

June 2009

Policy news



First deaf person elected as Member of the European Parliament

The Hungarian Ádám Kósa is the first deaf person and sign language user ever being elected to the European Parliament. His party FIDESZ won 14 seats for the European Parliament and Ádám Kósa was 12th in the list.

Elections to the European Parliament were held across the 27 states of the European

Union between 4 and 7 June 2009. A total of 736 Members of the European Parliament were elected to represent some 500 million Europeans, making these the biggest trans-national elections in history. The turnout across the EU was 43%, the lowest since 1979.

For more information on the results of the European elections:

www.elections2009-results.eu



EPSCO council adopts conclusions on social services and flexicurity

On 8 June, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council adopted conclusions on "social services as a tool for active inclusion, strengthening social cohesion and an area for job opportunities" as well as on "flexicurity in time of crisis".

The meeting was dedicated to the preparation of the European Council held on 18 and 19 June, i.e. finding solutions to the impacts of the current crisis on

employment. The discussion was based on the main messages of the Employment Summit, whose participants agreed on the necessity to introduce short-term measures to maintain jobs and on the reforms to be introduced in order to prepare the labour market for the post-crisis period.

The Conclusions of the Summit were incorporated by the European Commission into concrete measures to be adopted by

individual Member States, the Commission itself and the social partners in a “Communication on a shared commitment for employment”.

The council concluded on social services as a tool for active inclusion, strengthening social cohesion and an area for job opportunities. The EPSCO Council invites the Member States:

- to ensure that measures combating social exclusion and promoting the active inclusion of those furthest from the labor market and society, through a better access to social services, are high on the political agenda;
- to ensure that social protection and active inclusion policies facilitate the integration into sustainable, quality employment of those who can work and provide resources, which are sufficient to live in dignity, for those who cannot;
- to recognize the role of social services, in particular during the present economic crisis, in the national recovery plans, where appropriate, so as to reinforce the recovery of our economies and

strengthen their potential in terms of growth and job opportunities as well as economic and social cohesion.

The conclusions of flexicurity are based more on work activation, focusing mainly on work incentives. For instance, the EPSCO council recognises that:

- the implementation of flexicurity requires modern and active social protection components with clear work incentives underpinning the other components and thus contributes to reducing social exclusion and the risk of poverty by opening the labor market to all citizens, and to vulnerable groups in particular;
- All measures taken should aim at maintaining a high level of employment and job creation, and thus promoting the long-term growth potential of the EU economy.



European Legal specialists debate the issue of legal capacity

The European Disability Forum (EDF) and the European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability jointly organized a symposium on the legal capacity of persons with disabilities in light of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

The symposium, held at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) in Brussels on 4 June, was attended by more than 100 specialists, including for the

first time legal experts (from the Council of the Notariats of the European Union), representatives from the EU institutions (Commission, Council and Parliament), as well as from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to defend the human rights of persons with disabilities. EASPD was one of the participants.

Under Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(CRPD), the signatory parties are obliged to ensure equal recognition before the law of persons with disabilities. This article marks a positive shift towards the full participation and equality of persons with disabilities, as governments will be obliged to create favorable legal frameworks and enabling supportive policies to guarantee equal recognition before the law.

During the symposium, several questions were raised around the construction of this article and how it should be implemented in European as well as National law.

On the 22 June, the main issues raised during this symposium were brought to the High Level Group on Disability of the European Commission.

For further information visit: www.edf-feph.org

EASPD news



More employment for persons with disabilities: EASPD agrees on Thessaloniki Declaration

On 11-12 June, the EASPD conference on the theme of “Bringing people to work” took place in Thessaloniki, Greece. More than 150 interested sector leaders, EASPD members and persons with disabilities attended the conference and discussed strategies on how to include persons with disabilities into the labour market and how social service providers can contribute to this process.

On this occasion, EASPD agreed on an initiative underlining its commitment to adapt to the challenges of the financial crisis and the 21st century: the EASPD Thessaloniki Declaration.

The EASPD Thessaloniki Declaration: employment for all

Today, over 50 million European citizens with disabilities represent more than 12% of the population of the European Union. While about 68% of non-disabled people have a job, only 20% of the disabled citizens are employed. 2.5 million disabled

people are still employed in sheltered workshops. Unemployment leads directly to poverty, social exclusion and mental health problems.

EASPD and its member organizations therefore call for a full implementation of art. 27 (on work and employment) of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. These high unemployment rates are not acceptable!

Success factors are:

- Stakeholder cooperation - persons with disabilities, social service providers, authorities and the business world at one table
- Targeted actions - make sure that work pays
- Availability of support for employers and employees
- Research and evidence based innovation should be promoted

Unlock the potential!

“We have to unlock this huge potential of persons with disabilities who want and

who are able to work!” said Franz Wolfmayr, President of EASPD. “Excluding people from the open labour market means a huge loss of economic value, skills and competencies and generates pressure on social protection schemes. We cannot accept it and therefore call on the European Institutions and the Member States to promote the correct implementation of art. 27 of the UN Convention and to provide legal frameworks guaranteeing real contracts

and real salaries to all workers. Persons with disabilities have the right to work like anyone else.”

The Thessaloniki Declaration will be launched in September 2009 in the European Parliament.



**“Salamanca, 15 years on – Inclusion, A School for All”
Dublin, 12-13 November 2009**

On 12-13 November, EASPD, together with the NFVB in Ireland, is organizing an international conference on Inclusive Education.

On this conference, EASPD wants to give its members and their network the opportunity to present their work. During breaks and lunches, a marketplace will be organized for and by persons with disabilities. Projects, products, initiatives, art, examples of innovation - everything to do with inclusion/education, in the broad sense of the word, are welcome! Non for profit organizations can have a space for free.

For profit organizations are asked to pay a minimum fee of € 500.

Information and registration on www.fedvol.ie or www.easpd.eu

Please, disseminate this call amongst your contacts.

For further information, contact Goedele Avau: goedele.avau@easpd.eu

Project news



Project meeting on “Quality Approaches for assuring the quality of training and service provision”

On 4 June 2009, the 2nd meeting of the Main Steering Committee in the framework of a study on “Quality Approaches for assuring the quality of training and service provision“ was held at the EASPD headquarter in Brussels.

The study is part of Cedefop’s (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) work on Quality Assurance in Vocational and Educational Training (VET) and is carried out by LUCAS (Centre for research and consultancy in care, Catholic University of Leuven) in co-operation with EASPD and other European organisations. It aimed at presenting and discussing the state of play of the project, as well as the main findings.

The partnership identified the main societal and policy changes, the challenges that the social sector faces and tried to highlight some of the competencies that are needed to tackle the current issues. A presentation of some innovative VET good practice was also given by LUCAS. As a follow-up to this meeting, a Hearing Group will be held on 2 July 2009 so that experts of the social sector can give feedback, approve and validate the current results of the ongoing study.

For further information contact Sergio Michelini: sergio.michelini@easpd.eu

From 24 to 27 June the last project meeting of the Grundvig Learning Partnership Programme “CC.fpd - Creating Conditions for the implementation of people with disabilities” took place in Brussels.

Project partners from the Czech Republic, Wales, Spain, Turkey and Belgium came together in Brussels and discuss and visit best practice models in the field of disability in Belgium. On the agenda of the meeting were visits of Belgian

organizations for persons with disabilities De Lork, ADO Icarus and Zonnestraal and a visit of the European Parliament.

The aim of the project is to seek, think and discuss various ways of creating conditions for the integration of people with disabilities and to get new ideas for our national, social or community projects. The project runs from 2007-2009.

For further information visit <http://ccfpd.horef.net> or contact Charlotte Boetticher: charlotte.boetticher@easpd.eu

Charlotte Boetticher
Membership & PR-Officer
charlotte.boetticher@easpd.eu
Tel.: 0032- 282 46 10