# The Norwegian Braille Committee

# Annual Report

## Administration

The Norwegian Braille Committee is an independent unit under the Ministry of Culture and Equality, and until last summer we have been provided with administrative services by the Norwegian Library of Talking Books and Braille. In July this year, however, we have a new provider of these services, as the Norwegian library of Talking books and Braille has transitioned from being a separate entity to becoming the Department of Accessible Literature within the National library of Norway. As a consequence of this the Norwegian Braille committee’s administrative services are taken over by the National library. The experience so far is that it works, but still has the potential of working better.

I guess you all have noticed that you have had to subscribe to a new Nordicbraille list this year. The reason for this is that the web hotel we have used for both website and mailing lists, has decided to cease providing the mailing list service. Therefore, we had to place our mailing lists elsewhere, and so our braille committee member, Lars Bjørndal, set up our mailing lists through a subdomain. We have had some trouble with it, but I hope you all now are subscribed to the list, and that it will work well in the future.

Early this year we decided to improve the design of our website and to find someone to do it for us. We appointed some members of the braille committee to work with it, and they have explored different providers. They at last chose to go for the Ministries’ Security and Service organization, and have asked if the organization may create a new website for us. They are willing to do so, but before we accept their offer, our working group will do some testing to check if at least one of the editors is accessible to screen readers, and if it’s possible to publish our handbooks and documents in wished accessible formats.

## Standardization work

A comprehensive work that has been going on this year in the teaching material group, is the revision of a textbook the Norwegian Braille Committee produced in collaboration with Statped in the first decade of this century. The work is called “lær punktskrift – Kort og godt” and is a teaching material meant for adults who want to study braille on their own. The textbook takes the students through both contracted and uncontracted braille and consists of both teaching material and a guidance in how to use it. The guidance, however, has probably never been finished, and the revision of the teaching material is so comprehensive, that the group will have to produce a brand-new guidance. This will be time consuming, so the work will have to be continued in the years to come.

We also have a group working with 8-dot braille and a more usable way of representing the braille signs on the braille display, but I will not say more about this now since the group itself will present their ideas here to morrow.

Earlier this month our chess notation group presented a revised chess notation standard. The new one is more explanatory and comprehensive than the old one.

## Events

In Octobre last year the Norwegian Braille Committee held a national conference addressing braille teaching to adults with sight loss. The actual theme, of course, was the learning proses, but in addition to that a common thread through all the presentations was that braille teaching for adults was hard to get. This was the case even though adults with sight loss according to the Norwegian Education Act have a right to braille teaching in the municipality where they live. At the conference, however, it came out very clearly that most municipalities in Norway don’t even know about that right, and therefore neglects it.

Made aware of this, we in the Norwegian Braille Committee found that it was our duty to report this, and so we wrote a report of concern to our mandator, i.e., the Ministry of Culture and Equality. That ministry, however, doesn’t deal with educational issues, so therefore we contacted the Norwegian association of the Blind and Partially Sighted to ask if they could perform some pressure on the ministry of Culture to make them send our report over to the Ministry of Education and Research. The Association of the Blind succeeded in their efforts, and so our report of concern really was sent over.

In the report we had asked for a meeting to discuss what to do to make the municipalities do their duty and give braille teaching to adults with sight loss. In May, this year we in fact got an invitation to such a meeting from the Ministry of Education and research.

The timing of the meeting couldn’t have been better since a new Education Act was about to be adopted in the Norwegian parliament. This act enters into force in August 2024, and so the ministry and the Directory of Education were, and still is, busy preparing the regulations to the new act. Being aware of this, we insisted upon that the braille teaching for adults should be clearly defined in those regulations. At the meeting the response to this was positive, but the regulations are not finished, so we don’t know yet how braille teaching for adults will be treated there.

What we do know, however, is that there’s a brand-new paragraph in the new Education Act saying that adults with sight loss have a right to braille teaching. This is an improvement compared to the old Education Act, where adults only could be provided braille teaching if it were recommended in an expert assessment.

This year we also have been planning national braille conference that will be held 16. Novembre. The theme for the conference this time is how to read braille effectively. On the Nordic meeting next year, we’ll tell you what came out of it. This year we have no more to report.