

STF78 A06008

REPORT

Evaluation of the Handicap-programme at Telenor

Reidun Skøien, Karl-Gerhard Hem and Geir Tyrmi

SINTEF Health Research

January 2006

■ www.sintef.no

**SINTEF Health Research**

P.O.Box 124, Blindern, NO-0314 Oslo
 Telephone: +47 40 00 25 90
 Fax: +47 22 06 79 09

SINTEF REPORT

TITLE

Evaluation of the Handicap-Programme at Telenor

AUTHOR(S)

Reidun Skøien, Karl-Gerhard Hem og Geir Tyrmi

CLIENT(S)

Telenor

REPORT NO.

STF78 A06008

CLASSIFICATION

Open

CLIENT(S) REF.

Ingrid Ihme

GRADER. DENNE SIDE

Open

ISBN

978-82-14-03913-9
82-14-03913-4

PROJECT NO.

78G15030

NO. OF PAGES/APPENICES

43/3

ELECTRONIC FILE CODE

TelenorHCPRapport.doc

PROJECT MANAGER

Reidun Skøien

CHECKED BY

Thomas Dahl

FILE CODE

DATE

2006-01-20

APPROVED BY

Arne H. Eide, forskningssjef

ABSTRACT

Telenor's Handicap-Programme has achieved its aim of providing a springboard into working life for persons with disabilities. The evaluation shows that the programme has had positive consequences for both participants and companies, in addition to bringing major social economic benefits. For this reason, cooperation with Aetat and working-life centres should be strengthened in order to raise awareness of this scheme.

Telenor's Handicap-Programme is a two-year training and work-training programme for people with activity limitations. The programme is intended to give participants work experience and it comprises courses, real work training and follow-up measures. In formal terms, the Handicap-Programme is defined as work plus support. The programme has been in existence since 1994, and was previously evaluated by SINTEF IFIM in 1999. The programme has now be re-evaluated, this time by SINTEF Health Research.

The aim of the evaluation was to find out what consequences the Handicap-Programme has had for **participants**, for the **companies** involved and for **society** as a whole.

Data were gathered through focus group meetings, individual meetings with participants and managers and via a questionnaire distributed to previous and current participants.

The evaluation shows that the Handicap-Programme has largely succeeded in meeting its principal objectives: to act as a springboard to working life for people with disabilities, to give such people the knowledge and experience they need to break out of an existence as social services clients, and to help to change attitudes and create acceptance of the idea of people with disabilities taking part in normal working life.

The participants felt that both the courses and the work experience phase gave them the competence and experience that they needed to go to work, though a minority felt that there was insufficient follow-up in certain areas. The questionnaire study also showed that three out of every four participants had obtained regular work. Half of these respondents felt that they owed this to their participation in the programme.

The experience of the companies was that having an employee with a disability was not a burden, but rather a strength for the work environment. Some of them claimed that it was capable of positively influencing working morals and sick-leave rates in the rest of their work-force. However, a number of companies outside Telenor experienced complications in communicating with Aetat and the Social Services, and found that writing applications to adapt their premises and for obtaining aids could take a great deal of time.

The economic consequences for society as a whole are obvious: most participants in the programme have changed from being recipients of social security benefits to becoming tax-payers. This is also a confirmation of the fulfilment of the third aim of the programme: to help to create general acceptance of people with disabilities in working life - and in society in general.

The programme should become a model for similar measures in other companies. Awareness of the Handicap-Programme, however, is still limited, in spite of active efforts on the part of Telenor to spread information about it. For this reason, a challenge will be to increase awareness of this offer, particularly in Aetat and in Social Security offices at local level. Responsibility for this should lie first and foremost with the authorities.

KEYWORDS	ENGLISH	NORWEGIAN
GROUP 1	Work Life	Arbeidsliv
GROUP 2	Disability	Funksjonshemming
SELECTED BY AUTHOR	Inclusive Workplaces	Inkluderende arbeid

Contents

Summary	3
1 Background	4
1.1 Telenor's Handicap-Programme (HCP)	4
2 New evaluation of HCP	7
2.1 Problems addressed by the evaluation	7
2.2 Central questions	10
3 Methods	12
4 Results	14
4.1 Consequences for the participants	14
4.2 Consequences for the companies	22
4.3 Consequences for society in general: is the Handicap-Programme worthwhile?	24
4.4 The questionnaire study	27
5 Challenges	37
5.1 The roots and management of the programme	37
5.2 Recruitment and marketing	37
5.3 We need to work just like everyone else	39
5.4 Comparison with the previous evaluation	40
5.5 Why do we need the Handicap-Programme?	41
5.6 A final word	42
References	43
Appendix I	44
Appendix II	46
Appendix III	48

Summary

Telenor's Handicap-Programme (HCP) is a two-year training and work-training programme for people with activity limitations. The programme is intended to give participants work experience and it comprises courses, real work training and follow-up measures. In formal terms, the Handicap-Programme is defined as work plus support. The programme has been in existence since 1994, and was previously evaluated by SINTEF IFIM in 1999. The programme has now be re-evaluated, this time by SINTEF Health Research.

The aim of the evaluation was to find out what consequences the Handicap-Programme has had for participants, for the companies involved and for society as a whole.

Data were gathered through focus group meetings, individual meetings with participants and managers and via a questionnaire distributed to previous and current participants.

The evaluation shows that the Handicap-Programme has largely succeeded in meeting its principal objectives: to act as a springboard to working life for people with disabilities, to give such people the knowledge and experience they need to break out of an existence as social services clients, and to help to change attitudes and create acceptance of the idea of people with disabilities taking part in normal working life.

The participants felt that both the courses and the work experience phase gave them the competence and experience that they needed to go to work, though a minority felt that there was insufficient follow-up in certain areas. The questionnaire study also showed that three out of every four participants had obtained regular work. Half of these respondents felt that they owed this to their participation in the programme.

The experience of the companies was that having an employee with a disability was not a burden, but rather a strength for the work environment. Some of them claimed that it was capable of positively influencing working morals and sick-leave rates in the rest of their work-force. However, a number of companies outside Telenor experienced complications in communicating with Aetat and the Social Services, and found that writing applications to adapt their premises and for obtaining aids could take a great deal of time.

The economic consequences for society as a whole are obvious: most participants in the programme have changed from being recipients of social security benefits to becoming tax-payers. This is also a confirmation of the fulfilment of the third aim of the programme: to help to create general acceptance of people with disabilities in working life - and in society in general.

The programme should become a model for similar measures in other companies. Awareness of the Handicap-Programme, however, is still limited, in spite of active efforts on the part of Telenor to spread information about it. For this reason, a challenge will be to increase awareness of this offer, particularly in Aetat and in Social Security offices at local level. Responsibility for this should lie first and foremost with the authorities.

1 Background

Telenor's **Handicap-Programme** (HCP) has been in existence since 1994. It was evaluated by SINTEF's Institute for Social Research in Industry (SINTEF IFIM) in 1999 (Dahl 1999). SINTEF concluded that the programme had largely succeeded in rehabilitating its participants and that both participants and the company were positively inclined towards continuing the programme.

Following the 1999 evaluation, the Handicap **Project**, as it was originally known, was renamed the Handicap-Programme, and it became a permanent feature at Telenor. The programme is still run according to the same principles as previously, but has been better adapted to the needs of people with visual and hearing impairments. The course part of the programme is also better adapted to the requirements and competence of individual participants.

Telenor now wishes to re-evaluate the programme, and on this occasion the evaluation has been performed by SINTEF Health Research. Thomas Dahl, the project manager of the previous evaluation, has been responsible for quality assurance.

1.1 Telenor's Handicap-Programme (HCP)

The motto of the Handicap-Programme is:

You don't need to go to work, as long as you come.

Telenor's Handicap-Programme is a two-year training and work-training programme for people with activity limitations. The programme comprises courses, real work training and follow-up measures. In formal terms, the Handicap-Programme is defined as work plus support.

The programme is an offer to people with reduced mobility and to those with hearing and visual impairments. Applicants must be enrolled in the work rehabilitation programme run by Aetat (the Norwegian employment services). They must have an educational level corresponding to high school or equivalent, or have other relevant education. Young people with disabilities who lack work experience are given priority for enrolment in the programme. A prerequisite for success is a motivation to learn and to hold down a job.

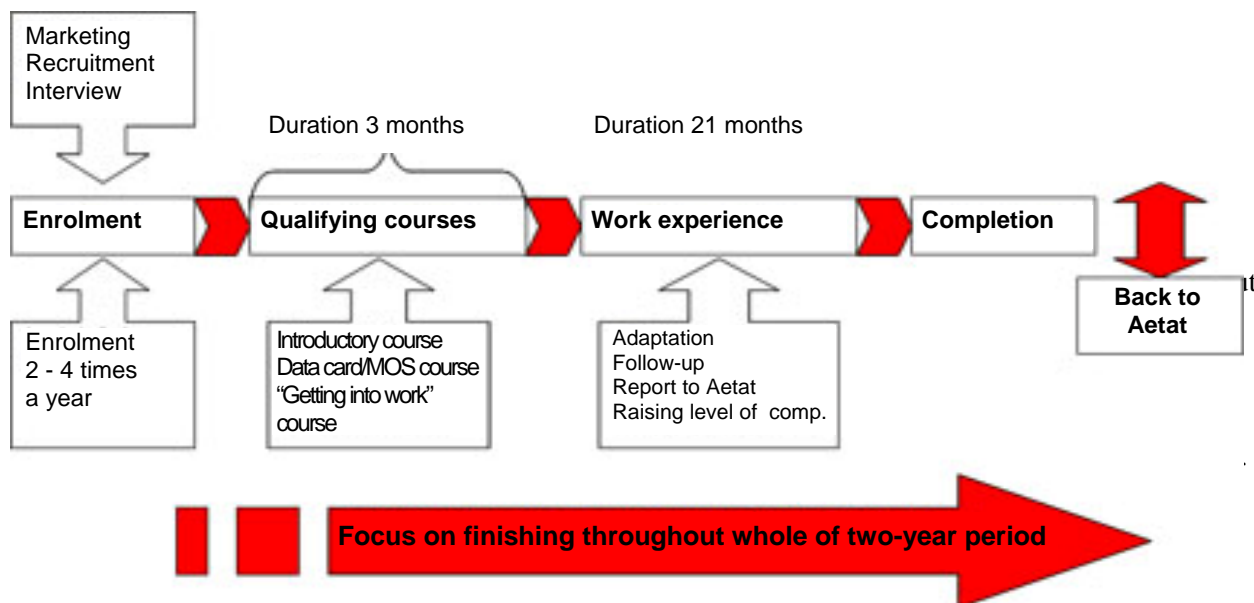
Administration

The Handicap-Programme administration has a staff of five, comprising a programme manager, programme administrator, department manager for day-to-day operation of the programme and two job consultants, who run the programme's courses.

The Handicap-Programme has a six-member board. The chairman of the board is Telenor's Director of HSE, while the HR Director (human resources) and division-level managers are members. The programme manager reports to the board.

The Programme

The Handicap-Programme comprises an enrolment interview, a qualifying period of courses and training, and a follow-up period consisting of work experience. Enrolments take place two to four times a year, with up to five applicant on each occasion. The enrolment interview is most concerned with the applicant's motivation to work. The programme itself starts with a three-month qualifying period consisting of courses in computing. The ICT training is based on MOS - Microsoft Office Specialist. This course gives candidates certification in computing at basic or intermediate level. Candidates also follow a communication programme called "Unique as I am", which focuses on personal development, aims and the expectations of work-life, and a course on "Getting into work" that takes up matters such as job applications and information about the labour market.



The Handicap-Programme supports participants with guidance and work-place adaptations and carries out an evaluation after the end of the qualifying period. The guidance helps to map the interests of participants in the use of ICT tools, their ability and their motivation to adapt. In cooperation with their own HSE department and the Assistive Devices Centre, participants receive the support they need to adapt their work-place to their special needs.

This phase is followed by a work-experience phase lasting for 21 months which takes place in Telenor or in a company with which Telenor collaborates. Every third month a follow-up meeting is held with the individual participant, after which a report is submitted to Aetat. Participants are encouraged to apply for other jobs while they are still in the work-experience phase.

Financial arrangements

The costs of running the Handicap-Programme are shared by Telenor and Aetat. Telenor covers the salaries of two and a half positions in administration, in addition to equipment and operating expenses. Aetat pays the salaries of two positions. Aetat also meets the costs of courses and follow-up for each participant for two years, up to a limit of NOK 50,000 a year. If the participant leaves the scheme after one year, the last part is not covered. Participants are paid rehabilitation support for the whole two-year period.

Recruitment

Applicants for the Handicap-Programme must be enrolled in Aetat's physical rehabilitation programme. The application forms, which can be found on the Handicap-Programme's website www.telenor.no/hcp, is completed and sent to HCP. The application and the applicant's CV are evaluated and suitable applicants are called in to an interview. The programme coordinator then contacts Aetat to tell that body which candidates they will send letters of enrolment to.

Telenor's own studies have shown that almost 75% of the participants in the scheme get a job after the end of work training. Participants have been registered systematically since 2002. Before then, registration was unsystematic, but a total of between 80 and 90 persons have participated in the programme since it started in 1994. At the end of 2005, the programme had 19 participants.

Cooperation with external actors

Apart from Telenor, the Handicap-Programme cooperates with a number of companies that can offer work experience positions to participants in the programme. These companies are as follows: Manpower, Gjensidige Nor, Storebrand, EDB, IBM, NHO, Brixs and Making Waves. This means that there is a wide range of types of work-place available to participants. Cooperating companies are found in Trondheim, Kristiansand and Bergen.

In January 2004, the Working Life Centre in Hedmark launched a pilot project called **“Telenor Light”**. The centre was motivated by Telenor to set up a similar scheme. The project is based on the HCP model, but in Hedmark it is Aetat that follows up the participants during the course phase. Telenor Light is a cooperative project involving Hedmark Regional College, Aetat, user organisations in the County of Hedmark, The Confederation of Norwegian Business and Industry (NHO), the Norwegian Federation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Hedmark Social Security Offices.

The Handicap-Programme is also involved in the establishment of a similar project in Sweden. **“Open Up”** is an EU project and is a pilot project inspired by Telenor’s Handicap-Programme. Via practical training, persons with activity limitations will be given the opportunity to find work. Starting in February 2006, 20 participants will be ready to join the project. The idea is that the participants will help to influence and shape the project.

2 New evaluation of HCP

Telenor's Handicap-Programme was evaluated in 1999, when it had been in operation for five years. Telenor now wishes to re-evaluate the programme. This time round, the evaluation will also cover external partners and public authorities that have been involved in the programme. As before, both previous and current participants will be involved.

Telenor wishes to have both the economic and human consequences of the Handicap-Programme documented and evaluated, and considered in relationship to the programme's objectives for its own activities, which are as follows:

- To act as a springboard into working life for persons with disabilities.
- To break the vicious circle: without experience, it is impossible to find a job. Without a job, it is impossible to gain experience.
- To help to change attitudes and normalise the perception of people with disabilities taking part in normal working life.

The evaluation of the Handicap-Programme was carried by means of a systematic collection of information about the activities of the programme. Our task was to find out what characterises the programme today, compare the results with those of the previous evaluation and identify the results obtained by the programme. The evaluation will also measure the effects of the programme against the objectives that had been set up.

2.1 Problems addressed by the evaluation

The evaluation addressed three central problems:

1. What have been the consequences for the participants?
2. What have been the consequences for the companies involved?
3. What have been the consequences for society in general?

Consequences for the participants

From a human perspective it has been important to identify participants' positive and negative experiences of the Handicap-Programme. One important element has been the individual's experience of being treated as an equal, of being of use to society, and of earning his or her own living. We also studied changes in attitude among the various actors involved, among other employees and in the participants themselves. One aspect that we looked at concerned whether the programme had helped to create a sense of acceptance of people with activity limitations in working life, and what such acceptance involved. The importance of practical work experience was an interesting topic of study as was closer study of rejection and reason for this. We have also studied whether participants in the Handicap-Programme have improved their life situation and quality of life via an improved self-image, more enjoyment of life and raised level of income.

Consequences for the companies involved

One of the aims of the IWL (Inclusive Working Life) Agreement is to get more persons with disabilities into regular employment. Compared with the work line of the 90s, the IWL Agreement stresses that an inclusive working life is created within individual companies, thus putting a sharper focus on the role of employers. For this reason, the evaluation has studied the degree to which the companies involved have an inclusive work environment and how the work environment has been affected by the Handicap-Programme. We also looked at the extent to which the companies have actually helped to get more people with activity limitations into employment and to what extent the companies have gained a positive

reputation in the community as a result. It was also important to study whether the employers' understanding of the situation of having activity limitation has contributed to adapting better to the needs of such persons and to expert follow-up of individual participants with respect to their particular needs.

Consequences for society

The Handicap-Programme itself has developed a simple cost-benefit analysis that aimed to estimate the economic effects of the programme for Telenor. Here we have included the NOK 1.7 million direct annual costs of the programme in our calculations. The ordinary costs of employing 18 people are estimated at around NOK 8.8 million, but the difference cannot be seen as a gain because we need to assume that the participants were on average less effective than other employees. If the efficiency of the participants in the programme was half that of other employees on average, there would still be a net positive result of NOK 2.7 million a year for Telenor. This applies to the directly measurable economic results. Telenor would also be able to count on a positive effect in terms of an improved reputation and the PR effects of the programme.

The social-economic costs and benefits of the programme have been excluded from these calculations. The authorities have borne certain cost of support for the participants, but such costs would largely have been incurred in any case. If a proportion of the participants return to work, the social-economic benefits will be large, because the alternative would be many years of social security payments for each of them. Instead of being passive recipients of social security benefits, the participants have become contributors to the system. We have analysed the economic consequences for the different actors in connection with the implementation of the programme.

In the project called "Access of persons with disabilities to the labour market - use of the adaptation guarantee" (Skøien & Hem, 2005) a number of critical phases in the task of getting disabled people into employment were identified: in the preparatory phase in connection with job applications and interviews, in the training phase with the need for physical, psychological and social adaptation, and in the follow-up phase, with regard to remaining in employment. The project studied the factors that hinder and those that encourage the possibilities of disabled people to obtain employment. Education, involvement and motivation were mentioned as important positive factors, while attitudes, both among employers and disabled people themselves tended to reduce the chances of gaining work.

The Handicap-Programme seems to be doing a thorough job in the preparatory phase, which is known as the intake and qualification phase by the programme, via its selection criteria, motivational efforts and courses. The participants are also followed up both personally and in terms of job content during the training and follow-up phases through work training, and what the programme calls the work experience phase.

The first evaluation showed that most of the participants were satisfied with the work training they received, but some participants felt that there was a lack of course (Dahl, 1999). The evaluation also showed that not everyone was satisfied with follow-up efforts. A few left the programme because they felt that they had been pressed out, partly because the work they were given was too difficult or because that not enough regard was being paid to their disability. Several of them described the follow-up of the professional aspects via courses and in the work situation itself as deficient. It was pointed out that after 1999, the Handicap-Programme wished to differentiate the scheme so that some participants would be able to follow a different track than the rest. For this reason, we felt that it was important to determine whether the Handicap-Programme has managed, through this process of differentiation, to improve its service.

The 1999 evaluation also showed how the Handicap-Programme was utilising technology to realise the vision of giving people with handicaps equal status in the labour market. According to the author of the evaluation, the adaptation and conscious use of IT tools had helped to give participants the possibility of demonstrating to both themselves and others that they were capable of achieving something in employment. In this evaluation we found it appropriate to study how IT tools have improved their performance, how the technology has been adapted to the work situation of the individual and whether this has contributed to these employees remaining in employment.



The motto of the Handicap-Programme is:
You don't need to go to work, as long as you come.

2.2 Central questions

The following questions were identified and dealt with in the report:

Consequences for the participants:

Acceptance:

- To what extent did participants feel that they were treated as equals?
- How have participants been received in the work-place, in terms of responsibility, rights and obligations, and socially in terms of acceptance?

Attitudes in the work-place:

- To what extent did a change in attitudes take place among the participants, their colleagues and their employers?
- What are the attitudes of the participants and their employers to the use of assistive devices?
- To what extent did participants experience rejection in the work environment?

Participants' satisfaction with the Handicap-Programme:

- How has the Handicap-Programme, through differentiation of its service, managed to improve this?
- How satisfied are the participants with the course and work experience phases?
- What did participants feel that the Handicap-Programme lacked?

The significance of the Handicap-Programme:

- What has been the significance of the practical work experience?
- How have education, motivation and attitudes affected the chances of the participants of obtaining employment?
- What do the participants feel is lacking in the Handicap-Programme?
- To what extent have the participants improved their life situation?
- How have IT tools improved the performance of individual participants and how well has the technology been adapted to the work situation of the individual?
- To what extent has technology contributed to participants remaining in employment?

Consequences for the companies:

- How has the Handicap-Programme contributed to companies improving adaptations for disabled persons and the follow-up of individual participants?
- How has the Handicap-Programme helped to generate an inclusive work environment?
- How has the Handicap-Programme contributed to getting more people with activity limitations into employment?
- What financial consequences has the Handicap-Programme had for the companies involved?
- How has the Handicap-Programme affected the reputation of the companies involved?

Consequences for society:

- How has the Handicap-Programme contributed to getting more people with activity limitations into employment?
- What are the economic consequences of the Handicap-Programme?

- How has the Handicap-Programme affected society in terms of universal design and accessibility for everyone?
- To what extent is there awareness of the Handicap-Programme in society in general?

The Handicap-Programme management team believes that the programme represents a win-win-win situation, in that the participants have a better chance of getting a job after taking part in the programme, the companies involved obtain workers and improve their reputation, while society makes savings from people with disabilities moving from being recipients of benefits to contributors to the system.

Our hypothesis, therefore, is that there are real benefits of the Handicap-Programme for participants, companies and society.



Participant's expression of opinion:

“The Handicap-Programme has functioned 100% as a springboard for me. Employers are initially sceptical about employing people with disabilities, so without the Handicap-Programme I would not have had a job.”

3 Methods

The evaluation consisted of three parts:

Part I: Focus groups

Part II: Interviews

Part III: Questionnaire study and economic analyses

Part I: Focus groups

We organised two focus group meetings, one of them with the programme management team and contact persons in the companies involved, and one with current and former participants in the programme. The focus group meetings were held on Telenor's premises. The aims of these focus groups were as follows:

- to obtain points of view regarding the problems we should address
- to identify other aspects of the programme that it was important to examine, for example attitudes to assistive devices
- to develop an interview guide for in-depth interviews
- to identify relevant informants for in-depth interviews and to draw up a list of questions for the questionnaire study.

The interview guide used in the focus groups is enclosed as Appendix I to this report.

Part II: Individual interviews

The results of the focus groups provided us with a basis for drawing up an interview guide for in-depth interviews of a number of people, including the participants in the programme and a selection of people from the other parties involved, both within and external to Telenor. We planned to interview up to twelve former and current participants in the programme and eight persons from the entities involved (e.g. managers and colleagues in Telenor, members of the board of the Handicap-Programme, the Social Services, Aetat, external companies involved in the programme, etc).

The interview guide used in the individual interviews is enclosed as Appendix II to this report.

Part III: Questionnaire study and economic analyses - costs and benefits

The economic analyses were carried out largely from a social-economic perspective. A social-economic analysis adopts a significantly wider perspective than a micro-economic analysis, because it looks at the economic effects on other instances than the company itself, i.e. individuals and costs and benefits for the public sector. It was important to map the results of the programme among the participants because these were what specified the basis for the economic analyses. We therefore carried out a questionnaire study of current and previous participants. The questionnaire was drawn up in collaboration with the sponsor of the study. The form was first tested by two participants and then modified. A information letter with an invitation to take part in the questionnaire study was sent to all registered current and former participants.

The questionnaire was Internet-based, but respondents could also answer the questions on paper. Participation in the study was voluntary. Both the Internet-based and paper versions of the questionnaire were anonymous. It was made clear that no information could be traced to individuals and that SINTEF Health Research would treat all the data as confidential. The Norwegian Social Science Data Services were contacted in order to guarantee personal privacy in the questionnaire study.

The focus group meetings, individual interviews and questionnaire study were carried out to enable us to say something about the efforts put into the programme by the various parties involved. The value of these efforts will be a valuable pointer with regard to our ability to evaluate the consequences for the individual (Sverdrup, 2002). The Handicap-Programme can have both intended and unintended consequences. An intended consequence is that the participant should obtain regular employment after completed the programme. An unintended consequence could be that the participant also develops an

improved social network as a result of participation in the Handicap-Programme. Such a side-effect will be positive and will reinforce the beneficial efforts of the programme for society as a whole. Similarly, it would be important to identify any negative unintended consequences in order to be able to take remedial measures.



The Handicap-Programme starts with a three-month qualification programme that combines teaching in a good social environment with private study.

4 Results

This section of the report presents the information obtained from the two focus groups, the individual interviews and the questionnaire study. The data have been analysed with regard to the problems presented in the Introduction.

Nine persons took part in the focus groups with management personnel. Six of them were from various departments of Telenor while three were from external partners. In the participant focus group, three current and four previous participants took part.

Four current and eight previous participants, as well as nine managers, were interviewed individually. The nine managers represented the Handicap-Programme, Telenor, Aetat, the Social Services, Gjensidige and the Norwegian state.

Of a total of 82 registered participants in the programme, 76 current and previous participants were identified by their address. These were sent an information letter with an invitation to complete a questionnaire that could be found on the Internet. Three letters were returned as “addressee unknown” and one person rang to say that he had not been a participant in the programme. By the deadline, the response rate had reached 20%. Because the response rate was so low, a reminder was sent out, and finally, a total of 38 completed forms were received, a response rate of 53%. Although the rate could have been higher, it was sufficient to provide a reasonable picture of the situation. One reason for some people’s lack of response can have been that many have moved house following the programme, and that we do not have the correct addresses of everyone.

Quotes from the informants have been used to emphasise the significance of a concept or to provide examples of statements about the topic being described. Only to a limited extent have we expressly stated who has made a given statement. In most cases, however, the quotes can be traced back to identify whether they were made by participants or programme staff. We believe that this is sufficient in this context.

4.1 Consequences for the participants

This section presents the participants’ opinions of the Handicap-Programme’s significance for them and of whether it has affected the attitudes of participants, colleagues or employers. The importance of the ICT tools with regard to permanent work is also analysed.

4.1.1 Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming means getting up at 7 a.m. in order to go to work. It is a matter of earning a living and of going to the staff Christmas dinner.

The questions that were dealt with under this heading were as follows:

- To what extent did participants feel that they were treated as equals?
- How were participants received in the work-place, in terms of responsibility, rights and obligations, and socially in terms of acceptance?

The acceptance of persons with disabilities in the work-place was one of the measures of the effects of the Handicap-Programme. This topic was discussed in both the focus groups and the individual interviews.

A number of participants experienced acceptance in terms of being less dependent on others, in that they were given the opportunity to find out that “I can manage this very well by myself”. Being asked out on the town and to staff parties was mentioned as important. The fact that no-one turned to stare at them at work and that they were not noticed as being different were other examples. It was said that for their part, many people with disabilities helped to make these less “dangerous” by being ironical and humorous about them.

Many respondents felt that **acceptance** as a concept was positive, and that this was a matter of making the person visible, but the disability invisible.

The following quotes illustrate this attitude:

No-one in Telenor reacts to us employing persons with disabilities.

You feel like an ordinary employee on an equal footing to all the others.

I feel that I am a colleague. The Handicap-Programme makes an effort to find the individual's strong points.

Acceptance is a matter of dissolving scepticism and talking of processes of **surprise reaction**, thought one of the managers. We gradually come to see the competence in place of the disability.

Several respondents thought that the methods employed by the Handicap-Programme had helped to make persons with disabilities accepted in the work-place. Visiting the tax office instead of the social security office is one aspect of this. Treating everyone in the same way whether they can walk or sit in a wheelchair is another example. The responses to the questionnaire confirmed this impression. More than 80% answered that they "fully agree" or "agree" that they felt accepted in the work-place to an equal degree as their colleagues. Fewer than 10% "slightly agreed" or "completely disagreed" with this, when the remainder neither agreed nor disagreed.

The leader of the Abelia project "**Good Heads at Work**"¹ explained that their aim has been to get away from categorising disabilities. Previously, when they asked employers "*Do you have any persons with disabilities in your company*", the answer was often "*No*". However, when the question was if they employed anyone who was poor sighted or hard of hearing, their answers were more nuanced. This shows that employees with reduced abilities were not always regarded as disabled, but rather as ordinary employees.

The Handicap-Programme changes people from recipients to contributors.

Some respondents felt that using the concept of acceptance of persons with disabilities led to stigmatisation of such people. Some of them pointed out that as part of the ongoing development of the use of concepts concerning persons with disabilities it may be problematic to utilise the concept of acceptance. The same applies to the concept of a society for everyone. The use of these concepts implies that some people are outsiders whom we wish should become accepted, or just like everyone else. A critical point about acceptance, therefore, is information and knowledge of what is problematic for the individual. When problems are perceived as being normal, it may be easier to find ways of solving them, it was said.

Attempts to have persons with disabilities accepted mean that the point of departure is that persons with disabilities are not accepted.

Some participants reported back that they had previously chosen to omit any mention of their disability in job applications, because they did not wish that these should be focused on. This has turned out to lead to greater scepticism among employers, when they subsequently find out that applicants have a disability. Several people thought that omitting to mention this results in the person being found out later on. The Handicap-Programme enables people to be open and honest about the problems of being disabled. Within the programme, several individuals found that it was a relief to be able to talk about themselves without the fear of not getting the job. At the same time, being open about one's disability can help to demystify it.

It was claimed that the Handicap-Programme led to a continuation of the stigmatisation of people with activity limitations, because there was a special set-up for a special group, isolated from the rest. On the other hand, several people experienced that they were valued as employees through their participation in the Handicap-Programme. Individuals discovered their own value and convinced themselves that they

¹ Abelia: NHO's association for knowledge and technology companies: www.abelia.no

could do something. The programme gave many people the experience of coping by going to work, working every day, getting involved, advancing in their work and not receiving disability support. When one has been sitting in a wheelchair all one's life, and perhaps been cared for by others, it can be difficult to believe that one is capable.

The Handicap-Programme helps to break the train of thought that there is no point. You change from being passive to being active, you see that you have to accept responsibility and you unconsciously discover obligations; things will be left lying until you come back.

Critical factors in the process of acceptance include being subjected to the same demands as other employees, and that job descriptions are not modified. Disabled people need to exert themselves to satisfy the demands made of them.

The code of values within the company are decisive for the ability of a work environment to be inclusive. It is important that employers should be aware of this, and set conditions that also apply to persons with disabilities, it was said. Treating everyone alike leads to acceptance. At the same time, we all need security. It was pointed out that this is why follow-up is important and that it should take place in an appropriate way.

Several of the participants in the Handicap-Programme had previously had jobs, either without disabilities or as persons with disabilities, while others had never worked before. Those who had previously been in work were thus more familiar with working life and probably tackled the work situation better than those who had never worked before. For this group, the transition to a life in work can be hard. Among other aspects, it was pointed out that many of them had been protected by their families or care workers and were unused to demands being made of them. They may also have a different daily rhythm from what is required by working life and have not been used to holding out for a whole working day. Differences in the encounter with working life between those who had previously been in employment and those who had not, were not paid particular attention in this evaluation.

4.1.2 Attitudes in the work-place

I found that I was treated differently from the others at first, but this changed once I had shown that I could deliver. It is essential to allow for a period of "running-in".

Questions that were taken up were the following:

- To what extent did a change in attitudes take place among the participants, their colleagues and their employers?
- What are the attitudes of the participants and their employers to the use of assistive devices?
- To what extent did participants experience rejection in the work environment?

The management staff who provided information thought that participants in the Handicap-Programme have a low rate of sick-leave. They are cheerful and pleasant, and demonstrate a "can-do" attitude. Getting up at five in the morning is not a problem for them. In that sense, they set a good example for the rest of Telenor's staff.

One employer said that the other employees were not used to having anything to do with people with disabilities.

It is not the people with disabilities that are a challenge, but the rest of the staff.

She said that the disabled person had been well received at work, that there was someone who helped him in the canteen and that it gradually became a habit for everyone to help him.

Communication with him had been difficult at first, and the other employees felt that it was a bother to talk with him, because they could not understand what he was saying. It was said that this situation gradually improved because they did not give up.

The Handicap-Programme works on attitudes to assistive devices from day one, the programme management pointed out. Many participants have had negative experiences of such devices and are doubtful about using them. "They don't suit me". As management staff in the Handicap-Programme they

themselves are role models, because they have disabilities. Telenor also purchases its own assistive devices for testing, independent of the Assistive Devices Centre.

People who deny that they have a disability are often those whose disability is not obvious. They do not wish to reveal that they have a disability.

Generally speaking the participants have three types of attitude to assistive devices, says one of the managers:

- those who ask for assistive devices for everything possible
- those who use assistive devices for their real requirements
- those who refuse to use assistive devices.

The management team of the Handicap-Programme recommend the use of assistive devices when they see that there is a need for them. They usually manage to arrive at a solution together with the individual concerned.

In Telenor, most of the necessary adaptations have been implemented. For this reason, most of the participants prefer to apply for work experience there. Furthermore, the Handicap-Programme cooperates closely with company's HSE department, particularly with regard to the physical work environment.

Apart from that we often arrive at simple solutions; for example, we have bought a scooter for a participant who has a walking difficulty.

One of the participants said that she preferred to use assistive devices as little as possible. Being able to use SMS, however, has been useful for several of the participants with hearing difficulties. Hands-free telephones and keyboards single-handed operation have been useful for a participant who had injured one of his hands. Another received transport assistance, and everything else went fine. One participant used no assistive devices at first, but later considered getting a wheelchair, because his condition had deteriorated. One participant felt that there could be too many assistive devices at times:

I said yes to all sorts of assistive devices, but now I think that a lot of them just get in the way.

Security in the immediate environment means that assistive devices are accepted. Disabled people need to adapt to being disabled at work on their own premises, and to feel sure of their own identity, though one of the management team.

One of the participants said that he was encouraged by the Handicap-Programme managers to use a wheelchair at work. He did so, but with mixed feelings, and felt that this represented something of a defeat. It took him some time to accept the situation. However, the wheelchair has helped to improve his work situation, and now he himself decides when he needs to use the wheelchair and when he can use an office chair.

In other respects, my work-place is well adapted, with electric door-openers, which were installed when I joined. All in all. I was positively surprised that everything was so well prepared for my arrival.

The Working Life Centre in the County of Hedmark says that most of the participants there need assistive devices at their work-places. These might be a matter of accessibility (door-openers) or specially adapted equipment. Two of the participants also have function assistants. This scheme is really intended only for regular employees, but they have benefited by a flexible approach, where the HSE department has interpreted the regulations in accordance with their intentions. This is a good example of cooperation to identify common solutions.

One of the managers explained that the reasons behind some participants leaving the programme before it had been completed can be divided into three types:

- Their condition may have deteriorated.
- Unexplained factors that have changed the prerequisites for their acceptance by the programme may have changed. In many cases, this is a result of poor advance information about their situation.

- Some have been unsuitable for the programme.

In 2001, two persons who lacked motivation left the programme. IT was suggested that they had perhaps been **pushed into** it by Aetat. It is not sufficient **just to have a disability**; a little more is needed, a requirement that employers make of all their employees. People need to demonstrate a degree of interest. Some people are not used to having demands made of them. Some have been cared for all their lives and have been made helpless.

Some probably left the programme because this is what their families, rather than they themselves, wanted. Many of them had to leave home in order to participate in the programme, which may also have led to some of them leaving. Some participants were oversold or overevaluated by Aetat. One of them was insufficiently fluent in Norwegian, a weakness that was not discovered during the interview. They had a wrong impression of the work situation in the Handicap-Programme, and did not receive sufficient information. The case officers were positive, but lacked the ability and/or knowledge to inform interviewees sufficiently well about the programme. It was also claimed that they were unrealistic regarding whom they could refer to the programme, and were not sufficiently active in doing so.

4.1.3 Satisfaction of the participants with the Handicap-Programme

Very good courses. I was giving training at the IT Academy to the level of the "Data Card". I would have liked more training in what we could expect when we came to work. The course phase could have been longer, with a smoother transition to work experience.

The questions dealt with under this heading were the following:

- How has the Handicap-Programme, through differentiation of its service, managed to improve this service?
- How satisfied are the participants with the course and work experience phases?
- What did participants feel that the Handicap-Programme lacked?

Most of the participants said that their experience of the uptake interview was positive. A thorough survey of their level of functioning was made and how their work and their work-place could be adapted was examined. They also regarded it as extremely positive to be met by someone what was sitting in a wheelchair. *"The management team also know a lot about what it means to be disabled"*, said one participant

I feel that I immediately became a member of staff.

Adapting the work-place to the needs of people with vision or hearing impairments has become better, and more assistive devices are available for people who need them, thought several people. Some found that the process to be gone through before an application could be sent to the Handicap-Programme was rather problematic. One participant found that it involved a great deal of preparatory work, and that it had been difficult to persuade Aetat that the programme was the right thing for her.

Before 1999, the selection of courses was not nuanced, and all the participants were given the same offer. Today, the course phase is more flexible than it used to be, says the programme manager. During the course period, participants at different stages of maturity are placed in the same group, in which some are a little older and have experience of life, while others are younger. It was claimed that this enables the younger members to learn from their older counterparts. However, the management team of the Handicap-Programme retain responsibility for following up if anyone shirks work or does not observe agreements. Within each group, the composition of the courses is the same for everyone, and is built up in accordance with the competence and needs of the group members.

Not everyone follows the courses for three months. Those who have some previous knowledge of computing have a shorter course period and start their work experience earlier. This means that the set-up worked much better than it used to do. The course phase also reveals whether participants are suitable for a future in computing. One participant who had problems in learning computing decided to leave the programme.

Several participants felt that it was positive to be together with other in a group, even if not all the members of the group operated at the same level. However, the group was a social point of focus. The management team emphasised that they should all draw on each other's know-how, feel a sense of community and care for each other.

One participant talked of his experiences in the group that he had been assigned to, and which consisted of five persons with various backgrounds and abilities. It was exciting to have to work with these people. They were given tasks that they had to solve together. He benefited by cooperating and discussing things with the other members of the group, and they all got practice in cooperating.

One current participant is a member of a group of four that works well together, she said. They are all very different in age and level of competence, but they share a single goal, which is to obtain a job. All of them seem to be highly motivated. Sometimes their illnesses make it hard work, she said. They are obliged to follow various routines, but are still extremely free. The most important thing about this phase is to reach their goal. Telenor is a rewarding place in which to work, she felt. Sometimes, when they are not strong enough, their employer is flexible, and they can take a rest when they need to. The programme is tough, and what you put into it counts.

The greatest changes take place in participants during the course phase, felt one of them. From being disabled and unemployed you suddenly become part of something. Learning a few computer programs is well and good, but not the most important thing, she explained. What is important is that you move from a state of passivity to a system in which each individual has the opportunity to test whether "*this is something for me, something I can cope with*". The most critical aspects are the change in the life situation and the social development. She felt that not everyone is capable of tackling this transition.

"*After the course, everything started to fall into place*", said another participant. During the work experience phase they have the chance to demonstrate that they can keep up with other people at work. Most of them have a realistic picture of themselves and their role. They have their feet on the ground, and are also given help to steer their expectations in a realistic direction.

However, I am not sure just how good other Telenor staff are at regarding participants as "regular" colleagues.

The work experience phase works well as a way of seeing how we function in a real work situation and of measuring the level of what we can achieve with a given disability.

One participant felt that he had received good follow-up during his work experience phase, and that it was an advantage to be evaluated together with his employer. He was relatively soon able to manage on his own, he said. Nevertheless, he would have liked to have had the opportunity to try out several different work experience positions, as he felt that this would have expanded his network and given him more job opportunities.

In the questionnaire study, participants were asked to evaluate the follow-up that had received in the course of the programme. About half of them thought that the follow-up had been good or extremely good in both the professional and personal fields. One in four, however, felt that there had been insufficient professional follow-up during the work experience phase. About half of the participants who completed the questionnaire also missed a closer follow-up after the end of the programme.

4.1.4 The significance of the Handicap-Programme

I am better prepared now; I know that I have more ballast, and I have more training in presenting myself.

The questions dealt with under this heading were the following:

- What has been the significance of the practical work experience?
- How have education, motivation and attitudes affected the chances of the participants of obtaining employment?
- What do the participants feel is lacking in the Handicap-Programme?

- To what extent have the participants improved their life situation?
- How have IT tools improved the performance of individual participants and how well has the technology been adapted to the work situation of the individual?
- To what extent has technology contributed to participants remaining in employment?

Several respondents thought that the Handicap-Programme acts today as a springboard to working life. Some people have found regular jobs after completing the programme, and the chances of getting a job are clearly better after two years of experience here. However, public-sector companies ought to be more ready to make positions available to people with disabilities and to act as good examples to other companies. Many companies still need more knowledge of and competence in employing people with activity limitations.

It is much simpler to apply for a job when you already have one than when you are sitting at home. Your motivation is often better.

The Handicap-Programme has acted 100% as a springboard for me. Employers start off by being sceptical about people with disabilities, so without the Handicap-Programme I would not have had a job.

Through out the programme, participants are encouraged to look out for possible positions and to apply for them. As participants in the Handicap-Programme, they receive testimonials and references from their employers, and can improve their CVs. Each of them can find out what he or she would need to fill a position and what would be needed to stay where they are.

The Handicap-Programme has been a springboard into regular employment for 75% of the participants, claim the management team. Responses from the questionnaire study confirm this claim. According to these responses, three out of four are in work. Most of them, (10 out of 17) are working for other companies than Telenor. Some of them may have got a regular job in the company where they obtained their work experience. The fact that most of them have found work outside Telenor may also mean that the transition to a different employer has gone well, even though several participants said that they were not sure how they would get on in a job outside Telenor. In the course of the work experience phase there efficiency improved, in most cases to between 80 and 100%, claimed the management team. This increase in efficiency was not measured in the evaluation.

It was also said that what distinguishes participants in the Handicap-Programme from other disabled job applicants is that Telenor employs these people itself. The usual procedure is to be employed via a reference from Aetat. This model has been so successful that Sweden is now launching a similar project with EU funding. This is a “win-win-win” situation, in that the companies get a competent, loyal employee, the participants find a position in the labour market and society moves a social security client over to salaried employment.

A previous participant said that the Handicap-Programme had been of significance for the fact that he was in work today because has given an important combination of theory and practical experience and that he gained confidence in using a PC. He felt that he was treated in the same way as other employees: “*this could have something to do with an increase in my own self-confidence*”. He had applied for his current job in the normal way. The job-applicant course that he followed as part of the Handicap-Programme may have helped him to write a good application, so that he got the job.

The Handicap-Programme has helped several people with disabilities to find work, and this helps you change the attitudes of society to people with disabilities, it was claimed.

One sees that people with disabilities do a good job and manage just as well as other people, even if some of them need some special adaptations. Society saves money by getting more people into work.

In Telenor, people with disabilities are highly visible, said one participant. This is positive when people visit the company. The IWL Agreement forces employers to think afresh, also in terms of their premises. The Handicap-Programme had been of great benefit to him personally. Instead of being closed in at home, he now goes out much more. There has been a change in a positive direction, a better life situation and a richer life.

This participant had previously worked in computing. For him, the most important aspect of the Handicap-Programme had been that he could easily come back to work, while retaining the freedom to say that today he would have to take it easy, i.e. that the programme displayed flexibility with regard to his health. He feels that Telenor has demonstrated that the company can take human needs into account as well as profit.

Another respondent was able to try working again with a disability. He had been in a normal job before he became obliged to use a wheelchair. Everyone thought that he ought to go in for ICT; that this was the thing for him now. This was why he applied for the Telenor programme. However, he was not interested in ICT, but rather in administration. He was able to try this field in the course of the programme, which includes all sorts of jobs with Telenor; not just ICT but also finance, administration, customer service, etc. The IT courses gave him the basic knowledge he required to do other types of work. In the individual department where they work, each participant is given training in the work that needs to be done.

One participant said that the Handicap-Programme had given her a unique opportunity to gain work experience. She had been at home for several years and had heard about the Handicap-Programme via an acquaintance. She submitted an application to the Handicap-Programme and was called in to an interview. She had to go through Aetat, which had not heard of the programme. Her advice to other people is to try.

Although the system is hard, you always have support, and it is free. You get two years of work experience. You are expected to do as well as you can.

Another participant said that the Handicap-Programme had given her a special chance to show that she was capable of achieving something, that there exists a community, that it is busy, but that she always got a nod back. It felt safe to be with Telenor, and she was fearful about starting somewhere else. She had been told right at the beginning that there was no guarantee that she would be able to stay with Telenor.

I had to expect to go to another work-place.

One said that his quality of life had improved.

It is a lovely feeling, and I have no problems with getting up early in the morning.

She becomes worn out physically, which she regards as positive, and not psychologically worn out from doing nothing.

Preparing for the job situation was important, said another.

The Handicap-Programme is good at preparing us to accept responsibility, so that we know more about what is expected of us. We take courses in writing CVs, tackling job interviews and focusing on being "full-value" employees.

One participant felt that there was a good progression in the programme, and that the good ongoing support was important. Another thought that he would never have been considered if he had applied in the normal way. His first work-experience placement was with Telenor in Oslo, but since he came from another part of the country, a job was found for him in his home town. However, he was not certain whether he would be able to get a job when he had finished his period of work experience.

It can be a good idea to get a job in a real company and to gain experience over such a long period of time as the Handicap-Programme offers, thought a representative of the Social Security services. It may also be an advantage that it takes place in a well-known company, because this may be of importance later when one is applying for a job, she thought.

One of the staff of the Handicap-Programme believes that it is important that line managers can see that participants are making a contribution and that they are of benefit to the company. We have examples of such people becoming the company's expert in their own field. The company has also learned a great deal. The result for the participant is an enlarged social network and a much higher salary than the social security benefits.

One of the participants said that it is important to become an active contributor. You can survive on social security, but you do not live. The longer that you are passive, the more difficult it is to break out of the situation. Local authority help to get started needs to be better. Changing attitude: the "it's worthwhile" attitude. The rights and obligations of the individual vis-à-vis himself and others. Wheelchair users have

resources, and they can make a contribution. Unfortunately the “downgrading law” still exists, and many say to themselves that they cannot manage.

A great deal is happening in the computer world, and it is important for the Handicap-Programme to keep up to date, to look ahead and stay at the cutting edge, believes a former participant. It is an important supplement to formal education, because not everyone can go back to school. The most important aspect of the Handicap-Programme for him was the fact that it took a holistic approach, that it gave participants belief in themselves and improved their self-confidence. The programme management team is good, because it listens and is not arrogant.

The questionnaire confirms what many of the participants have said here; that the Handicap-Programme has been of importance in finding regular employment. More than 70% of the respondents who are in work today feel that the Handicap-Programme was “important” or “extremely important” in finding work. Half of those who have not yet found a job feel the same.

4.2 Consequences for the companies

This section present the informants’ perceptions of the importance of the Handicap-Programme for companies, in terms of accessibility, work environment and financial consequences.

4.2.1 Accessibility

Those who see possibilities rather than problems will be most successful in making adaptations.

The question that was dealt with under this heading was:

- How has the Handicap-Programme contributed to companies improving adaptations for disabled persons and the follow-up of individual participants?

Telenor’s new building at Fornebu near Oslo has been designed with the idea in mind that it should be accessible to everyone, without the necessity for special adaptations. This is true both of access within the building and of its work-places, where vertically adjustable desk-tops are standard. **The Fornebu model** has also been adopted in other Telenor companies. In the “paperless” Telenor, all internal information is based on the company’s intranet. This means that everyone can choose to read it in the form that they find most suitable, whether they have reduced vision, cannot use their hands or have other forms of reduced capacity. The study did not show how this has been dealt with in other companies.

In the non-Telenor work-experience companies, the Handicap-Programme required the building to be accessible to persons with disabilities, and that any special measures should have been put into effect before the arrival of the participant. The survey of needs was carried out as a joint effort of the company, representatives of the Handicap-Programme and the participants themselves, so that they would be able to identify the most appropriate solution together. The Handicap-Programme has in this way made a contribution to better knowledge of and attention to problems of accessibility.

None of the informants in the study have experienced serious problems of physical accessibility in their work-place buildings. Some of the managers, however, have found that it can be difficult to cooperate with the Social Security regarding aids and measures, and that applications for support have taken a great deal of time. Some companies also felt that there was a lack of information about what support schemes were available.

Some managers suggested that the Handicap-Programme should develop a programme for analysing accessibility in individual companies, for example in collaboration with Abelia. What barriers exist? Who could my company be suitable for? Others felt that such a general-purpose programme might have the opposite effect in that individual applicants with special needs for adaptations might find themselves excluded. Nor did they wish to involve individual participants in the survey, preferring to identify problems and propose solutions themselves.

4.2.2 Work environment

We are treated like everyone else: it is an advantage that there are several others with problems - this makes our colleagues more relaxed about people with disabilities.

The question that was dealt with under this heading was:

- How has the Handicap-Programme helped to generate an inclusive work environment?

There is a general perception among both participants and company managers that the Handicap-Programme has helped to alter the work environment in participating companies in a positive direction.

Some companies claim that this has also affected rates of sick-leave. When other employees see that a colleague with serious physical problems manages to go to work, the threshold for reporting sick is raised. The result is lower rates of sick-leave. However, we lack figures to show rates of sick-leave among people with disabilities compared to those without disabilities.

The Handicap-Programme has helped to create openness about disabilities. Some colleagues may themselves have problems that set limits on their performance, while other have friends or members of their families with disabilities, so that these are not regarded as particularly special or remarkable.

Some people noticed that they had begun to be a bit more considerate about each other. Meetings that included people with hearing problems meant that we do not all talk at the same time, while the meetings themselves become more structured and effective.

Some people claimed that companies that have people with disabilities at work have become better at dealing with difficult discussions about the work environment while still thinking about profits. People with disabilities bring out the fact that we all have different capabilities and characteristics, and that there exist other values that affect the bottom line.

There is a wide range of types of disability, and not everyone will fit in everywhere. Some people need more follow-up than others, and it is important for the company to be prepared to accept that situation.

Working together with persons with disabilities provides experience that is important for the acceptance of such people at work. We gradually stop noticing the difference, because the job is done just as well. At the same time, it is important for managers to make clear demands of people with disabilities in their companies. Treating everyone in the same way helps to create acceptance. A lack of communication regarding expectations and the conditions that are being set is a cause of insecurity. It is important that everyone should know what can happen in terms of participants taking sick-leave, working slowly, taking extra rests, etc. When people know the causes of such things they will be easier to accept.

Informal social contact in the work-place was hardly touched on by the respondents. Some of them mentioned that some people need help in the canteen, but this was not a problem. The same was said about coming to parties, excursions and other social arrangements. It was emphasised that such events lead to social openness and creativity, and care in the work-place.

4.2.3 Financial consequences

Perhaps we should market the Handicap-Programme under the slogan of "Try a disabled person free for two years"!

The question that was dealt with under this heading was:

- What financial consequences has the Handicap-Programme had for the companies involved?

Stability, sick-leave, efficiency and subsidies are the factors that respondents felt have the most important financial consequences for companies who host participants in the Handicap-Programme.

One of the most critical factors for the companies involved is stability. Some disabled persons may need to take sick-leave because of their disability. There must be openness about this topic and it must be taken into account.

Norwegian companies prefer not to employ new people; they prefer to increase the load on those that already work there.

In such cases, disabled persons employed under subsidised schemes can be a solution. They provide relief for others, which in turn may reduce sick-leave rates.

It is important to balance duties and expectations when companies are taking in participants in the Handicap-Programme. Nor must it be too easy for the company to back out once the work experience period is over. This is a special challenge when companies are “downsizing”, when employees with health problems are particularly vulnerable. The Handicap-Programme has survived within Telenor because of its solid roots at top management level, and not least because the unions have always been active participants.

Companies may still be undecided as to whether they wish to offer work experience because they may have the impression that they are letting themselves in for long-term obligations vis-à-vis the employee. Informants called this “drawing the short straw”. Aetat ought to be able to stand in as a guarantor, so that problems can be solved ahead of deadlines and with a service declaration that offers support and measures. However, some people claim that such scepticism falls off when companies have joined the milieu. Companies also feel that they have a responsibility to society and are not solely concerned with financial considerations.

The salary subsidies turn the Handicap-Programme into good business for the companies involved. Some managers suggested in their interviews that we should market the Handicap-Programme under the slogan of “Try a disabled person free for two years”! It is important that financial side is made predictable for the companies, and that Aetat makes it clear what support measure are available and what obligations the companies assume.

4.2.4 Reputation

The question that was dealt with under this heading was:

- How has the Handicap-Programme affected the reputation of the companies involved?

The respondents thought that the Handicap-Programme can certainly help to improve the public face of participating companies, but that such an effect is difficult to measure. Telenor mentions the Handicap-Programme as an important measure when the company is describing its social involvement. A previous participant is critical to this claim, and thinks that:

The Handicap-Programme offers a glossy picture of Telenor, which ignores the fact that their goal is profit.

Some people mentioned that the Handicap-Programme may improve public recognition of the IWL scheme, and that companies that participate in the programme are proclaiming that they take visions of an inclusive working life seriously.

4.3 Consequences for society in general: is the Handicap-Programme worthwhile?

Telenor’s vision is that every company should start its own Handicap-Programme, taking the Telenor programme, for example, as a model.

We present some calculations here to show how far the Handicap-Programme has contributed to bringing a number of people with activity limitations have found work and some of the consequences of this for the participants, companies and society in general.

Economic analyses were carried out primarily in a social economics perspective. A social economic analysis adopts a much wider perspective than a micro-economic analysis, in that it also looks at the effects of a measure on others than the company itself, i.e. on individuals and on public-sector costs and revenues.

4.3.1 Social-economic consequences

On the basis of the results of the questionnaire study and average levels of income and social security benefits, we estimated the economic consequences and put them in a social economics perspective. The assumption of such estimates is that the measure - in this case the Handicap-Programme - brings about long-term changes (increases) in employment among participants that would not otherwise have taken place.

The interviews and the questionnaire study provided a basis for discussion and evaluation of this assumption.

We can see that persons with disabilities do a good job and manage just as well as other people, even if some of them require special measures to be taken. Of course, such measures come at a price, but they soon pay for themselves as a result of increased tax revenues. Society saves money when more people are at work. The question is, how many years people have to work before there is a net gain for society.

One of the aims of the Handicap-Programme was to reduce the number of people on disability benefit and increase the number of people with disabilities in active employment. This will lead to saving for society. The Handicap-Programme has saved the community millions of kroner, it was claimed.

One interpretation of the programme, which we present in the following section of this report, is that about 35% of the participants in the Handicap-Programme indicated that they had obtained salaried employment as a direct result of the programme. Some people would have found work without the help of the Handicap-Programme, but we regard this as a relatively conservative estimate of the net effect of the programme. Of about 85 people who have been through the programme so far, there are about 30 such persons. If we assume that these persons remain in long-term employment until they reach pension age, we can calculate some of the consequences of this result for public-sector budgets. We therefore need to assume that none of them would have found work without the programme. The calculations are somewhat uncertain, and are intended as an illustration of the order of magnitude of some of the economic effects of the Handicap-Programme until 2005, as seen in the perspective of the whole life of the participants. None of the figures have been adjusted for inflation, nor has any form of discounting been carried out.

Saved disability benefits + increased tax revenues = net savings

Saved disability benefits

The average age of the participants in the Handicap-Programme is 33, which means that they have another 33 years until they reach pension age. Today, the average recipient of disability benefits has 1.46 pension points², and the base amount for calculating social security benefits is NOK 60,699. Generally speaking, we can say that an average recipient of disability benefits receives NOK 88,620 a year. In the course of 33 years, this will come to NOK 2,924,477.

Increased tax revenue

In 2003, the mean salary level was NOK 183,900, and mean income tax paid was NOK 52,000³. In 33 years this adds up to NOK 1,716,000.

² Social Security. ?? Social Security Statistical Yearbook, table 9.37.

³ Statistics Norway. Statistical Yearbook 2005. Table 189.

Gross savings

In total, this provides a saving to public sector of NOK 4,640,477 for every person who finds work, where the alternative was disability benefit. For 30 persons, this comes to a total of almost NOK 140 million.

Net socioeconomic gain

From the gross savings we must subtract rehabilitation costs and course fees, which are intended to cover some of Telenor's expenses.

The costs of running the Handicap-Programme are in the order of NOK 2 million a year, if we exclude the disability benefits paid to the participants. An average of eight to ten persons pass through the course every year. We can say that ten years of operation of the programme have cost NOK 20 million. We assume that the rehabilitation costs have been of a similar order of magnitude. The total costs have thus been around NOK 40 million.

The net effect of the Handicap-Programme has thus been around NOK 140 - 40 million, i.e. about NOK 100 million, which is a conservative estimate.

An extra employee enters the labour market. That is where the savings lie! This represents a win-win situation. I myself had less than a fifty percent chance of getting a job. Today, my chances are almost 100%.

These calculations also show that it would be sufficient for only one person a year to obtain employment for this measure, the Handicap-Programme, to be profitable in socioeconomic terms.

4.3.2 Additional costs?

With a good outcome or successful result, both society and the public sector save both money and resources. As an active contributor and provider for oneself, this offers benefits both to the disabled person and to society. If attempts to establish the Handicap-Programme in other companies are unsuccessful, it may mean that companies do not wish to employ any such people. For this reason, success stories are important.

If the project had not been successful for some of the participants, we would be in a position to speak of additional costs.

An important point is that the Handicap-Programme is run by a private, ordinary company (rather than by a state-supported protected company (AMB)). It is very positive that the company has accepted a social responsibility in this way.

It saves the course fees for alternative training, plus that an ordinary school would have taken much more time.

The user does a socially useful job! - and the Handicap-Programme is due much of the honour for this. An alternative could have been a VTA company, at a cost of NOK 13,700 a month. Many of these companies do an impressive job, but they are more suitable for persons with mental retardation. Other offers are also expensive, while it is difficult to see any additional costs with the Handicap-Programme.

4.3.3 Raising the profile of disabled people in work

The Handicap-Programme has helped to raise the profile of disabled people in society. If they can get work, other social activities that "normalise" them will follow in due course. It is a way into new possibilities, going on courses and other job-related activities. Well-integrated wheel-chair users are not regarded as being disabled.

This programme is capable of producing what may be significant savings, while supporting the personal development of participants. They earn a living and they get an education!

The Handicap-Programme changes people with disabilities from social security recipients into tax-payers, and thus raises their profile in the workplace.

We need to find a way of spreading the word about the concept of the Handicap-Programme. Enthusiasts for the programme must act as ambassadors to sell the idea.

Access has not become much better as far as applying for jobs is concerned.

The Handicap-Programme should have been marketed better to industry. The programme is still far from being sufficiently well known.

It is possible that it is easier to start up a project of this sort in a large company than in a small one. Large companies are often more flexible and less vulnerable, and they may have more room for pilot schemes.

I believe that when such a large company as Telenor emphasises universal solutions, this has an effect as a model for the rest of society.

The reputation of the company has meant that Telenor is brought more into the public eye and is winning prizes. It has been received by Ruth Kleppe, former Minister of Social Services, and has been featured on TV. Many relatives of people with disabilities rang in after the programme, but no company managers.

4.3.4 The Handicap-Programme's contribution to the IWL Agreement

Via the Handicap-Programme, Telenor has helped to create a more society for disabled people. They have noticed that this is a progressive company. Telenor started the Handicap-Programme before it became a IWL company, and one of the measures of effect of the Handicap-Programme is that it should act as a springboard. This has also turned out to have a long-term effect in that disabled persons stay in work. In this way, the Handicap-Programme contributes to Part 2 of the IWL being fulfilled. For this reason, it is important to find out how different public-sector bodies regard the Handicap-Programme. The Working Life Centres play a key role in getting persons with disabilities into work, and closer cooperation with these centres is essential. At the moment, it is not certain what is happening with the new NAV organisation.

The IWL Agreement forces employers to think in new ways, also where their premises are concerned. At Telenor, employees with disabilities are highly visible in the work-place. This is positive when customers visit Telenor. Other companies are gradually coming into line as a result of the IWL Agreement. They may have heard of the Handicap-Programme at meetings or seminars that they have attended.

Funding is necessary if this effort is to be successful. The alternative is usually disability benefit. There are things going on in the field of thinking total economy. There is a sharp focus via the IWL Agreement on getting people with activity limitations into work, but this is not so easy to do. We need to make better use of their abilities. We lack figures on how many people are disabled and which of them have a real need.

4.4 The questionnaire study

Most of the results are presented in the form of figures showing the percentages obtained by the various responses. Unless otherwise stated, the percentages are based on 38 responses. For some of the questions, however, it was natural to look at a smaller group of respondents, such as those who are in work at present.

4.4.1 Who were the respondents?

A total of 26 men (68%) and 12 women responded to the questionnaire; they were aged between 23 and 53, and their average age was 33.

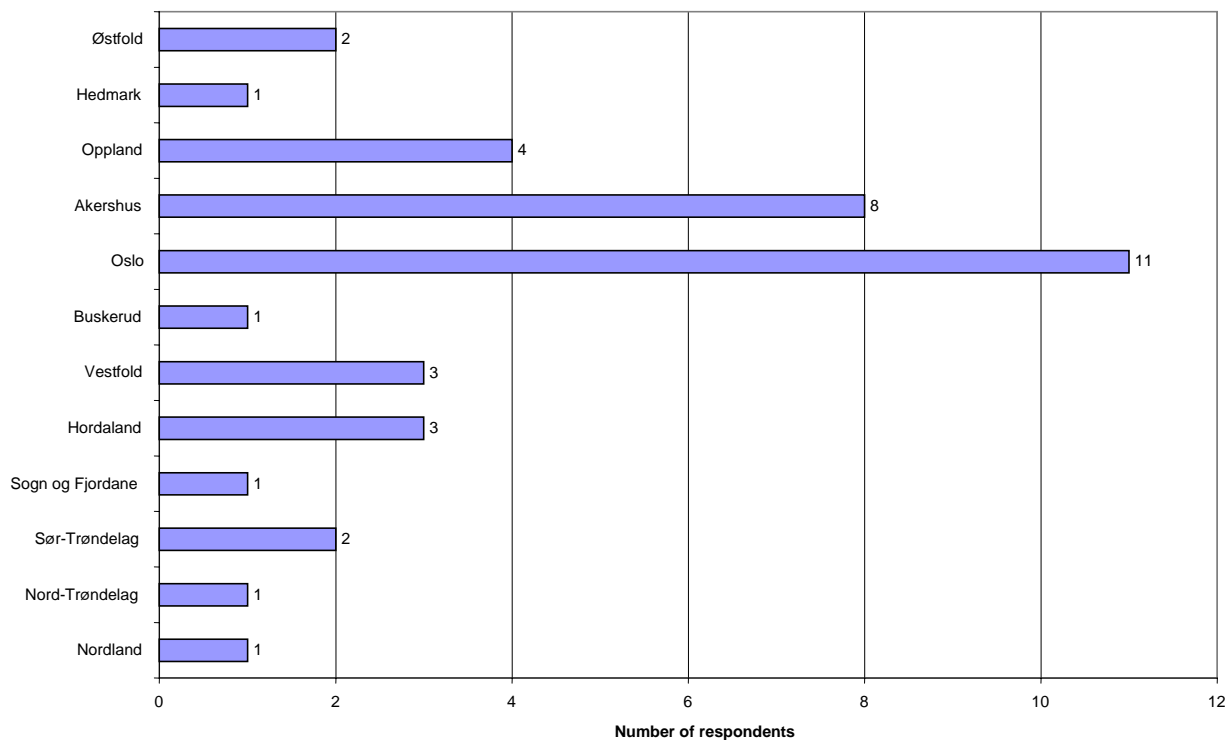


Figure 1. Distribution by county

The respondents came from a total of 12 different counties, 11 from Oslo and 8 from Akershus.

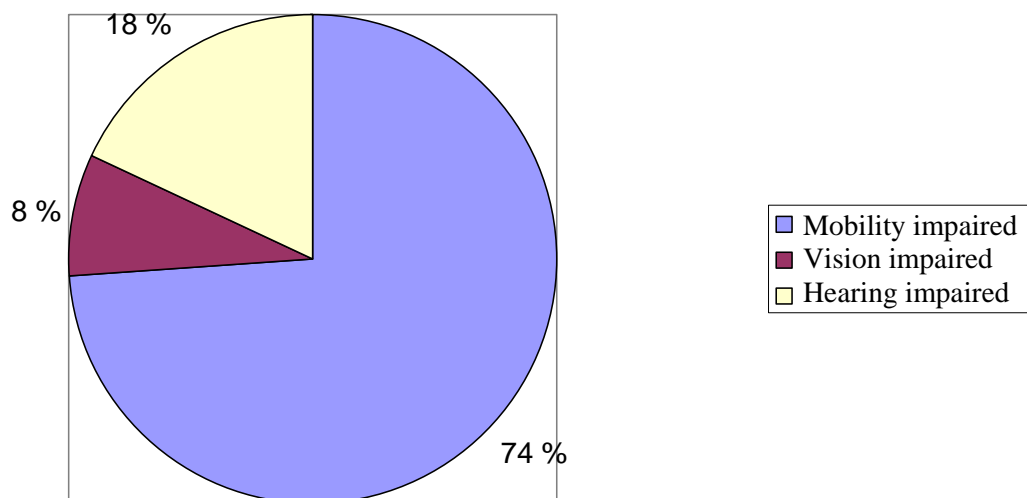


Figure 2. Type of disability

Three of every four participants had some form of mobility limitation, while one in five had impaired hearing and the remaining eight percent suffered from limited vision.

We do not know the overall distribution by age, gender or home town of all the participants in the Handicap-Programme, but on the basis of these results we regard the study sample as being sufficiently representative to offer a picture of the experience of participation in the programme. Most parts of the country are represented, and there is a reasonable spread of ages.

Education and ICT experience:

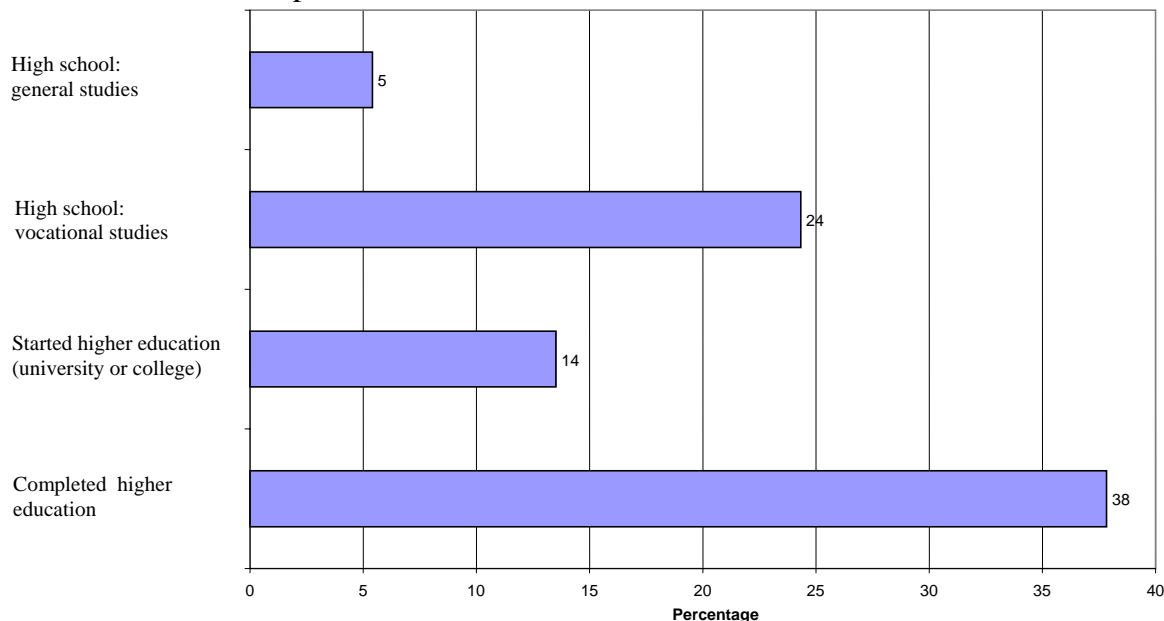


Figure 3. Education

One of the requirements for participation in the Handicap-Programme was that candidates should have completed high school or equivalent. More than half of the participants had also commenced or completed higher education studies (Figure 3).

The text responses revealed that many of them had graduated from the Business Academy or IT Academy.

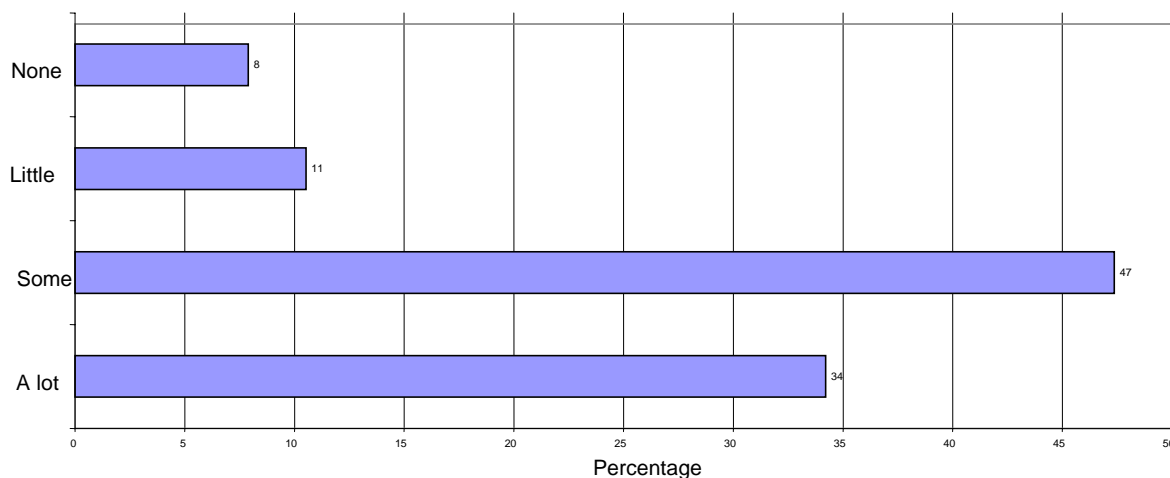
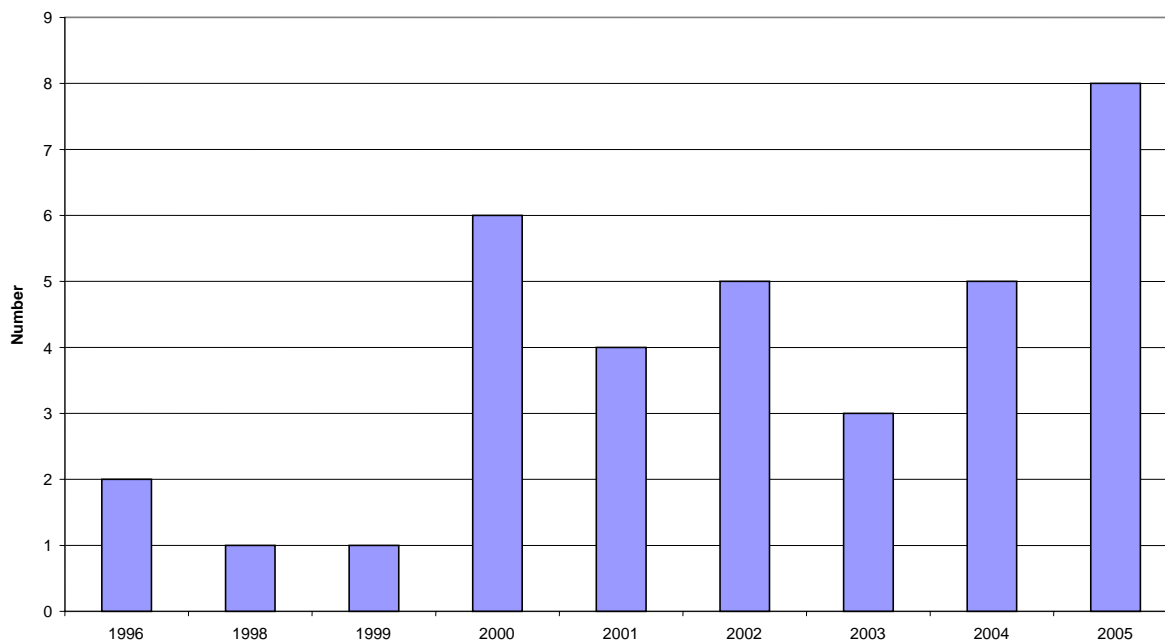


Figure 4. How much ICT experience did you have before joining the Handicap-Programme?

About one in five of the participants had no or little ICT experience before they started in the programme, while a third of them had a great deal of experience.

4.4.2 When they participated



Figur 5. When did you join the Handicap-Programme's basic course?

There were respondents from every year of the programme's existence except 1997. Most of them had participated in the programme in the course of the past six years.

Four respondents are currently in the course phase, 11 in work experience, while 23 have completed the programme.

4.4.3 How respondents heard about the Handicap-Programme

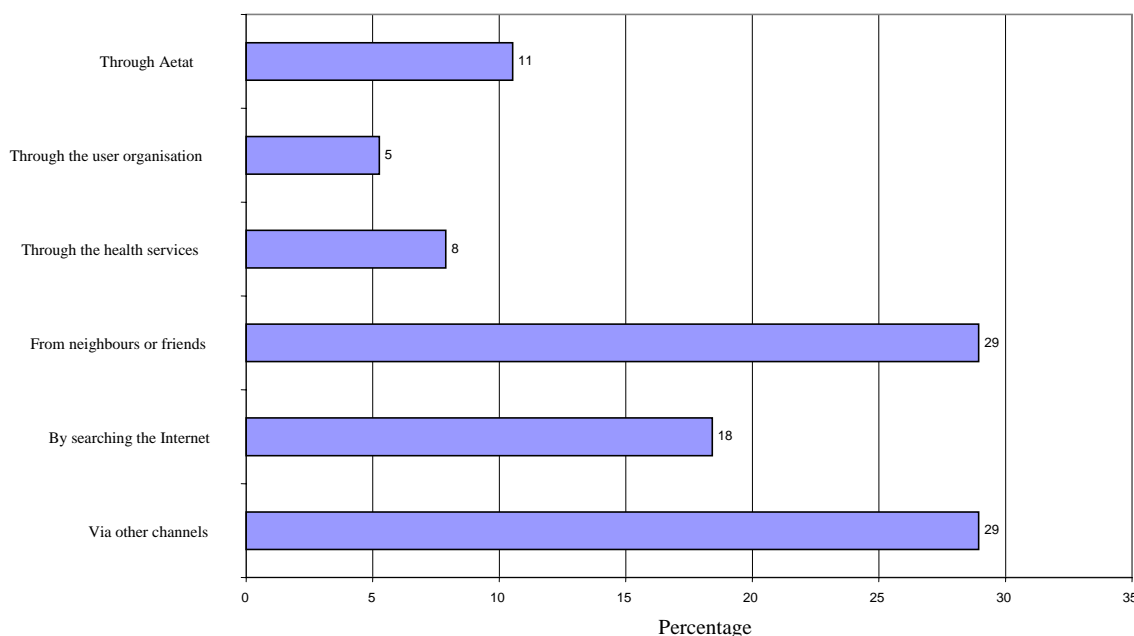


Figure 6. How respondents heard about the Handicap-Programme

The Handicap-Programme is marketed in various ways, but the most usual way of hearing about the programme is via friends and acquaintances (Figure 6). Almost one in five had searched the Internet. Only one in ten respondents had heard of the Handicap-Programme via Aetat. Many of them (29%) mentioned other ways in which they had heard about the programme: on the radio(Channel 4), text-TV,

brochures that they had come across by chance, their families, newspaper ads, their previous jobs, a stand that the Handicap-Programme had had at the Sjølyst Exhibition Centre, etc.

4.4.4 Work status after the end of the programme

Of the 23 who have completed the programme, a total of 17 (74%) are in work today; 14 are in full-time employment, while three work part-time. A further 14 are studying. Of the 17 in employment, 10 are in other companies than Telenor. Of these, six are working in ICT companies, while four are doing ICT-related work in other types of company. Most of them found a job at once, and only four had to wait for three months or more to get work.

Evaluation of the Handicap-Programme

Most of the questionnaire study dealt with the informants' evaluations of various aspects of the programme.

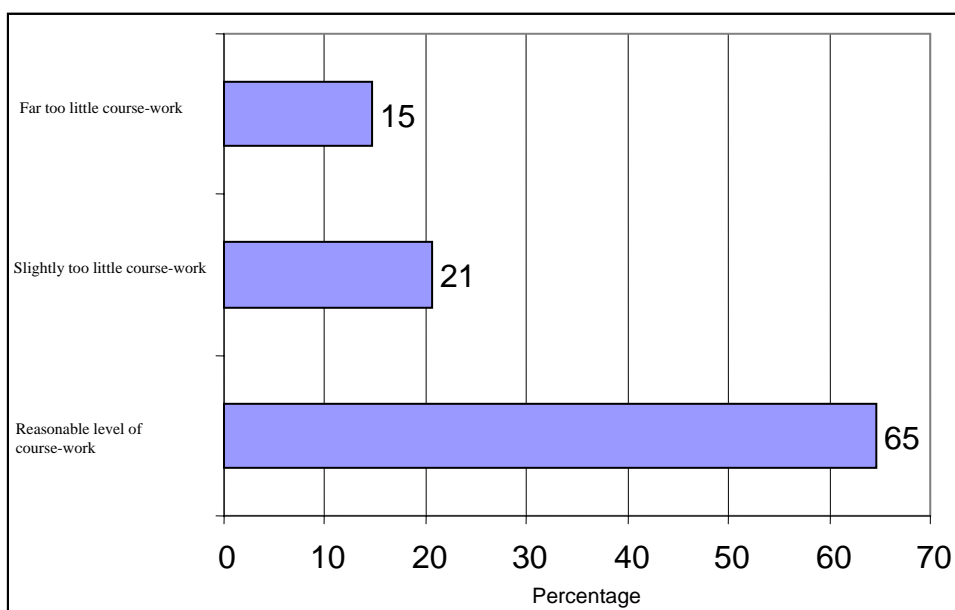


Figure 7. How do you regard the proportion of courses and practical work training in the programme? (Respondents who had completed the programme; n=34)

Respondents who had completed the programme were asked for their opinion regarding the proportion of courses and work experience. Two-thirds thought that the proportion was reasonable, while the remainder felt that the proportion of course to work experience was too low or far too low. No-one felt that there had been too much course-work.

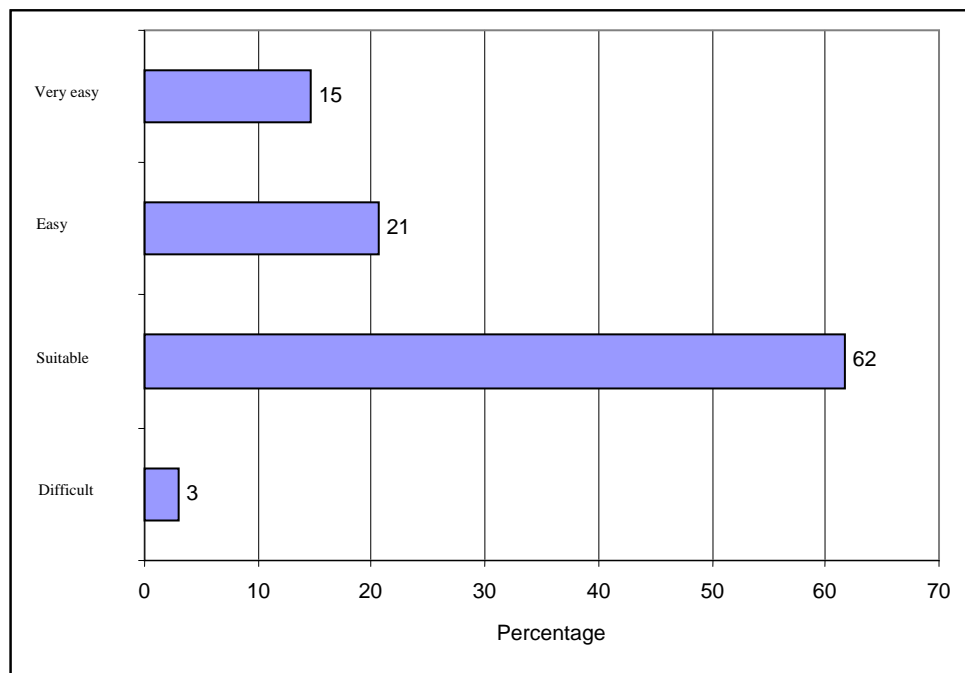


Figure 8. How difficult was the course? (Respondents who had completed the programme; n=34)

Only three percent felt that the course had been difficult, while a third thought that it had been easy or very easy.

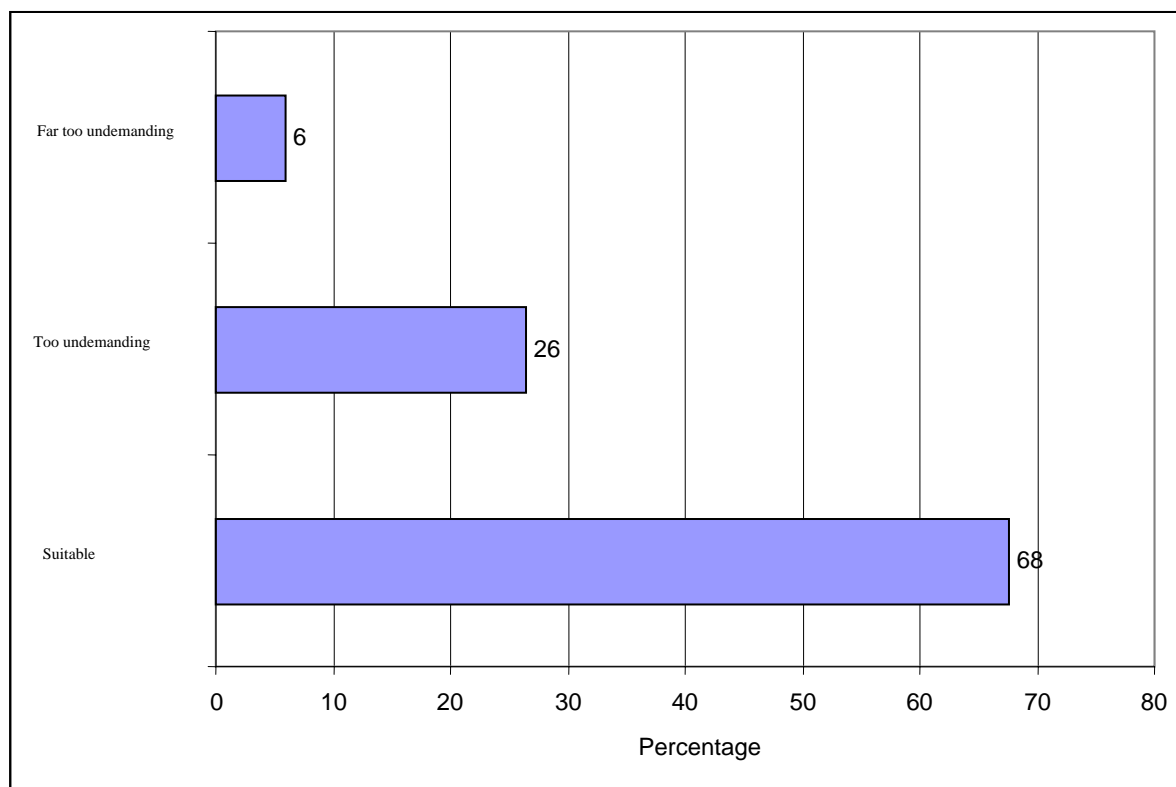


Figure 9. How do you regard the demands that were made of you? (Respondents who had completed the programme; n=34)

No-one thought that the demands made of them in the course of the programme were too high, while about one third felt that demands had been insufficient or very insufficient.

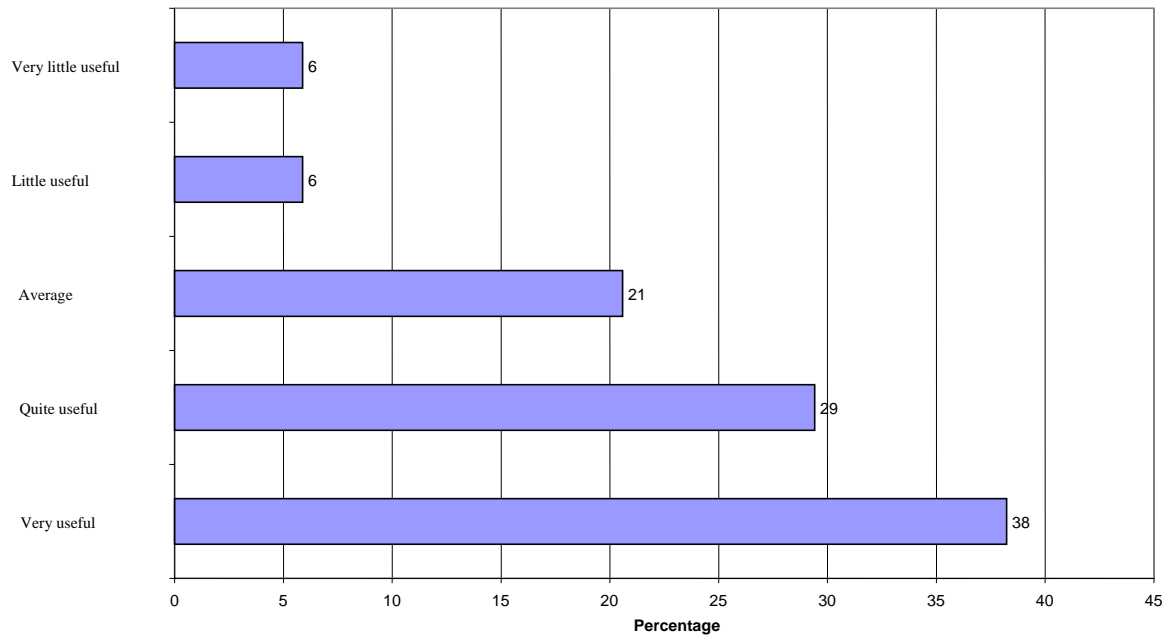


Figure 10. How useful is your ICT competence now? (Respondents who had completed the programme; n=34)

Only one in ten answered that the competence that they had gain in ICT was of little use or of little use. Nearly 70% thought that that their competence in ICT was extremely or quite relevant, while the remainder that that it was reasonably relevant.

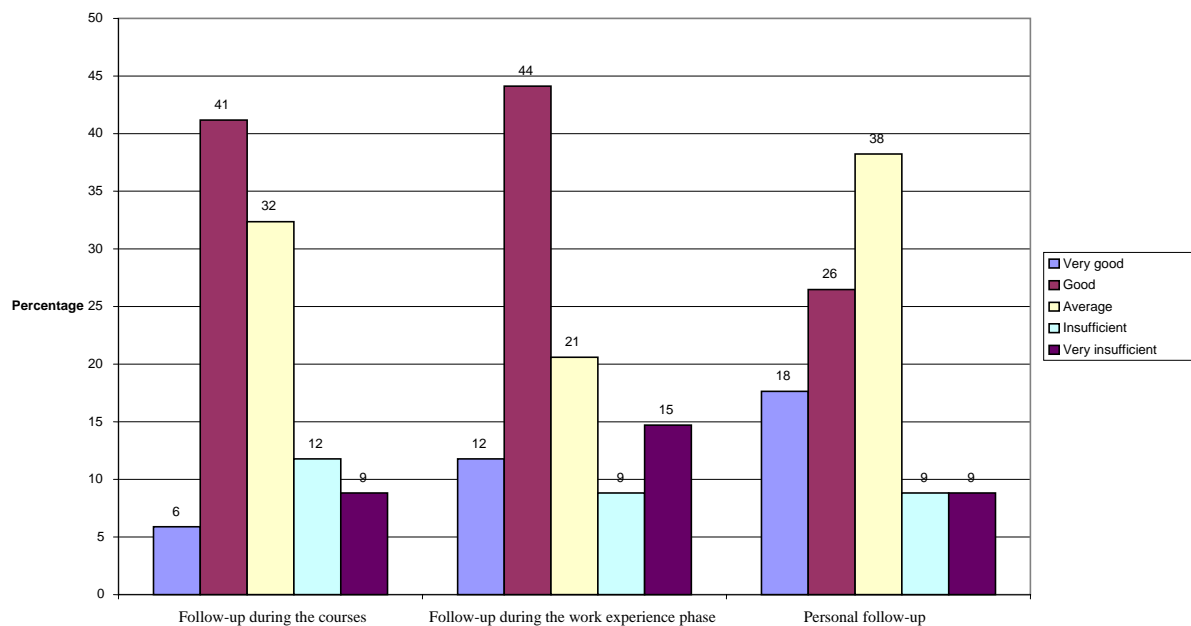


Figure 11. How do you evaluate the follow-up you were given? (Respondents who had completed the programme; n=34)

A total of three question were asked about how the participants regarded the follow-up they had been given in the course of the programme. A quarter of them felt that the follow-up during the work experience period had been inadequate or extremely inadequate. About half thought that that the professional and personal follow-up had been good or extremely good, while the remainder were reasonably satisfied.

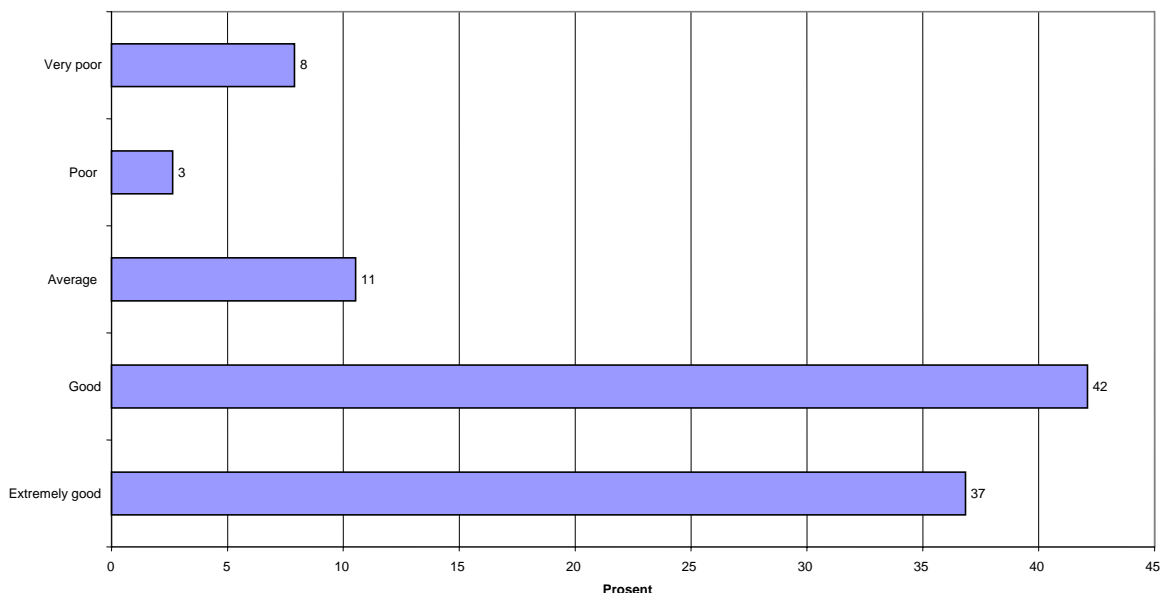


Figure 12. What is your overall evaluation of the Handicap-Programme?

A total of 79% of the respondents answered that their overall evaluation of the Handicap-Programme was good or extremely good. Only 11% thought that the programme was bad or very bad.

4.4.5 The importance of HCP as a means of finding a job

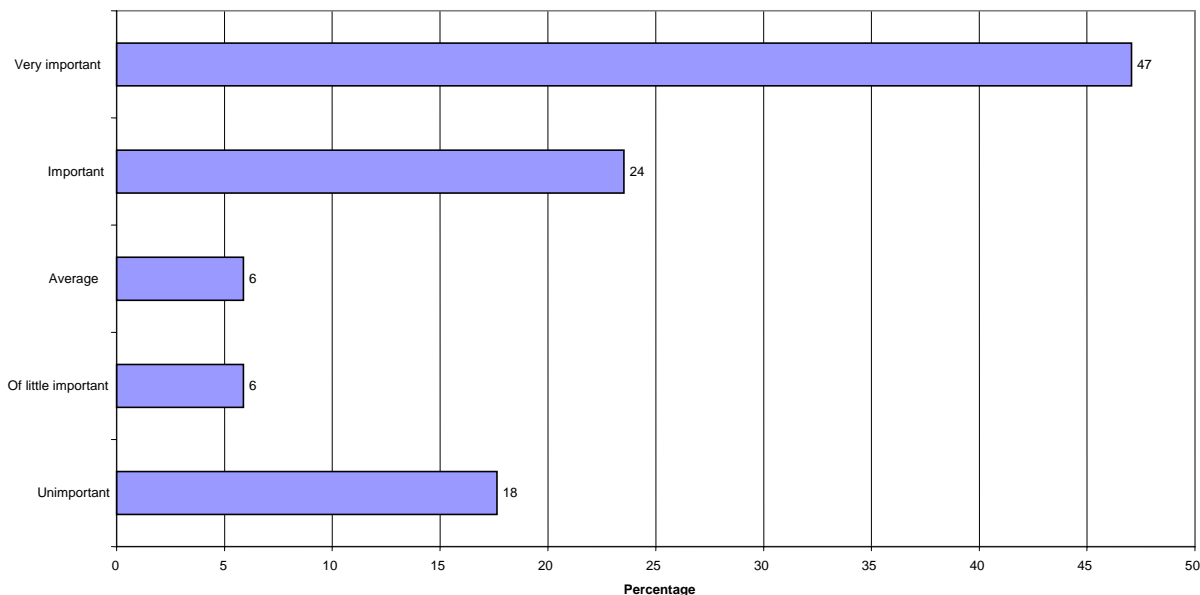


Figure 13. How important was the Handicap-Programme for the fact that you are in work today? (17 respondents)

A key question concerns the extent to which the Handicap-Programme is capable of raising the rate of employment of disabled persons. Of the 17 who are currently in employment, 71% (24% + 47%) that the Handicap-Programme had been important or extremely important in this respect, while 23% thought that it was of minor or no importance.

Of the six persons who are currently unemployed, three regarded the Handicap-Programme as important or extremely important for their prospects of finding a job in the future.

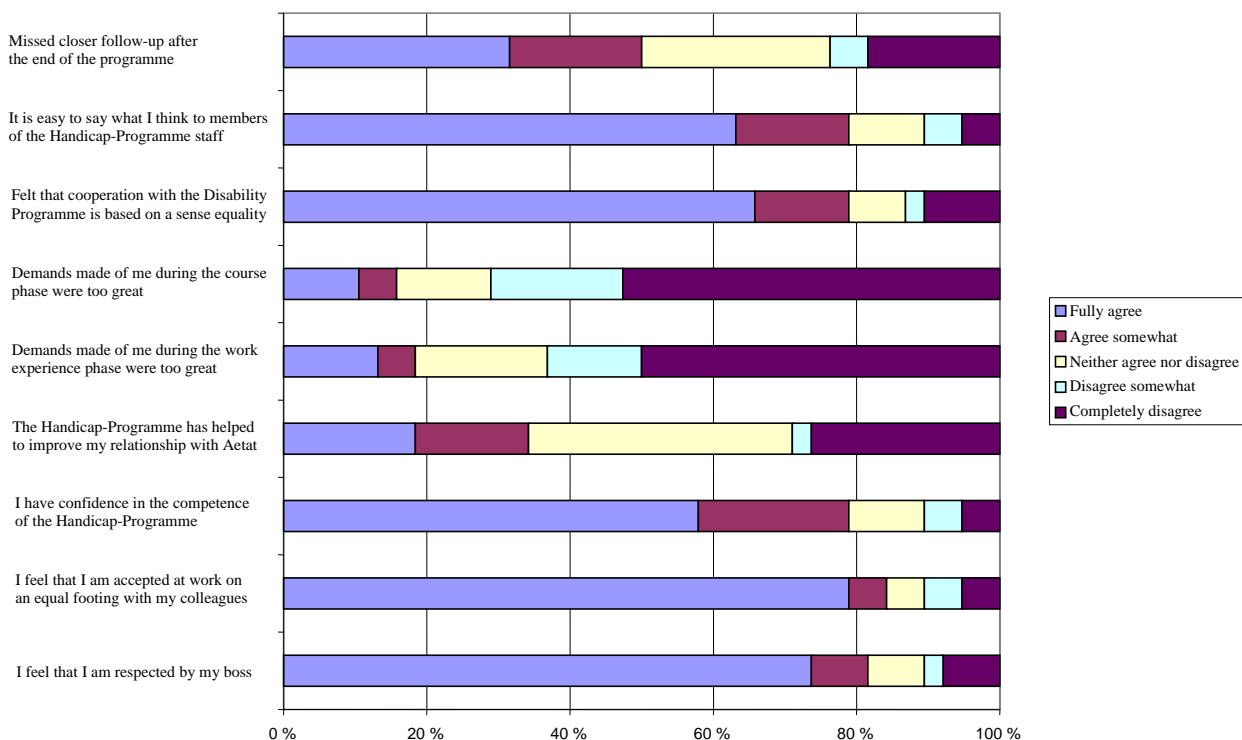


Figure 14. Evaluation of the Handicap-Programme. Do you agree or disagree with these statements? (All respondents, i.e. 38 persons)

Figure 14 shows that very many (80 - 85% agree, or agree somewhat) of the respondents have confidence in the competence of the Handicap-Programme, that they are respected at work, are respected by their boss, that it is easy to say what they think to the Handicap-Programme staff and that cooperation with the programme is characterised by a sense of equality. Very many (65 - 75%) did not agree that the demands made of them during the course and work experience phases were too great.

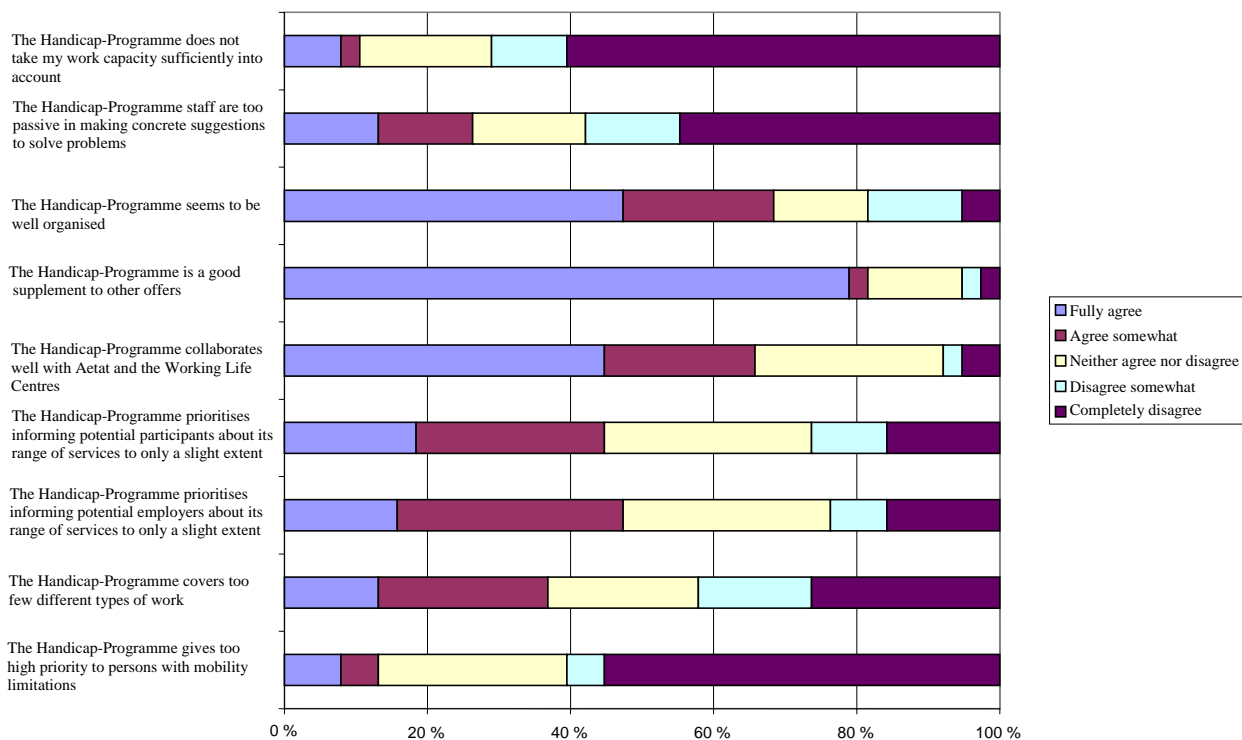


Figure 15. Evaluation of the Handicap-Programme. Do you agree or disagree with these statements? (All respondents, i.e. 38 persons)

Figure 15 presents the results of the remaining statements with which respondents were asked to agree or disagree. A large majority (more than 80%) fully agreed or agreed somewhat that the Handicap-Programme is an important supplement to other offers. The responses also make it clear that the Handicap-Programme largely manages to match tasks to the functional level of participants. Very many disagreed either somewhat or completely that the Handicap-Programme did not take the work capacity of the individual sufficiently into account.

5 Challenges

The evaluation of Telenor's Handicap-Programme has dealt with three main topics: the consequences for the participants, the companies and for society as a whole. The programme itself claims that it is a win-win-win situation, in that all parties benefit by it. In this section, we discuss this claim and the challenges that face the Handicap-Programme if it is to be able to develop further. In the course of the evaluation, three aspects stand out as being of particular importance:

- The roots and management of the programme
- Marketing and recruitment
- The transition from work experience to regular employment.

5.1 The roots and management of the programme

The Handicap-Programme has its roots in Telenor's top management. This is regarded by the programme's management team as extremely important, because it gives the programme authority and draws attention to it. Company management obviously has the attitude that persons with activity limitations are capable of working as well as everyone else. Many of the participants emphasise this as making a contribution to the spread of a similar attitude throughout the organisation. The attitude and willingness of top management is also an essential factor in maintaining and further developing the programme. In any reorganisation of the company, the Handicap-Programme management must compete with other employees. So far they have been protected, but they know that loss of jobs can affect them too. They are few in number, and the programme is therefore particularly vulnerable. It was said in the interviews that Telenor's line management will have to take more responsibility for the programme. This could be important in connection with establishing and developing work experience posts in Telenor and in other companies.

Management meetings ought to focus more on work experience positions. They should accept more responsibility and commit themselves at a high level, and increase the number of external partners.

The implementation of the IWL Agreement has raised the level of interest of companies in finding schemes whereby they can employ people with activity limitations. Several of these companies are currently working with Telenor. The Handicap-Programme management team is therefore now laying more stress on helping participants to apply for jobs outside Telenor. The Gjensidige insurance company, which accepts work experience candidates from the Handicap-Programme says that it is willing to accept its part of the responsibility to society by employing more people with activity limitations. However, several other companies which have said that they are willing to accept work experience candidates have found it difficult to follow up their promises, and it will be a challenge for the Handicap-Programme to strengthen its cooperation with these companies. Some of the informants have challenged the programme to contact the Working Life Centres and ask for more work experience positions for the participants. Such an effort is now under way, and ought to be further developed.

Telenor will continue its efforts to establish more work experience positions via cooperation with external companies and the Working Life Centres. In this connection, it is important for Telenor to refer to its own experience of support at top management level, and that involvement at this level is essential if attitudes in the rest of the organisation are to evolve.

5.2 Recruitment and marketing

Telenor is in a unique situation because it is one of few Norwegian companies that have managed, with a high rate of success, to obtain long-term employment for people with activity limitations. The secret seems to lie in the company's integrated scheme, which has a good balance between demands and individual follow-up. It may also be due to the fact that participants are usually motivated and interested, because the enrolment procedure helps to weed out persons who lack motivation.

Even so, it is said that people are not lining up to join the Handicap-Programme. There may be several reasons for this. On the one hand, it may be the case that disabled people refuse to apply. On the other, it may be that the Handicap-Programme is not sufficiently well known. The problem for many people with disabilities may be the high threshold for joining it.

They have to dare to jump in. A gradual process of adaptation is no use. Many people do not dare, especially those who have become institutionalised and have become passive recipients of disability benefit. It is difficult to break out of that circle.

Each individual is faced with an important choice in life. This is especially the case for those who have never previously been in work. Many disabled persons have been lived a protected existence within their families and the health service. In many cases, other people have taken decisions on their behalf, and few demands have been made of them. Many people feel themselves safe in such a situation, at the same time as they have been picking up their social security benefits. "Safe on social security" is a well-known concept with some disabled people (Skøien and Hem, 2005).

Many people with activity limitations are out of work. Statistics Norway's work-force study covering the period 2002 - 2005 shows that less than half of them (45%) are employed. In an ECON report (2003) it emerges that many of them who would like to have a job do not seek help from Aetat. One of the reasons they give is their previous negative experience of the help they got from Aetat, for instance that Aetat's staff lacked competence about various types of disability. This may be the reason that some of the participants in the Handicap-Programme had problems in having their applications for the programme approved.

There may thus be many reasons for people being reluctant to apply for the Handicap-Programme. Some find that it is difficult to make the big choice - to "jump in", Others have problems with Aetat, which does not know enough about employment possibilities for people with disabilities. It may be difficult for the Handicap-Programme to deal with such factors.

A challenge for the Handicap-Programme is to be clear about the advantages of the programme:

- Participants do not suffer financially, because they continue to be paid disability benefits throughout the two-year duration of the programme.
- Participants are given free training and raise their own level of data expertise.
- Participants get two years of work experience.
- Participants receive close professional and personal follow-up in the course of the programme.
- Participants are prepared for and given competence in the process of applying for jobs.
- Participants make a contribution to the business of ordinary companies.

Better marketing of the intentions of the programme vis-à-vis Aetat would also appear to be called for. Aetat's head office is well oriented about the Handicap-Programme, but what its first-line offices know about the programme appears to be a matter of chance. Even though it is in the interests of the Handicap-Programme that as many potential applicants as possible should know about the programme, it is not its task to inform Aetat at local level. This is something that the employment authorities must take responsibility for themselves.

In the questionnaire study, around half of the respondents answered that they agreed or fully agreed that the Handicap-Programme is poor at informing potential applicants about its services. In spring 2005, NHO invited around fifty large companies to a meeting to discuss the Handicap-Programme. The meeting was cancelled for lack of participants. The organisers had no clear answer to the question of why there was so little interest. Perhaps fewer companies should have been invited, or perhaps the topic of the meeting should have been more broadly defined, with the Handicap-Programme as one of several points, or perhaps Aetat and the Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion should have been invited as well as industry.

The Handicap-Programme's own web-pages are an important marketing channel. As well as providing information about the programme, it relates some of the participants' concrete experiences of it. This helps to make people with disabilities more visible in the labour market. Other people with activity limitations see that it is worth while, and employers see that it works.

Other marketing measures include t-shirts and other material for handing out. The Handicap-Programme has also been in contact with public-sector bodies and has made use of the media to market the programme. The Handicap-Programme concept has also caught on in Sweden. A project called “Open Up” is inspired by and is based on Telenor’s Handicap-Programme. In spite of a good deal of positive profiling, the Handicap-Programme is still struggling to become recognised and to win sufficient applicants. One of the programme’s manager says:

We can inform the public until we are blue in the face. It takes time to change attitudes, and attitudes will not change without action. We need more good examples, and what we particularly need are more positions in the public sector.

One of the participants thought that the marketing material could have been more goal-oriented and original. T-shirts, mouse-pads and pens are rather usual. The Handicap-Programme could have been more creative and could have found something a bit more special, some that would make an impression and be more functional. Others have put it in the following ways:

It is difficult to find information about the Handicap-Programme. I found something myself about it on text-TV, and a friend of mine is a participant in the programme.

Aetat in Levanger had not heard about the programme. It was I myself who had to tell them about it.

The Handicap-Programme is relatively unknown among companies in Norway.

I found out about the Handicap-Programme through the Norwegian Association of the Disabled.

I feel that the Handicap-Programme has adopted an active role in providing information about itself, but that the problem lies with the recipients of the information. Aetat claimed not to have heard about the Handicap-Programme, in spite of the fact that the programme had sent them information (a brochure).

Perhaps the Handicap-Programme needs to become better at meeting the public sector, so that more people there would hear about the programme.

The media have also paid relatively little attention to the programme.

The statements show how difficult it is to market the programme, and how it may seem to be a matter of chance whether someone knows about the programme and how we can get hold of information about it. It was suggested that the Handicap-Programme may need more support from the public sector in recruiting people to the programme, and that both Aetat and the Social Security offices should more actively refer people to the Handicap-Programme as a possible solution to their problems.

The programme needs to be marketed in close cooperation with the central authorities, and in several different directions. Marketing should be aimed at:

- Aetat, in order to increase recruitment to the Handicap-Programme and to establish contact with more companies that can offer work experience.
- Companies, in order to establish similar programmes outside of Telenor.
- User organisations, health institutions and educational institutions, in order to make the programme better known among potential applicants.

Just as the Handicap-Programme has contributed to the establishment of a similar programme in Sweden, the concept should be brought to other Norwegian companies.

5.3 We need to work just like everyone else

Many of the participants have said that they would like to continue in a regular job with Telenor after the end of their work experience, because they feel secure there. This may mean that participants are too sheltered in the work experience, that they relate **too much** to others with activity limitations and **too little** to the other employees. In this process, it may be of decisive importance that the persons responsible

for the programme in Telenor make even greater efforts to persuade other companies to accept work experience candidates.

Being the only disabled person in a work-place may lead to continued stigmatization and a lack of well-being at work, with the result that the person concerned give up his or her job. A company ought therefore to have the capacity to accept at least two work experience candidates at the same time.

It is said that many people with disabilities become disillusioned after their negative experiences with working life. This means that a challenge for the Handicap-Programme is to motivate participants to seek work with other companies and to prepare them for an everyday working life outside of Telenor.

However, the questionnaire study showed that as many as 10 of 17 participants have found work in a company outside of Telenor. This shows that many have got a job outside Telenor. However, many participants felt the lack of a closer follow-up after the end of the programme. The question is thus how far Telenor's Handicap-Programme should feel a responsibility to prepare individual participants for the work situation that they will face after the programme. Perhaps the Working Life Centres should accept more responsibility to follow up participants after they have left the programme. A previous participant put it thus:

The most important thing in the future is that the Handicap-Programme should not be perceived as a charity, but that people in it must work like everyone else and become tired like everyone else. It also need competent, experienced managers and to avoid having all the participants working in the same office.

Telenor treats people who have participated in the Handicap-Programme like other employees. This means that they are in the same position as everyone else when jobs are being cut. In this respect they are treated just like everyone else, but they are perhaps more vulnerable. Their vulnerability lies in that it may be more difficult for people with disabilities to find a new job than it is for others. For this reason, a challenge facing the work-place is to find a balance between giving people with disabilities a chance to work on the same conditions as others and taking into account their special needs. By and large, it looks as though the Handicap-Programme has managed to achieve this balance. For this reason it is important for the Handicap-Programme to let other companies know what it has done to manage this.

5.4 Comparison with the previous evaluation

When we compare the results of the previous evaluation with those of ours, we can identify a number of interesting findings.

The proportion of women in the programme has risen from 15 percent in 1999 to 32 percent now. This may mean that the programme has become better known, or that it now appears more attractive to women.

In comparison with the previous evaluation, participants now possess a higher level of education before they join the programme. This may partially explain why more of them are finding work after they finish the programme. At the same time, it is a paradox that people with higher education find it necessary to join a programme of this sort in order to find a job at all.

The proportion who evaluated the Handicap-Programme as being good rose from 71% in 1999 to around 80%. This may indicate that the quality of the programme has improved. In 1999, 47% felt that the proportion of the programme dedicated to courses was too low. This proportion is now 37 percent. Nearly two thirds of the participants now find that the proportion of courses is about right. This is a trend in the right direction. In the previous evaluation more than half of the respondents thought that there was a lack of professional follow-up during both the course and work-experience phases. Today, this proportion has fallen to 24% for the course phase and 29 % for the work experience phase. The comments of those people who were dissatisfied were that the follow-up was poor because of a lack of staff, that the staff were too busy and that the Handicap-Programme management team should have been more visible at times of difficulty. Another comment was that the person responsible for training should have had more insight into the needs of individual participants for help and support.

The personal follow-up situation has also improve with respect to the previous evaluation. So far, the evaluation shows that the Handicap-Programme has evolved in a positive direction. As far as the Handicap-Programme's significance for obtaining long-term employment is concerned, the current evaluation shows that 71% of participants who are in work thought that the Handicap-Programme had

been important or extremely important in this regard. Half of those who have not yet found work thought the same. In comparison with the previous evaluation, more of the respondents today felt that the programme had been of importance. This may mean that today's participants have more faith in the Handicap-Programme as a result of the fact that more people have completed the programme and have since found work.

5.5 Why do we need the Handicap-Programme?

The point of departure of the evaluation was that the benefits of the Handicap-Programme for the participants, companies and society were greater than if the programme had not existed. Is the Handicap-Programme a win-win-win situation for the participants, companies and society?

If we look at the consequences of the Handicap-Programme for the participants, the evaluation shows that the programme in itself has been positive for nearly all of them. In the questionnaire study, nearly 80% responded that they evaluated the Handicap-Programme as a good or extremely good thing. The participants have received free training and two years of work experience, and most of them have raised the level of IT competence. Moreover, three out of four of those who completed the programme are now in work. Even though some of them think that they would have found a job anyway, they evaluate the programme as important or extremely important in this process. The Handicap-Programme is thus a win situation for the participants.

However, some people believe that the programme may be too protective, during both its course and work experience phases. Some people wish to continue to work for Telenor after completing the programme, because they feel secure there. This may mean that not everyone feels fully prepared to start work in the ordinary labour market outside of Telenor. The dilemma for the Handicap-Programme is that having a disability is a prerequisite for participation. The participants in the programme are not competing with employees without disabilities, and thus cannot measure themselves against an average group of employees.

About half of those who responded to the questionnaire study felt that follow-up after the end of the programme could have been better. This is a challenge for the Handicap-Programme in terms of closer cooperation with other companies, and perhaps in particular with the Working Life Centres, in order to achieve an easier transition to the labour market.

The win situation is not so clearly defined for non-Telenor companies. None of the participants experienced major problems with physical accessibility. However, some manager reported that they had had problems in cooperating with the social services in the matter of assistive devices and measures, and that applications for support had cost them a great deal of time. Some companies also felt that there was a lack of information about support schemes. This suggests that some companies may have to put an excessive amount of time into adapting a work-place to the needs of an individual participant, which in turn may lead to them having qualms about accepting more applicants.

Nearly everyone, however, thought that employing people with disabilities helped to improve the work environment. Having a colleague with a disability helps to change attitude in both management and employees. Some respondents mentioned that it also helps to reduce rates of sick-leave. Viewed in these terms, this is a win situation for the company.

The work-experience scheme, with its 21-month subsidy is also a unique opportunity for companies to have the start-up costs of a potential new employee covered, if the company decides to offer the participant a regular job after completing the programme. The trial scheme with permanent salary subsidy for employees with disabilities, which will make it even more lucrative to employ people with disabilities, is also worth mentioning.

The consequences of the Handicap-Programme for society as a whole would appear to be wholly positive. There is a high degree of agreement among informants from Aetat, the social services and the state that the Handicap-Programme is making an important contribution to raising the proportion of people with activity limitations who are in work. This means real savings for the public sector, in terms of having fewer people on disability benefit and more taxpayers. The media have been reporting studies that show that the IWP Agreement's intentions of getting more people into work are not been fulfilled. However,

Telenor's Handicap-Programme can point to the fact that most of its participants are now employed. The programme is thus a win situation for society.

5.6 A final word

This evaluation has shown that Telenor's Handicap-Programme has largely succeeded in achieving its main objective: to act as a springboard into working life for people with disabilities.

Three out of four participants have found jobs, and around of this group think that this can be ascribed to their participation in the Handicap-Programme. Furthermore the programme gives people with disabilities the knowledge and experience they need to break out of an existence as social services clients, and is helping to change attitudes and create acceptance of the idea of people with disabilities taking part in normal working life.

The participants felt that both the courses and the work experience phase gave them the competence and experience that they needed to go to work, though a minority felt that there was insufficient follow-up in certain areas.

The experience of the companies was that having an employee with a disability was not a burden, but rather a strength for the work environment. Some of them claimed that it was capable of positively influencing working morals and sick-leave rates in the rest of their work-force. However, a number of companies outside Telenor experienced complications in communicating with Aetat and the Social Services, and found that writing applications to adapt their premises and for obtaining aids could take a great deal of time.

The economic consequences for society as a whole are obvious: most participants in Telenor's Handicap-Programme have changed from being recipients of social security benefits to becoming tax-payers. This is also a confirmation of the fulfilment of the third aim of the programme: to help to create general acceptance of people with disabilities in working life - and in society in general.

The programme should become a model for similar measures in other companies. Awareness of HCP, however, is still limited, in spite of active efforts on the part of Telenor to spread information about it. For this reason, it will be a challenge to increase awareness of this offer, particularly in Aetat and in Social Security offices at local level. Responsibility for this should lie first and foremost with the authorities.

References

- Dahl, T. (1999). *Informasjonsteknologi og attføring av funksjonshemmede. Ei evaluering av handikappprosjektet (HCP) i Telenor bedrift A/S*. SINTEF, IFIM, Trondheim.
- ECON rapport (09/03). *Funksjonshemmede og arbeid. En kartlegging av situasjonen for synshemmede, hørselshemmede og rullestolbrukere*.
- Skøien, R. og Hem, K.G. (2005). *Funksjonshemmedes adgang til arbeidsmarkedet - bruk av en Tilretteleggingsgaranti*. SINTEF Helse, Oslo (2005).
- Sverdrup, S. (2002). *Evaluering. Faser, design og gjennomføring*. Fagbokforlaget.

Appendix I

Interview guide for focus groups with managers and participants

Purpose of the focus group meetings:

- To gather together persons who have a similar point of departure with respect to a problem, in order to shed light on various aspects of the problem and to obtain input for the next stages of the evaluation process.
- All participants should have the opportunity to present their points of view.
- In view of the number of participants involved, it is important that they should all be structured and that they should not take up too much time with their statements.

Before we begin to discuss the individual topics, we will have a short round of presentations, in which you will tell the group who you are, where you work, your relationship to the Handicap-Programme and how long you have been involved with it.

A. Consequences for participants

- How has the Handicap-Programme helped to gain acceptance in working life of persons with activity limitations?
 - How are the participants received during the course phase?
 - What does the course phase mean for getting out into regular work?
 - What are critical factors for participants during the course phase?
 - Participant's competence
 - Participant's feeling of security
 - Structure and organisation of the programme
 - Follow-up of participant.
 - How are the participants received during the work-experience phase?
 - What does the work-experience phase mean for obtaining regular work?
 - What are critical factors for participants during the work-experience phase?
 - Participant's competence
 - Participant's feeling of security
 - Structure and organisation of the programme
 - Follow-up of participant.
- What are the attitudes of the participants towards assistive devices?
- Have any of the participants left the programme without finishing it?
 - If so, for what reason?

B. Consequences for the companies

- In what ways are the companies accessible to the participants?
 - Physically accessible
 - In terms of information
 - In terms of inclusiveness

- What are the companies' attitudes to the use of assistive devices and adaptations of work-places?
- How have the participants affected the work environment?
- What critical factors are involved in having persons with activity limitations employed by the company?
 - Sick-leave
 - Extra pauses during the working day
 - Working more slowly than other employees
 - Taking a long time to complete tasks
 - Work environment, contact with colleagues.

C. Consequences for society as a whole

- In what ways has the Handicap-Programme contributed to public-sector savings?
- In what ways has the Handicap-Programme been a cost to the public sector?
- What does it mean for society that people change from being passive recipients of social security benefits to active contributors?
- How has the Handicap-Programme affected society in terms of universal design and accessibility for everyone?

D. Inputs to the interview and questionnaire

- What do you think that it would be important to ask the participants about?
 - Current participants
 - Previous participants.
- What is it important to ask other parties involved?
 - Members of the board of the Handicap-Programme
 - The Social Security Services
 - Aetat
 - Telenor's customers
 - Participants.

E. What aspects of the Handicap-Programme do you think could be improved?

- Information about the existence of the programme?
- Communication with the programme management?
- Communication with immediate superior?
- Enrolment procedure?
- Enrolment phase?
- Course offers?
- Work-experience offers?
- Work-experience phase?
- Cooperation with colleagues?
- Final phase?

Appendix II

Interview guide for individual interviews with managers and participants

A. Consequences for the participants

- How has the Handicap-Programme helped to gain acceptance in working life of persons with activity limitations?
 - How are the participants received during the course phase?
 - What does the course phase mean for obtaining regular work?
 - What are critical factors for participants during the course phase?
 - Participant's competence
 - Participant's feeling of security
 - Structure and organisation of the programme
 - Follow-up of participant.
 - How are the participants received during the work-experience phase?
 - What does the work-experience phase mean for getting out into regular work?
 - What are critical factors for participants during the work-experience phase?
 - Participant's competence
 - Participant's feeling of security
 - Structure and organisation of the programme
 - Follow-up of participant.
- What are the attitudes of the participants towards assistive devices?
- Have any of the participants left the programme without finishing it?
 - If so, for what reason?

B. Consequences for the companies

- In what ways are the companies accessible to the participants?
 - Physically accessible
 - In terms of information
 - In terms of inclusiveness.
- What are the companies' attitudes to the use of assistive devices and adaptations of work-places?
- How have the participants affected the work environment?
- What critical factors are involved in having persons with activity limitations employed by the company?
 - Sick-leave
 - Extra pauses during the working day
 - Working more slowly than other employees
 - Taking a long time to complete tasks
 - Work environment, contact with colleagues.

C. Consequences for society as a whole

- In what ways has the Handicap-Programme contributed to public-sector savings?
- In what ways has the Handicap-Programme been a cost to the public sector?
- What does it mean for society that people change from being passive recipients of social security benefits to active contributors?
- How has the Handicap-Programme affected society in terms of universal design and accessibility for everyone?

D. What aspects of the Handicap-Programme do you think could be improved?

- Information about the existence of the programme?
- Communication with the programme management?
- Communication with immediate boss?
- Enrolment procedure?
- Enrolment phase?
- Course offers?
- Work-experience offers?
- Work-experience phase?
- Cooperation with colleagues?

Appendix III

Questionnaire study on experiences of Telenor's Handicap-Programme

This questionnaire is being sent to current and previous participants in the Handicap-Programme.

Most of the questions in this questionnaire can be answered by choosing from a number of alternative answers and marking the appropriate box with a cross. Mark only one box unless you are specifically asked for more than one response. If the alternative answers do not seem to be particularly appropriate to you, please mark the one which is closest. If there is a question that you are absolutely incapable of answering, please skip it and go on to the next one.

YOUR OWN BACKGROUND

1. Age: years

2. Gender

Female

Male

3. In which county do you currently live?

Østfold

Hedmark

Oppland

Akershus

Oslo

Buskerud

Vestfold

Telemark

Aust-Agder

Vest-Agder

Rogaland

Hordaland

Sogn og Fjordane

Møre og Romsdal

Sør-Trøndelag

Nord-Trøndelag

Nordland

Troms

Finnmark

4. Please describe your type disability (mark one or more boxes)

- Mobility limitations
- Visual impairment
- Hearing impairment
- Other (*describe*).....

5. Previous education beyond basic secondary school (mark one or more boxes)

- None
- High school, general studies
- High school, vocational studies
- Commenced higher education (university or college)
- Completed higher education
- Other education (*please describe*):.....

6. If you have had training in ICT, please describe it:

7. How much ICT experience have you had before joining the Handicap-Programme?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| None | Little | Some | Much |

8. How would you evaluate your ICT competence before you joined the Handicap-Programme?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very poor | Poor | Average | Good | Very good |

9. How would you evaluate your ICT competence after the programme (if you have finished it)?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Very poor | Poor | Average | Good | Very good |

PARTICIPATING IN THE HANDICAP-PROGRAMME

10. What is your status with regard to the Handicap-Programme today?

- Taking courses
- Waiting for a work-experience place
- On work experience
- Have completed programme.

11. When did you participate in the Handicap-Programme basic course?

Year:

12. When, if ever, did you finish the work-experience phase?

Year:

13. How did you hear about the Handicap-Programme in the first place?*(Please mark only one box)*

- Through the health services
- Through Aetat
- Through my school
- Through the social security office
- Through the benefits office
- Through neighbours or friends
- Through my user organisation
- By searching the Internet
- By other means (please describe):

STATUS TODAY

14. Which of the following alternatives best describes you? (mark one or more boxes)

- In full-time employment
What is your job? (*finance, administration, customer service, etc*):
.....
- In part-time employment
Percentage:.....
What is your job? (*finance, administration, customer service, etc*): .
.....
- In education
What type of education?
- In rehabilitation
- On disability benefit
Percentage:
- At home
- Unemployed/seeking work
- Other (*please describe*):

15. What has been your career since leaving the Handicap-Programme? (mark only one box)

- Have been working since I finished
- Got a job, but am now unemployed
How long were you in work? years,months
- Did not find work, but am now employed
How long did you have to wait to get a job? years,months
- Have not found work yet
- Do not expect to find work
- Am in education

16. If you left the Handicap-Programme without completing it, what was the reason?

.....

17. Did you have to move house in order to take the course?

- Yes
- No

18. Did you have to move in order to go on work experience?

- Yes
- No

19. Did you have to move in order to get a job afterwards?

- Ja
 Nei

FINANCIAL ASPECTS

20. What sort of benefits did you receive when you were on the Handicap-Programme?

- None
 Rehabilitation
 Disability pension
 Basic benefits
 Supplementary benefit
 Other type of benefit (*please describe*):

EVALUATION OF THE HANDICAP-PROGRAMME

21. How do you regard the relative proportions of courses and work experience in the programme?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Far too little course-work</i>	<i>Too little course-work</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Too much course-work</i>	<i>Far too much course-work</i>

22. How difficult was the course?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Very easy</i>	<i>Easy</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Very difficult</i>

23. How do you regard the demands that were made of you?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Far too little</i>	<i>Too little</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Too heavy</i>	<i>Far too heavy</i>

Comments on the demands that were made:

24. How useful is your ICT expertise now?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Very little useful</i>	<i>Not very useful</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Quite useful</i>	<i>Very useful</i>

25. How do you regard the professional follow-up you received during the course phase?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Extremely insufficient</i>	<i>Insufficient</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very good</i>

26. How do you regard the professional follow-up you received during the work-experience phase?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Very insufficient</i>	<i>Insufficient</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very good</i>

Comments on the professional follow-up:

27. How do you regard the personal follow-up you received during the programme?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Very insufficient</i>	<i>Insufficient</i>	<i>About right</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very good</i>

28. What is your overall evaluation of the Handicap-Programme?

- Very poor*
 Poor
 All right
 Good
 Very Good

If you are in work, please go to Q. 31

29. How important to regard the Handicap-Programme for your prospects of finding a job in the future?

- Of no importance at all*
 Not very important
 Of some importance
 Important
 Very important

30. Do you want to work in ICT in the future?

- Not at all*
 Preferably not
 A little
 Would like to work in ICT
 Would very much like to work in ICT

If you are in work (ordinary job or salary support scheme)

31. Where do you work?

- Telenor
 Other employer (*which*):.....
 If you work at Telenor, where?

32. How well adapted in your work-place?

- Very poorly*
 Poorly
 Sufficiently
 Well
 Very well

33. How do you like the work you have to do?

- Very little*
 Little
 OK
 Well
 Very well

34. How important are ICT aids for your enjoyment of your work?

- Of no importance at all*
 Not very important
 Of some importance
 Important
 Very important

35. How important has the Handicap-Programme been for the fact that you are now employed?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Of no importance at all</i>	<i>Not very important</i>	<i>Of some importance</i>	<i>Important</i>	<i>Very important</i>

36. Is there anything in particular that you would like to mention about the Handicap-Programme that is of importance for what you are doing now?

.....

37. Have you any suggestions as to how the Handicap-Programme could market itself better?

.....

Here are a number of statements which we would like to respond to.

Please mark the answer that best describes how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

	<i>Fully agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither agree nor disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Completely disagree</i>
38. I would have liked a closer follow-up on the part of the Handicap-Programme after the end of the programme.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. It is easy to tell the Handicap-Programme staff what I think.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. I felt that I was treated with respect by the Handicap-Programme.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. The demands made of me during the course phase of the programme were too heavy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. The demands made of me during the work-experience phase of the programme were too heavy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. The Handicap-Programme has helped to improve my cooperation with Aetat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. I have confidence in the competence of the Handicap-Programme.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45. I feel that I am accepted at my work-place as the equal of my colleagues.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46. I feel that I am respected by my boss.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47. I believe that I am doing a good job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
48. The Handicap-Programme does not take my disability sufficiently into account	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

49. The Handicap-Programme staff are too passive in making concrete suggestions as to solutions.
50. The Handicap-Programme seems to be well organised.
51. The Handicap-Programme scheme is an important supplement to other offers.
52. The Handicap-Programme cooperates well with Aetat and the Working Life Centres.
53. The Handicap-Programme does not sufficiently prioritise making potential participants aware of its services.
54. The Handicap-Programme does not sufficiently prioritise making potential employers aware of its services.
55. The Handicap-Programme covers too few types of work.
56. The Handicap-Programme over-prioritises people with mobility limitations.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!