



# Universal Design and Accessibility

Author: Holthe H.

The Norwegian health sector in collaboration with the authorities are currently carrying out extensive work to develop and implement web-based health services. Meanwhile, the population is growing older and the proportion of disabled persons already exceeds 15 percent.

The Norwegian Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act states that electronic patient services in their entirety should be universally designed by 2021.

## Common accessibility

Universal design implies that products, services and environments are designed in such a way that they can be used by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation for people with disabilities.

The purpose of universal design is to facilitate equal participation in society for all and increased efficiency through standardised solutions that can be used regardless of functional level.

## Two perspectives

The discussion in the Norwegian technology research community on universal design of web-based services primarily concerns two matters:

1. Reaching as many as possible (for instance, translating material in Norwegian to Sami).
2. Technical specifications should ensure platform independence in the access to services, allow operation of the interface using a keyboard as well as by mouse/joystick, and the presentation of information in non-proprietary formats.

The Norwegian Centre for E-health Research gives priority to the technical perspective in the work with e-health services.

## The Norwegian Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act

This Act was adopted on 20 June 2008, and entered into force on 1 January 2009.

The Regulations to Section 11 of the Act have effect from June 2014. The Regulations states that the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) should be followed to comply with the intentions of the Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act, limited to web sites and certain automats. Health services communicate by e-mail with the users, and the Regulations could with advantage also include e-mail exchange.

## WCAG 2.0

The Regulations to Section 11 of the Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act are based on the WCAG 2.0 levels A and AA. Generally, this standard is oriented towards the interface of electronic services. It may therefore be appropriate to emphasize that also the information (the files) the interface operates, should be universally designed.

## For more information, contact:

Halgeir Holthe, Sociologist

+47 957 29 763

halgeir.holthe@ehealthresearch.no

