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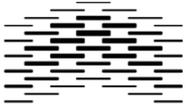
# NTS signers at Norwegian universities

*International Conference "Sign Languages in Tertiary Education and Scholarly Publications in Sign Languages", Masaryk University, Brno, 26th June, 2016*

Arnfinn Muruvik Vonen [arnfinn.vonen@hioa.no](mailto:arnfinn.vonen@hioa.no)

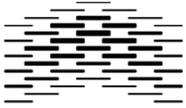
Odd-Inge Schröder [Odd-Inge.Schroder@hioa.no](mailto:Odd-Inge.Schroder@hioa.no)

Department of International Studies and Interpreting  
Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences

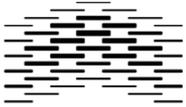


## Overview of the presentation

- 1. The sign language situation in Norway
- 2. Signing students
- 3. The rights of students using Norwegian Sign Language
- 4. The situation today
- 5. Where are we going?

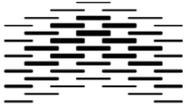


# 1. The sign language situation in Norway



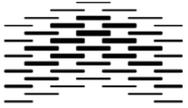
## Norwegian Sign Language (norsk tegnspråk / norsk teiknspråk – NTS)

- Norway has approximately 5 million inhabitants.
- The Norwegian Association of the Deaf estimates that NTS is used by 16500 people:
  - 5000 Deaf people
  - 10000 hearing relatives and friends of Deaf people
  - 1500 hearing professionals working with Deaf people
- NTS presumably emerged in Trondheim in the 1820s under influence from Danish Sign Language.

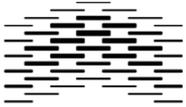


## The sign language status paradox in Norway

- NTS has been recognized as a language since 1985.
- Deaf schoolchildren have had the right to bilingual education since 1997.
- NTS has been recognized as a part of Norway's cultural heritage since 2008.
- Norway obliged itself to promote its sign language by ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2013.
- ***But:***
- Special schools for the deaf and other meeting-places are weakened or closed down.
- Bilingual education is still not always presented as the main option in the counselling of parents with hearing-impaired children.

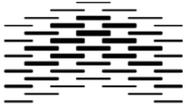


## 2. Signing students



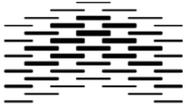
## Deaf students – a rapidly growing group

- Schröder (1995) estimated:
  - In 1970, 3 Deaf people in Norway had higher education.
  - In 2005, 300 Deaf people in Norway had higher education.
- In 2016, the number is unknown, but it is definitely much higher than in 2005.
- Signing students are found in many different programmes. There are no programmes exclusively for signing students.
- ***Why this growth?***
  - There are clearly several reasons – but these may be among the most important:
    - Bilingual primary and secondary education
    - NTS training programme for parents
    - Public interpreting service



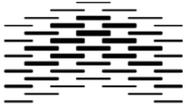
## Sign language rights for pre-school children and school-children (Act of Education, 1998)

- Children 0-6 years (**pre-school** children): The right to learn NTS (Act of Education, art. 2-6)
- Children 6-16 years (**primary and lower secondary** school): The right to NTS as the medium of instruction and as a major subject (see next slide).
- Pupils in **upper secondary** education (16-19/21 years): The right to NTS as the medium of instruction or interpreting, and as a major subject.



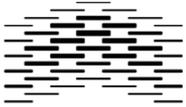
## NTS training programme for hearing parents of deaf children

- "See My Language" is a 40-week full-time curriculum in NTS for hearing parents of deaf children. It is offered in physical gatherings lasting for one week each and distributed over the child's first 16 years of life.
- Travel and subsistence costs, teaching costs, and costs for the parents' employer are covered by the government.
- The gatherings often take place simultaneously with the child's "short-term stays" in an NTS environment to boost NTS development.
- 7 out of the 40 weeks take place in Ål Folk High School for the Deaf and target the whole family.
- The programme has been positively evaluated several times and may be an important factor behind the increased motivation among Deaf youngsters to take higher education.



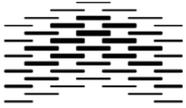
## **A public interpreting service**

- 1968: The first Deaf students received interpreting services.
- The public interpreting service was established around 1980.
- It has developed and grown very much since then.

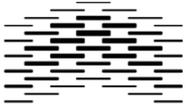


## Interpreter education

- A full-time interpreting programme at university level was established around 1990 (1 year, Oslo).
- In 1995, the programme was expanded into 2 years (Oslo and Trondheim).
- In 2002, the programme was expanded into a 3-year bachelor's programme (Oslo, Trondheim, Bergen), admitting students with no prior skills in NTS.
- The programmes have recently been opened to Deaf applicants.

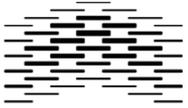


## 3. The rights of students using NTS

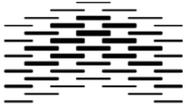


## The right to interpreting services

- According to the National Insurance Act, art. 10-7, the government provides
  - interpreting assistance to the hearing-impaired and
  - interpreting and escorting assistance to the deaf-blind.
- Earlier, there were restrictions to the amount of services provided, but these restrictions were removed in 2002.

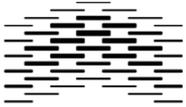


## 4. The situation today



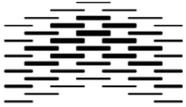
## **Nav – the provider of interpreting services**

- Nav = the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration
- Nav administers a third of the national budget through schemes such as
  - Unemployment benefit
  - Work assessment allowance
  - Sickness benefit
  - Pensions
  - Child benefit
  - Cash-for-care benefit
  - Assistive technology
- Sign language interpreting is offered by the assistive technology centres in each county.



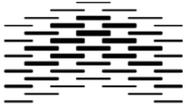
## How many interpreters?

- About 140 full-time equivalents in permanent positions in Nav
- About 500 individuals working freelance to some extent
- A smaller number of individuals working at work-places, which receive support from Nav.
  
- All are "certified interpreters for the deaf, the deaf-blind, and the late deafened".



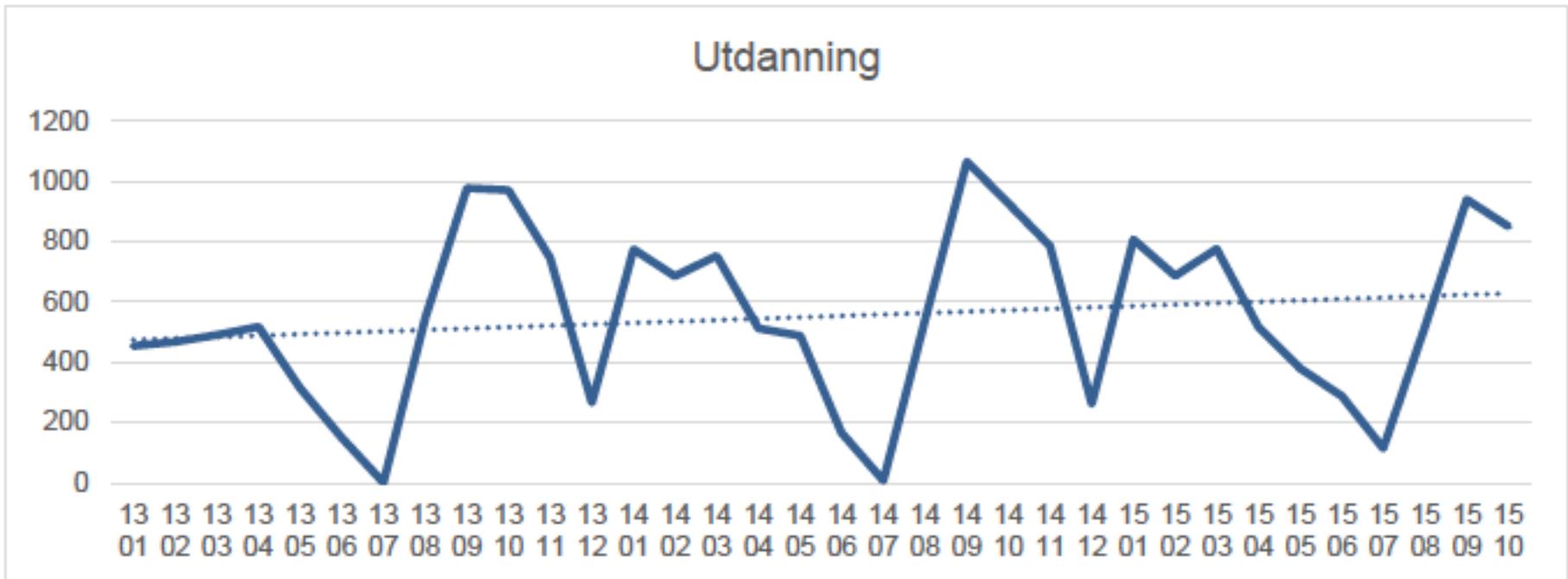
## **”A comprehensive review of the interpreting area” (Agenda Kaupang, 2016)**

- A report prepared for the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs by Agenda Kaupang (a private company), assisted by Arnfinn Muruvik Vonen on behalf of Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences.
- Aims:
  - Secure a maximally efficient, predictable and appropriate interpreting service in the future;
  - Secure that the consumers are provided with interpreting with the quality that they need, when they need it.



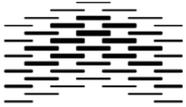
## Some information from the 2016 report

- The signers' associations report that:
  - In most cases, interpreting in higher education is available according to demand.
  - The organization of the service varies strongly between universities.
  - Some signing students prefer to have both speech-to-text service (for lectures) and sign language interpreting service (for groupwork etc.).



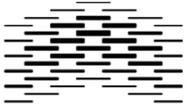
**Figur 4.4** Antall bestilte tolkeoppgaver per måned i perioden januar 2013–oktober 2015 innenfor kategorien Utdanning

- Amount of ordered interpreting assignments per month in the period January, 2013 – October, 2015, in the category Education
  - Source: Agenda Kaupang (2016)

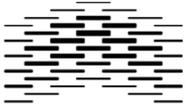


## Information from the 2016 report

- Nav representatives report that,
  - The amount of interpreting in higher education is increasing.
  - More signing students choose their programme according to personal interests rather than presence of other signers.
  - Signing students choose more long programmes.
- These changes imply higher requirements of the interpreting service.

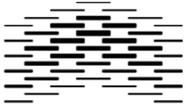


## 6. Where are we going?



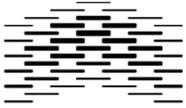
## From the report (Agenda Kaupang 2016)

- “We think that the trend that more Deaf and hard-of-hearing people take higher education, will continue. Many will take higher education, and many will increasingly take long programmes. We assume, therefore, that the amount of interpreting needs for higher education will increase for a certain time ahead. This influences the amount of interpreting needs and at the same time leads to an increasing need of specialized interpreters. More people will need both sign language interpreting and text-to-speech interpreting.”
  - Agenda Kaupang (2016, p. 28, our translation)



## National Academic Council for Sign Language and Interpreting

- In 2015, the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (UHR) established the National Academic Council for Sign Language and Interpreting.
- The Council immediately appointed two committees to work on programme development across the three institutions offering BA programmes in sign language and interpreting:
  - A "framework plan committee", to deal with the structure of the BA programmes
  - A "master's committee", to deal with the development of master's programmes for students of sign language and interpreting



Thank you for your attention!

Takk for oppmerksomheten!

Děkujeme vám za pozornost!