

DECEMBER 2011

The European Commission launches a public consultation on European Accessibility Act

One in six people in the European Union has a disability that can be from mild to severe: around 80 million persons are often prevented from taking part fully in society and the economy because of environmental and attitudinal barriers.

In this context, the European Commission launched the European Disability Strategy in November 2010, with the objective of empowering people with disabilities to fully enjoy their rights, and fully benefit from the European society and in the economy.

This Strategy focuses on eliminating barriers. The Commission has identified eight main areas for action: Accessibility, Participation, Equality, Employment, Education and training, Social Protection, Health, and External Action.

Accessibility is the first area for action, seen as a precondition for participation of persons with disability.

'Accessibility' means that people with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications technologies and systems, and other

facilities and services.

The Strategy identifies actions at EU level to supplement national ones; a key one is the preparation of a European Accessibility Act setting out a general accessibility framework in relation to goods and services, including public services, using different instruments such as standardization, public procurement or state aid rules. The Commission will also continue to support research on new technologies, such as assistive devices.

European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding announced in January 2011 that she will present a proposal for a 'European Accessibility Act' before the end of 2012.

This legislation is seen as an instrument for the EU to acquire a world leadership in the development of products and services accessible to people with disabilities: it will be an important achievement not just for ensuring fundamental rights and equal opportunities, but also as a way of creating jobs and growth by taking advantage of growing market opportunities.

On 13 December 2011 the European Commission launched a public

consultation that will help the Commission to prepare its proposals for the European Accessibility Act, planned for autumn 2012. The initiative aims to ensure that people with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transport and to information and communication services. It will also benefit people with limited mobility, such as the elderly.

The consultation – itself fully accessible – is aimed at gathering views from businesses, people with disabilities and the general public and will remain open until 29 February 2012.

Here is the website of the public consultation:

http://ec.europa.eu/justice/newsroom/discrimination/opinion/111207_en.htm

EASPD, representing 10,000 social service provider organisations across Europe and across disability will contribute to the consultation with a policy paper that will be available on our website www.easpd.eu.

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EASPD newsflash

Successful meeting between EASPD representatives and EU-Commissioner Reding

On Friday 11th of November 2011, EASPD met with Vice President of the European Commission, Viviane Reding, responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship and Dana Trama-Zada, member of her Cabinet.

Franz Wolfmayr, President of EASPD, Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General and Irene Bertana, Policy Assistant, had the opportunity to talk with Vice-President Reding about concrete issues, such as:

- The role of service providers in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD), of the European Disability Strategy (EDS) and of the upcoming Accessibility Act,
- The impact of the crisis on the quality of services,
- The funding of European Civil Society organisations,
- The human right issues concerning the staff employed in the sector,

EASPD Secretary General Mr. Luk Zelderloo expressed his concern with regards to a lack of “service perspective” in the EDS that is the role that specialised services can have in its implementation. He listed some examples of how they are essential in achieving the goals of the Strategy in the areas of accessibility, participation and employment: support systems play a fundamental role in informing mainstream actors and in facilitating the full participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

Vice President Reding reaffirmed the importance of specialised service providers as strategic actors that, thanks to their know-how, are fundamental for the implementation of the UNCRPD and of the EDS. “EASPD inputs are needed”, Ms Reding said, and she is looking forward to a productive and structural collaboration in the future. Moreover, together with the Disability Unit, EASPD will work on the develop-

ment of a service perspective in the EDS.

EASPD will have an essential role in the renewed High Level Group on Disability, both in relation to the implementation of the UNCRPD and of the EDS. EASPD’s expertise will also be welcomed in the drafting process of the Accessibility Act, the main priority in the area of disability for the next year.

With regard to the impact of the crisis, President Wolfmayr underlined how the austerity measures put in place by many European Member States are affecting the quality of services and the innovation in the social sector. He added that the financing to European Civil Society Organisations is essential to allow them to accomplish their role of representing the interests and needs of their members.

Vice-President Reding showed concern on the issue, in this period where the reduction of public spending is also one priority in the European Commission itself. Being aware of the important role of European Civil Society Organisations, including EASPD, Viviane Reding committed to maintaining the same level of funding that sustains their core activities.

EASPD representatives highlighted how working conditions of the staff employed in the Social Sector are in fact human rights related. The gender issue is crucial: the fact that between 85 and 90% of the workforce is composed of women means that the salary level is lower and the general working conditions are more precarious than in other sectors.

As up to the 80% of social service costs are staff relat-

ed, this is a key concern of EASPD that is firmly engaged for better quality of services.

The disability sector, that employs around 8 million people in Europe, has a huge job creation potential, due also to the ageing population, but . For this reason, EASPD representatives proposed a European Seminar about Human Rights issues in the Social Sector Workforce, organised by DG Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, in collaboration with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. The proposal was welcomed by Vice-President Reding who expressed a strong interest in organising the Seminar, in collaboration with Commissioner Andor.

The meeting with Vice President Reding was an important occasion to stress the importance of a service perspective in European disability policy making. Thus, EASPD, as representative of 10,000 service providers in Europe, will have an essential role in the drafting of the Accessibility Act, in the implementation process of the EDS and of the UNCRPD and in the work of the renewed Disability High Level Group.



**EU-Commissioner
Viviane Reding**

Next year will be the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations

Europe is ageing: a Eurostat estimation of the European population in 2060 foresees that the population with more than 65 years will be 30% of the total population, while in 2010 the percentage was of 17.4%. The European Union, thus, decided to launch next year as the year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations to tackle the issue of ageing and to promote the idea of a dynamic elderly population, not only considered as a burden for society, but as an added value for it. Hence, 2012 will be the European Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations.

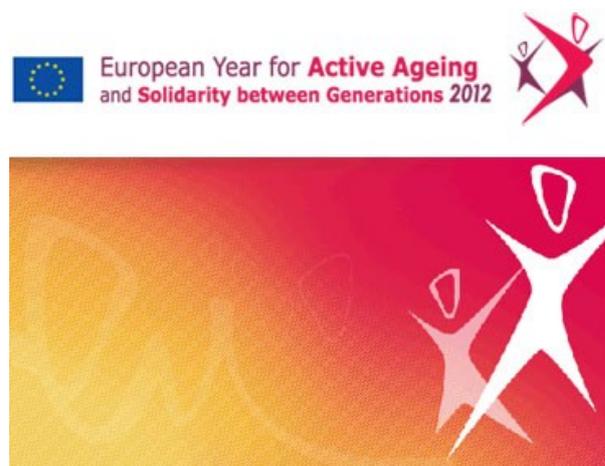
In this framework, the European Commission also launched, together with the AGE Platform Europe, a "Healthy Ageing Innovation Partnership" to find innovative solutions to enable EU citizens to lead healthy, active and independent lives while ageing using technology and innovation.

EASPD is successfully involved in the framework of ICT and Assistive Technologies (AT) to better improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities and persons in needs. Also thanks to the project "ImPaCT in Europe – Improving Person Centred Technology in Europe", EASPD developed a person-centred-technology approach in service delivery, which will be used by our members when imple-

menting technologies to support their users. This project, ending in December 2011, is a networking project in the field of ICT co-financed by the European Commission Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual and Culture in the framework of the Lifelong Learning Programme (for more information: <http://www.impact-in-europe.eu/>). Therefore, EASPD welcomes these initiatives and congratulates the European Commission for having chosen to tackle this issue now! EASPD is keen on promoting independent living for people with disabilities and also for elderly people experiencing disabilities in their matured life stage.

EASPD decided to enter in this coalition to bring in a social services viewpoint and to promote a disability perspective based on the values and principals enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. EASPD will also share the expertise and knowhow acquired in the Annual Conference in Linz "Old? So what? Independent Living for Seniors with Disabilities" where the different situations in various European states were analysed and best-practice-examples compared. EASPD will work for the achievement of one of the main objectives stated during the conference: linking services for persons with

disabilities with mainstream services for elderly people.



For more information, please visit

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/ey2012.jsp>

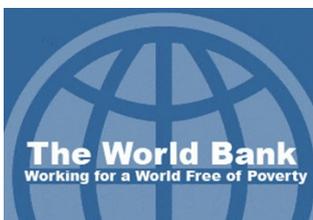
Presentation of the World Report on Disability at the European Parliament



To consult the Report in its entirety or read the executive summary click [here](#).



World Health Organization



To facilitate the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which came into force in May 2008, we must empower people living with disabilities and remove the barriers which prevent them to participate in their communities. More than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability, of whom nearly 200 million experience considerable difficulties in functioning. Across the world, people with disabilities have poorer health outcomes, lower education achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities. This is largely due to the lack of services available to them including health, education, employment, transport and information, as well as many other obstacles they face in their everyday lives.

To cope with this situation, the World Health Organization and the World Bank Group have jointly produced the *World Report on Disability*. It was presented on the 7th of December at the European Parliament by stakeholders and civil servants, amongst them Ádám Kósa (MEP), László Andor (Commissioner responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion), Tamar Manuelyan Atinc (Vice President for Human Development at the *World Bank*) and Javier Güemes

(Acting Director EDF). Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD, attended the presentation with a delegation from EASPD to get to know more about the results and the actual state of play of the Implementation of the UNCRPD. The Report is the first of its kind: it provides an extensive picture of the situation of people with disabilities, covering 74 countries around the world and it has been drafted with the help of more than 370 editors, contributors, regional consultations participants and peer reviewers. *The main objective of the report is that was present to provide the best available evidence about what works to overcome barriers to health care, rehabilitation, education, employment, and support services, and to create environments which will enable people with disabilities to flourish.*

The report suggests a concrete set of recommended actions for governments and their partners. The main recommendations are:

Enable access to all mainstream systems and services.

Invest in programmes and services for people with disabilities.

Adopt a national disability strategy and plan of action.

Involve people with disabilities.

Improve human resource capacity.

Provide adequate funding and improve affordability.

Increase public awareness and understanding about disability.

Improve the availability and quality of data on disability.

Strengthen and support research on disability.

The city of Salzburg wins the Access City Award 2012

On 1st December 2011 the Austrian city of Salzburg was proclaimed as the winner of the Access City Award 2012. The Ceremony took place in Brussels during the European Day of Persons with Disabilities Conference in the presence of Vice-President of the European Commission Viviane Reding and President of the European Disability Forum Yannis Vardakastanis.

The Access City Award is organised by the European Commission, DG Justice, in partnership with the European Disability Forum. It rewards cities with over 50 000 inhabitants which take exemplary initiatives to improve accessibility in the urban environment.

In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, accessibility is one of the pillars of the European Union's Disability Strategy 2010-2020 which aims at creating a barrier-free Europe for all. The Access City Award has been set as one of the key actions of the Strategy as, in the context of an increasingly ageing population and its correlation with disabilities, accessibility has important social and economic benefits.

This is the second edition of the Award that last year was assigned to the Spanish city of Avila. This year the European Jury selected Salzburg for its outstanding achievements in all key accessibility areas: the built environment and public spaces; transport

and related infrastructure; information and communication, including new technologies, public facilities and services.

The application phase for the Access City Award 2012 closed on 20 September 2011 with 114 cities from 23 EU member states joining the competition. After the national pre-selection, a European Jury composed of experts in accessibility and representatives of the European Commission, the European Disability Forum and the Age Platform Europe, selected one winner, three finalist "runners-up" and four special mentions.

The three finalist "runners-up" were:

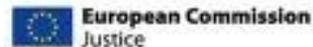
Kraków (Poland), for its commitment to improving accessibility in the challenging context of an inaccessible infrastructure and for the special attention paid to access cultural heritage monuments; Marburg (Germany), for its long-standing commitment to accessibility, a clear, long-term strategy for the future, and for the exemplary integration of people with disabilities in the municipality's accessibility projects, from the planning phase to its execution; Santander (Spain), for its consistently accessibility-friendly urban programmes following a universal design approach, as well as for the quality and sustainability of the results achieved.

Special mentions have also been attributed in each of the four key areas of accessibility. These

went to Terrassa (Spain) for the built environment and public spaces; Ljubljana (Slovenia) for transport and related infrastructures; Olomouc (Czech Republic) for information and communication, including new technologies and to Grenoble (France) for public facilities and services.

ACCESS • CITY
THE EUROPEAN AWARD
FOR ACCESSIBLE CITIES

MAKING EUROPE'S URBAN ENVIRONMENT ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL



An international study on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – the Zero Project – report 2012 has been published



More information
on

www.zeroproject.org

The Zero Project is an Essl Foundation’s project which advocates, with a new and innovative approach, the rights of persons with disabilities internationally. The mission is: working for a world with zero barriers. The Zero Project creates platforms for sharing and developing models that clearly improve the daily lives, and legal rights, of persons with disabilities. At this time the Zero Project has identified three areas of work that clearly help to improve the daily lives and the legal rights of persons with disabilities:

Social Indicators that compare and measure the implementation of the UN CRPD. For the report, 21 indicators have been reviewed based on a questionnaire that was sent to NGOs and experts in 36 countries, two states in the USA and nine Austrian federal provinces. The questionnaire was completed by around 50 experts from NGOs, foundations and from academic fields.

In terms of content, the social indicators are oriented exclusively toward the implementation of the UN Convention on the

Rights of Persons with Disabilities, since countries that have ratified the UN Convention have also incorporated it into their legal systems. Based on concrete examples, the social indicators throw light on the extent to which the UN Convention has been incorporated into the legal system and lived experience of persons with disabilities in the various countries.

Good Practice: Good Practice Examples were a kind of by-product of the pilot study in 2010. It turned out that those included in the study were highly thought of, since they provided proven solutions to a number of the problems that were identified by the social indicators. For this report an initial 27 Good Practices have been included, having been nominated by an expert committee and selected carefully in a two-step process.

Good Policy: For the first time in this report eight Good Policy Examples have been included. Of either a regional or national nature, they have been in existence long enough

to deliver identifiable improvements to advance disabled persons human rights. To research Good Policies, the Zero Project has teamed up with the World Future Council (WFC), a foundation informing policy-makers about future just solutions.

The P2i-network is becoming stronger and stronger



The 'Pathways to Inclusion' partnership has been active for two years now. We have received very positive feedback from the European Commission on the work carried out so far and we are pleased to hear that the topic of our project still triggers a lot of interest across Europe.

One of the key outcomes of the 'Pathways to Inclusion' project is the development of a stakeholder's network on inclusive education. It is a digital platform where knowledge, best practice and experi-

ence can be shared with the aim of raising the quality of inclusive education across Europe. The network is open to individuals and organizations, which are committed to contribute to the P2i web based knowledge centre on Inclusive Education and to EASPD's position on inclusive education. In exchange for their support, they will have access to the knowledge centre. They will receive a newsflash on a regular basis and they will have access to a wide network of experts for exchange of good practices and other information. They will also receive all relevant EASPD information related to education, including events organised by EASPD.

Training course in Lisbon: Building a School for All

Related to P2i, the project consortium organised a 6-days training course on the further development and promotion of inclusive education. It was a hands on course focused on "real life" implementation.

21 persons from 11 European countries participated in the course, which resulted in an impressive exchange of ideas on how to move towards inclusive education. Each partici-

pant developed an individual learning pathway, supported by a reflection and learning portfolio. The participants set their individual learning goals and monitored their achievement in interaction with their peers and with the tutor team. They developed a work plan to be implemented in their schools. Information and discovery sessions alternated with discussion groups, peer group support and reflection sessions.

If you are interested in the programme, we are pleased to announce you that, after the success of the first training course, a second one is in preparation for 2013 in Norway. More news will follow shortly.



For more information on the project, please contact

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