Long passives in Norwegian

A type of passive in Norwegian that has hardly been discussed in the literature is exemplified in (1)-(3). (Examples are from the www).

(1) det er mye som må huskes å gjøres
    there is much that must remember-PASS to do-PASS
    There is a lot that one must remember doing
(2) det må forsøkes å gjøres bedre neste gang
    it must try-PASS to do-PASS better next time
    'One must try to do it better the next time'
(3) det ordet bør helst unngås å brukes
    that word ought preferably avoid-PASS to use-PASS
    One should preferably avoid using that word

In these sentences, a passive verb takes a passive infinitive. The subject of the clause is usually the underlying object of the infinitive. Another option is to use an expletive subject, as in (4).

(4) det skal tillates å gjøres opptak av overlevende
    there shall allow-PASS to do-PASS recordings of survivors
    It will be allowed to produce recordings of survivors

Passives with passive infinitives are productive and acceptable with a number of verbs, including those in (5).

(5) anbefale 'recommend', beslutte 'decide', foreslå 'suggest', foretrekke 'prefer',
    forsøke 'try', glemme 'forget', huske 'remember', høpe 'hope', klare 'manage',
    love 'promise', mistenke 'suspect', planlegge 'plan', prøve 'try', tillate 'allow',
    unngå 'avoid', vedta 'decide', våge 'dare', ønske 'wish'

A possible analysis would be that the subject of the passive infinitive is raised to the subject position of the first passive verb. However, this analysis would give us a number of unmotivated raising verbs, and this paper attempts to show that a different analysis should be preferred.

A striking fact is that Norwegian has sentences that are identical to the ones mentioned, except that the infinitive has active form. Examples are (6)-(8).

(6) Har mye som må huskes å gjøre.
    have much that must remember-PASS to do
    (I) have many things that I have to remember doing
(7) sensuren (...) forsøkes å gjøre mulig
    censorship-DEF try-PASS to do possible
    One tries to make the censorship possible
(8) Dette bør unngås å bruke.
    this ought avoid-PASS to use
    One should avoid using this

The acceptability of these sentences varies somewhat, but examples can easily be found in texts. Passives such as those in (6)-(8) are traditionally called long passives, see e.g. Wurmbrand 2001, Cinque 2006. They are usually assumed to
involve reanalysis (also called restructuring), so that the two verbs together constitute one predicate in a monoclausal structure.

The passives with passive infinitives could be seen as long passives in which a diathesis feature of the second verb agrees with the one in the first verb. Verbal feature agreement is well known from Scandinavian reanalysis constructions (Wiklund 2007). Julien and Lødrup 2012 show that diathesis agreement can apply in other types of passives. It is not simply a copying of a morpheme, because the passive can be morphological or periphrastic.

The central set of verbs found in passives with passive infinitives is roughly what could be expected, given what is known about long passives in other languages (Wurmbrand 2001:342-45). (See examples in (5).)

Another argument for the complex predicate analysis is that at least some of the verbs in (5) can be the first verb of a complex predicate in an active presentational sentence. This is mentioned in Holmberg 2002, who gives the following example.

(9) Det forsøkte/lovet /?besluttet å komme en masse studenter
there tried / promised / decided to come a lot students
A lot of students tried / promised / decided to come

The long passives will be compared to other passive types that involve two verbs: Complex passives (e.g. Christensen 1986), as in (10), and what is called double and upside-down passives in Julien and Lødrup 2012, as in (11) and (12).

(10) Bilen forsøkes flyttet
    car-DEF try-PASS moved
    One tries to move the car
(11) den pleies å oppdateres
    it uses.to-PASS to update-PASS
    They use to update it
(12) Er det sånn det pleies å gjøre?
    is it such it uses.to-PASS to do
    Is this the way one uses to do it?

REFERENCES