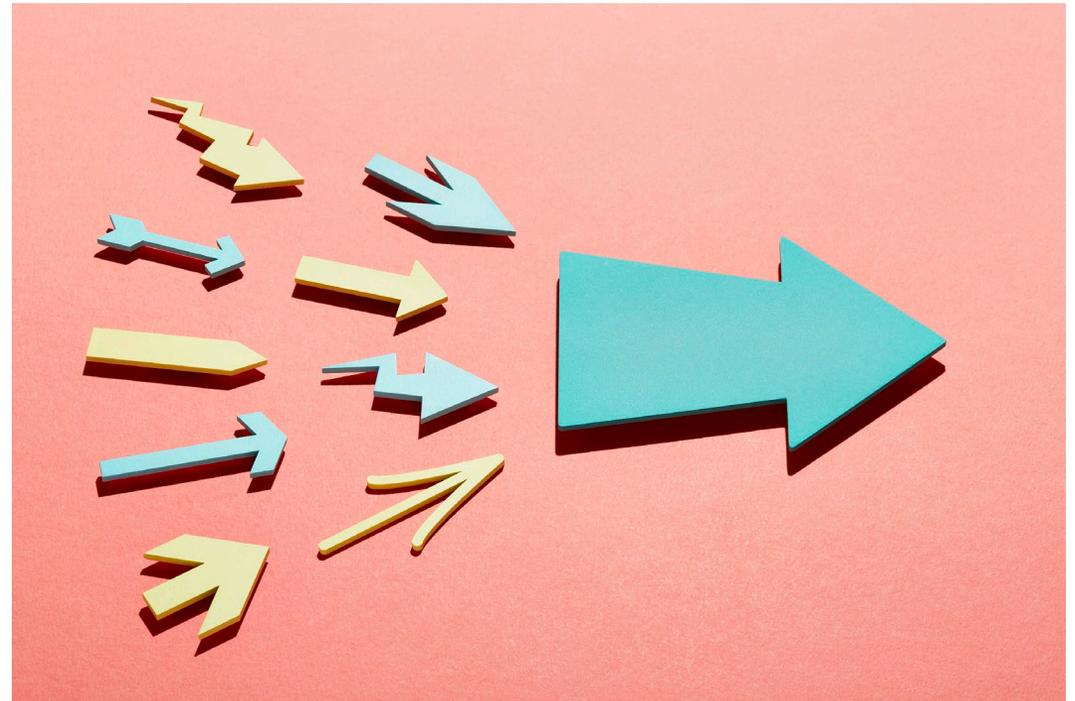
...and also necessary for meeting the obligations under the CRPD



Who are responsible for ensuring universal design in Norway?

«All Public companies shall work actively and targeted to advance universal design within the company. The same goes for private companies aimed at the general public»

§19 in the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act



Universal Design!= Universally designed

”

...the obligation for universal design shall be considered fulfilled if the agency meets the requirements for universal design laid down in law or regulations

Prop 81L 2016-2017: 324



So what does this mean in our daily work on universal design?

- > | The Planning and Building Act the term Universal Design is used in two different ways:
 1. As a Principle
 2. As a Material Requirement
- > The Principle of Universal Design applies to the entire Act
- > Material Requirements within the building regulations are minimal requirements for universal design
- > The regulation for universal design of ICT solutions also holds requirements for universal design



Challenges

- > Do we all have the same understanding of «universal design» (or «accessibility»)?
 - How can we establish a mutual understanding of these somewhat ambiguous concepts/terms?
 - Using data and information from various sources
- > When is «Universal Design» achieved?
 - Universal design as a verb (process) not as a noun (a definite thing)
 - Dilemmas and conflicting needs



The goal is equality and participation for all

- > Universal design is a **tool**, not the **goal**
- > It is a process that require continuous work and reevaluation

”

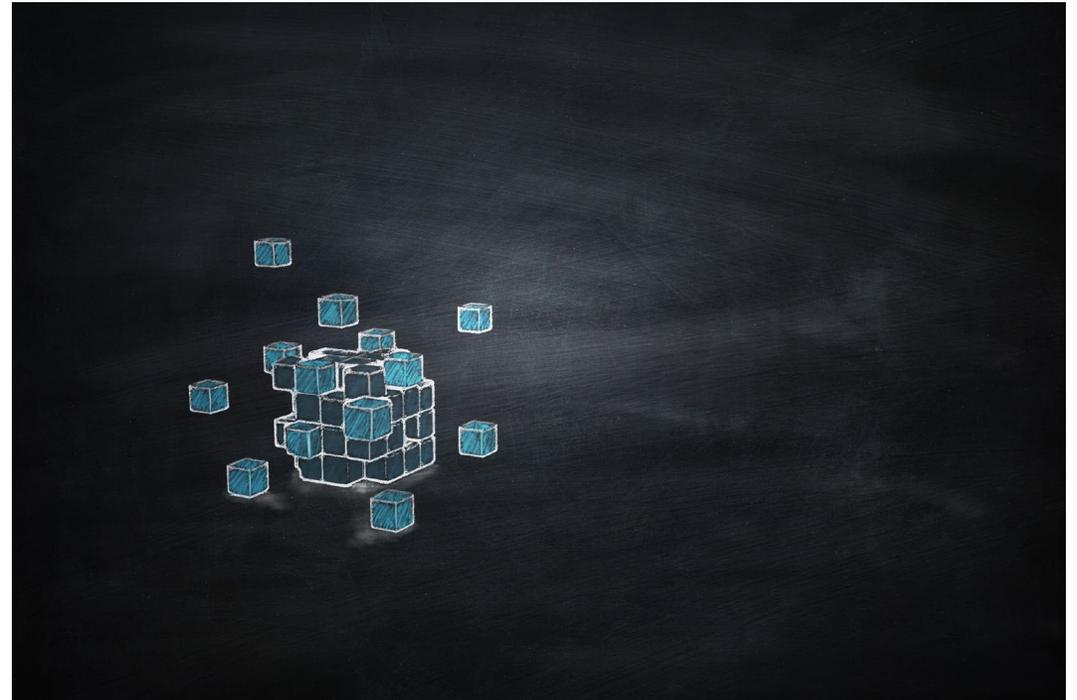
Universal design should always be a verb and never a noun

J.T. Dolmage

Organizational framework

Organizing of efforts on equality and Universal Design

- > Equality work is a cross-sectoral endeavour
- > The sector principle:
 - The various sectors/authorities are responsible for equality and accessibility within their own field

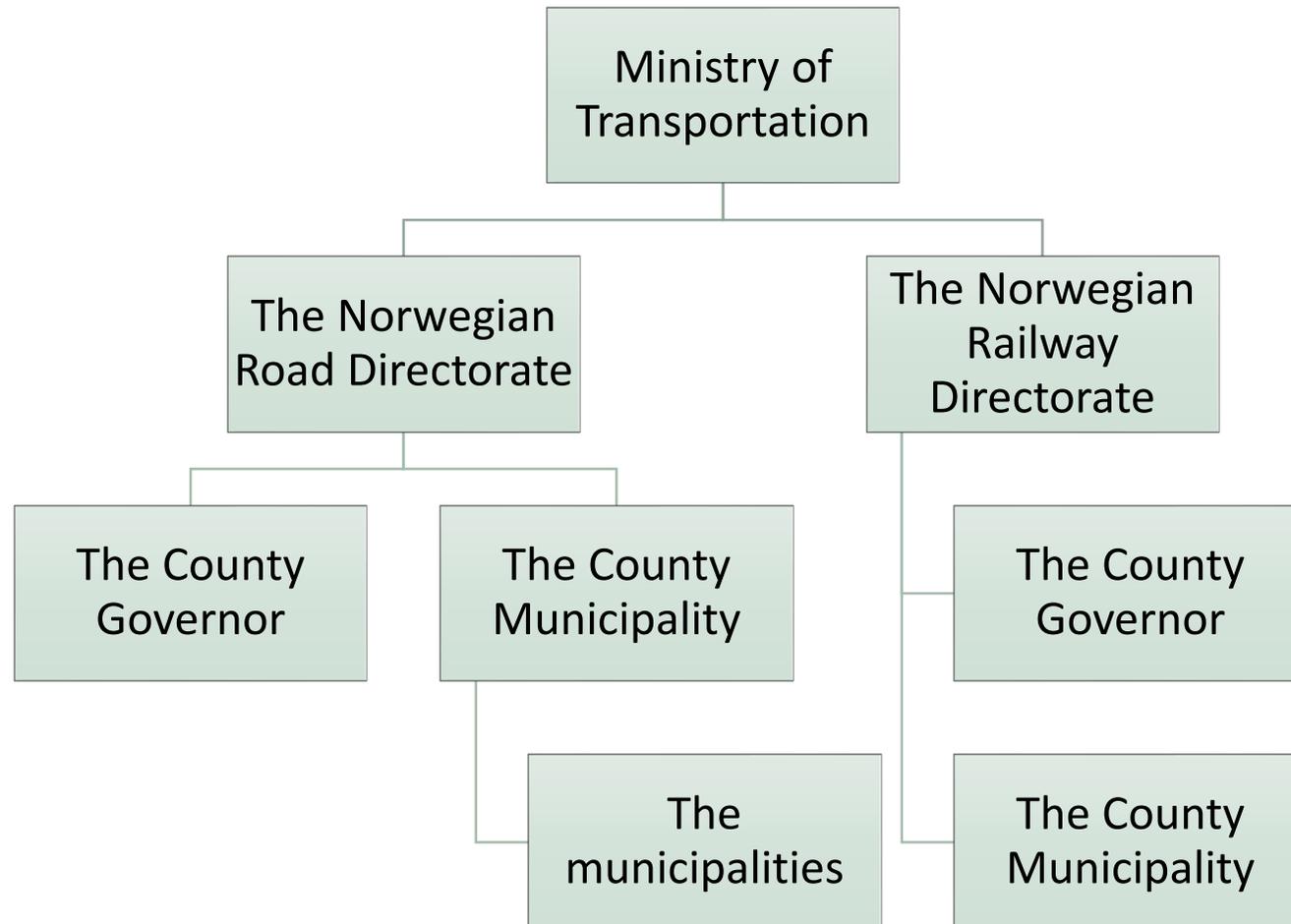


Local Governance

- > Two tier-system of local government
 - Municipalities and County Authorities
- > The generalist local authority system
- > Delegation and decentralisation of responsibility and authority



Example: Transportation



How Norway's efforts within equality and Universal Design is organized

The Ministry of Culture and Equality is responsible for the policy areas of equality and discrimination



The Directorate of Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir) is responsible for coordinating the governments efforts within equality and universal design.



The Department of Equality and Universal Design within Bufdir organizes Bufdirs daily work, tasks and efforts on universal design

Bufdirs efforts on equality and universal design

- > Coordinating The Government Action plan
- > Developing and sharing knowledge on equality and universal design
 - Research, surveys, statistics, analysis etc.
- > Cooperation, networks and user participation
 - Dialogue, presentations, organizing conferences and seminars
- > Allocate grants
 - Projects on equality and universal design
- > Mainstreaming
 - Integrating perspectives on equality within the work of various government bodies

The Government Action Plan on Universal Design

The Action Plan for Universal Design

- August 16th 2021 the Norwegian Government launched its fourth Action Plan for Universal Design: «Sustainability and equal opportunities - a universally designed Norway (2021-2025)»
- The Action Plan contains over 60 measures, from 8 different ministries



The Process

- > Input and involvement
 - Conferences, meetings and consultation
 - 300+ received suggestions
 - > Evaluations of previous action plans
 - > Political guidelines
 - > Coordinated by the Ministry of Culture and Equality, with support from Bufdir
 - > Started in 2019, finished in 2021
- > Decision: signed by 10 ministers of State
 - Minister of Labor and Social affairs
 - Minister of District and digitalization
 - Minister of Research and Higher Education
 - Minister of Health
 - Minister of Culture and Equality
 - Minister of Municipalities and modernization
 - Minister of Knowledge and Integration
 - Minister of Climate and Environment
 - Minister of Industry and Fisheries
 - Minister of Transportation

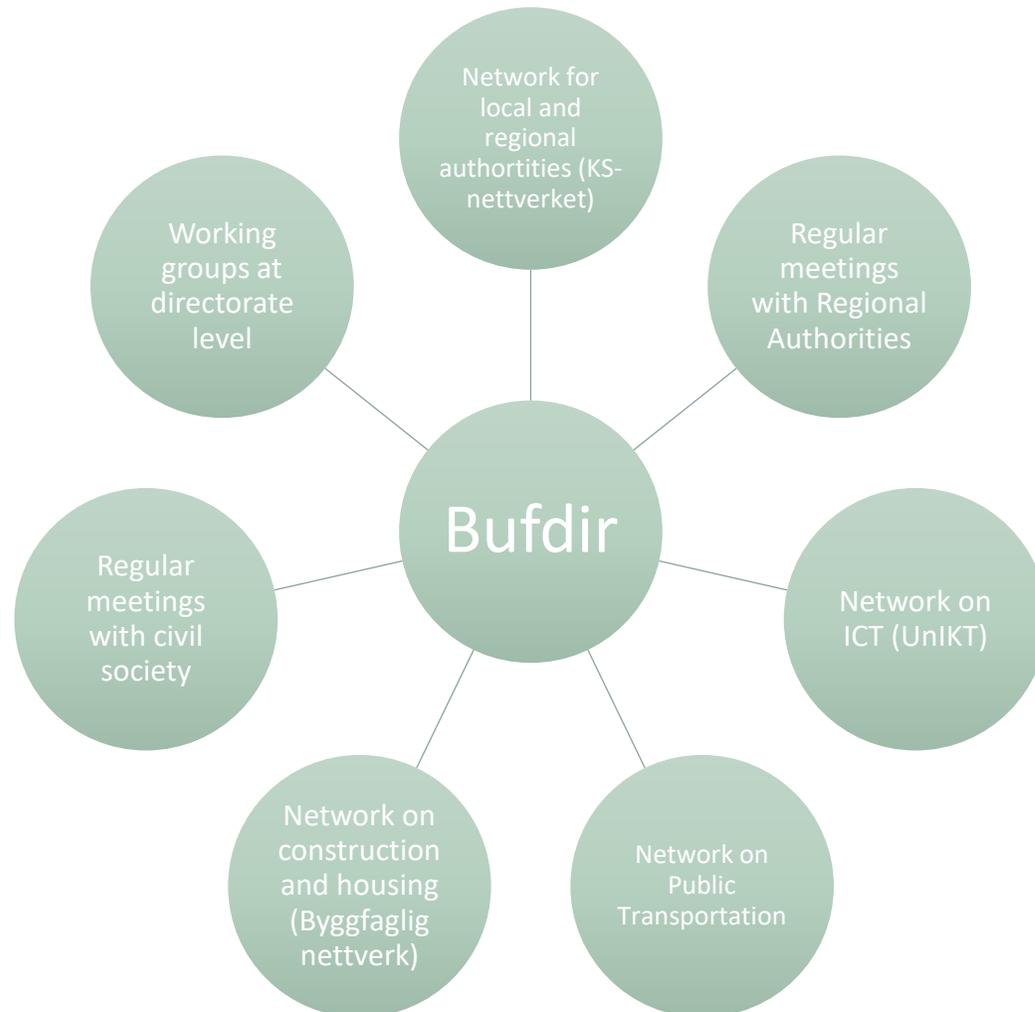
The goal: equity, equality and sustainability

- > A «Universally designed society» in which everyone can participate on equal terms
- > Universal design is seen as a strategy that ensures a sustainable and equal society
- > Universal design is good for all, and necessary for some
 - Simpler, safer and more comfortable environments for all



**How Bufdir cooperate with
stakeholders to ensure continuous
progress and attention on universal
design**

Examples of platforms for cooperation



An example: Network for Public Transport

- > Conferences twice a year
 - Last conference was held in June 2022 in Trondheim (8 hours north of Oslo by car)
- > Participants include Ministry directorates, County municipalities, interest organizations, researchers, public agencies etc.
- > The various actors hold representations, listen to one another and do group work together

The importance of Cooperation and User Involvement

- > An important source for dialogue, knowledge and legitimacy is the involvement of interest organizations in our daily work, in our various projects and plans.
 - Enhances legitimacy
 - provides important knowledge
 - ensures that our efforts are in tune with the needs of those who could benefit the most from our work on Universal Design



The importance of continuous dialogue with local and regional stakeholders



- > Regular contact with the County Governors
- > Municipal interest organizations
 - The Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)
- > Municipal Councils for persons with disabilities
 - New guidelines

Knowledge on the level of and attention to Universal Design in Norway

Level of Universal Design in Norway

- > What we know:
 - Lack of Universal Design across all sectors
 - Continuous progress
- > What we don't know:
 - The exact level of Universal Design in any of the sectors



Recent or ongoing publications

- > Universal Design in Norwegian Museums
- > Universal Design in governmental Child Welfare Institutions
- > How Municipalities in Norway work on Universal Design
- > Legal requirements on Universal Design within ICT at the Work Place
- > Universal design as a subject in Norwegian higher education
- > ++



Thank you for your attention