OBJECTIVE:
The objective of this study was to explore facilitators and barriers related to physical activity for adolescents with physical disability, including a comparison with peers without a physical disability.

BACKGROUND
Children with physical disabilities are participating with joy in a variety of activities, and they would want to be even more active (Nyquist, 2012). Participation in physical activity for young adults is more challenging for people with physical disabilities (Stewart, 2001). It is shown that intrinsic motivation and accessible activities are essential factors for participation in physical activity (Sæbu, 2011).

METHOD
This qualitative study applied interviews with six focus groups, each lasting 1-1½ hours. Each session was audio-taped. The recordings were transcribed and analyzed using systematic text condensation and content analysis. International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) was used as a framework for the analysis.

PARTICIPANTS
The subjects were recruited through four different rehabilitation- and educational units; Beitostølen and Valnesfjord Healthsport Centers, Turbo and Children’s Physiotherapy Center and Valdres High School. Thirty two participants (15 females and 17 males), aged 15-25 years, with various experiences of physical activity. Twenty four participants had various physical disability, and 8 people without disabilities served as a group of reference.

RESULTS
The analysis showed more similarities than differences between the focus groups, including the non-disabled group, in terms of facilitators and barriers related to persistent participation in physical activity. We divided these common factors into the ICF-categories “personal factors” and “environmental factors”. In addition, several factors were more specific for the participants with physical disabilities.

CONCLUSION
Adolescents with and without physical disabilities share many of the same facilitators and barriers when it comes to persistent participation in physical activity. However, physical disabilities bring along specific challenges due to lack of similar skills as peers that they compare themselves with. Because of significant individual differences, it is important that professionals – both in the fields of education, health and exercise – realize that efforts need to be made on an individual basis in order to explore the skills that these adolescents possess.

REFERENCES
Nyquist, A. (2012). I can participate! (PhD), The Norwegian School of Sport Sciences, Oslo.

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