

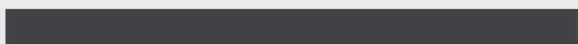


Nordic Council
of Ministers

DECLARATION

Promoting participation of persons with disabilities

through inclusive, fair and accessible
artificial intelligence



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Fair, inclusive and accessible AI

Artificial intelligence (AI) is developing rapidly. It is shaping the day-to-day life of everyone. Used in the right way, AI can promote the rights of people with disabilities. When AI is developed or used, it should take human rights in mind and take us in a positive direction. Universal design is crucial when creating products, environments, programs, and services that can be used by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design for certain groups. AI can be used to improve access to information, make social and healthcare services better, and facilitate the development of helping tools such as voice recognition, screen magnifiers, hearing aids or wheelchairs.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) 16% of the global population (around 1.3 billion people) currently experience significant disabilities. It is a human right, but also a potential economic benefit to consider disabilities in the development of AI. It can encourage people with disabilities to use their full potential in the workplace or help them find work if they are outside of the labour market.

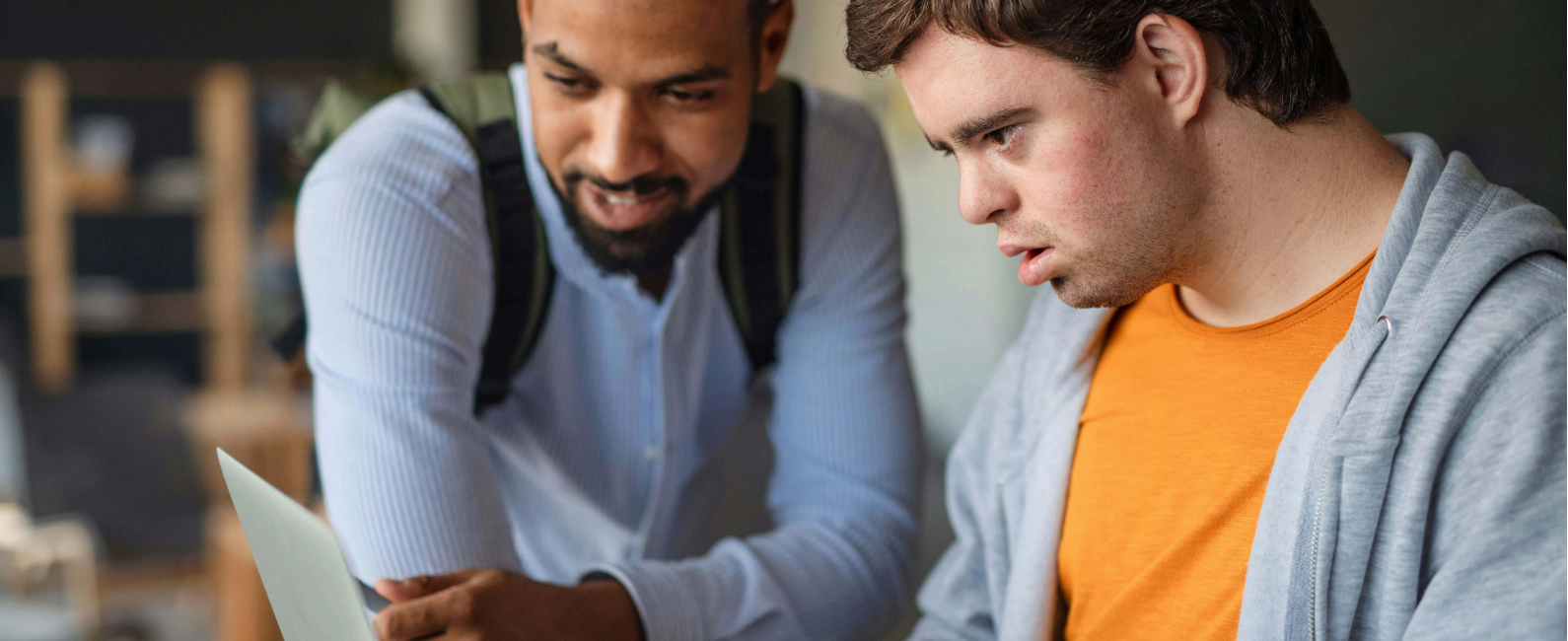
The vision of the Nordic Prime Ministers is to make the Nordic Region the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. In line with the Nordic Programme for Co-operation on Disability Issues 2023–2027, human rights and participation are non-negotiable principles of Nordic co-operation on disability issues and digitalisation. If the use of AI is to develop in a positive direction, and if we are to use the opportunities it can offer those with disabilities, we must make sure that the process includes people with disabilities and their rights.

Earlier, the Nordic Ministers of Health and Social Affairs adopted in 2023 a declaration on digital solutions for people with disabilities. It said that it is vital that everyone has access to digital solutions if the Nordic Region is to achieve its vision 2030.

The Nordic and Baltic ministers for digitalisation mentioned this also in a joint statement in 2021 as well as highlighting the importance of digital inclusion in the region's digital transformation.

All of the Nordic and Baltic countries have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The obligations under the UNCRPD have a human rights-based approach to promoting and protecting the rights of people with disabilities in the context of AI development and use.

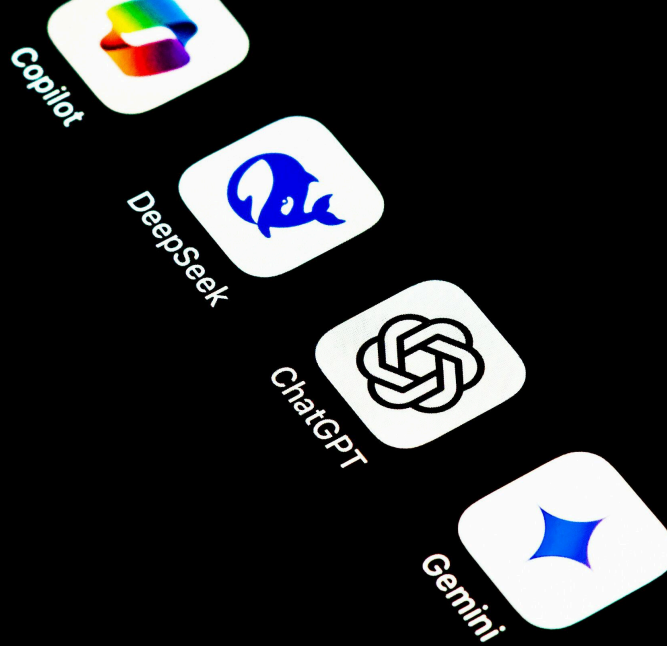
In line with the UNCRPD, states have a duty to consult and actively involve those with disabilities in decision-making processes that concern them. People with disabilities must be guaranteed equal access to information and communication on an equal basis with others. This includes information and communications on technologies and systems.



AI and the promotion of inclusion of people with disabilities

If used correctly, AI can help people with disabilities to participate in society, which includes being able to live independently, access information, communicate, study, and work. AI can be used to improve the quality and efficiency of service delivery and service content, including disability services.

The rapid development of AI presents a challenge when it comes to predicting all the possibilities it can offer. In the Nordic and Baltic countries, we aim to identify the opportunities AI offers for promoting the participation and the rights of people with disabilities in different areas of life, and to avoid discrimination.



Accessible and non-discriminatory AI

The impact of AI for people with disabilities can only be a success if all AI systems and processes are accessible. We need to be aware of risks of discrimination, including intersectional discrimination, and address it with appropriate measures. The vulnerable situation of children and young people with disabilities online must be a priority issue. AI must be developed in a way that respects and reflects diversity. The protection of personal data must also be taken into account in the development and use of AI. It is important to assess the impact on human rights both before decisions are made and in monitoring the impacts of those decisions.

The availability and affordability of AI systems must be promoted to maximise their availability and benefit to as many individuals as possible.



Participation of people with disabilities in development

The participation of people with disabilities is not only an obligation under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), but essential in delivering sustainable decisions and solutions. The needs of different user groups must be considered in order to make the most of the development and use of AI. AI systems can be made more accessible by involving people with disabilities in their development. The digital skills of people with disabilities must be supported to guarantee that no one is left behind.

Declaration approved by

We, the Nordic Ministers of Health and Social Affairs and the Nordic and Baltic Ministers of Digitalisation, commit to promoting the rights and participation of people with disabilities in discussions and decisions on artificial intelligence at the national, Nordic, and Baltic level.

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Nordic co-operation

Nordic co-operation is one of the world's most extensive forms of regional collaboration, involving Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

Nordic co-operation has firm traditions in politics, economics and culture and plays an important role in European and international forums. The Nordic community strives for a strong Nordic Region in a strong Europe.

Nordic co-operation promotes regional interests and values in a global world. The values shared by the Nordic countries help make the region one of the most innovative and competitive in the world.

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