



efc briefing

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Foundations contribute to new EU Disability strategy

Outline

On 4 January 2010 the EFC submitted, building upon the expertise of the members of the Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability, its contribution to the European Commission's consultation on the new EU Disability Strategy for the period 2010-2020. The European Commission was seeking views on problems faced by people with disabilities and on ways of solving them. The EFC contribution is available at: [http://www.efc.be/EUAdvocacy/Documents/2009_EFCContribution_ECStrategyonDisability2010%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.efc.be/EUAdvocacy/Documents/2009_EFCContribution_ECStrategyonDisability2010%20(2).pdf) (49kb)

In its contribution, the EFC acknowledges the importance of the Commission's consultation and the need to put forward a common EU strategy aimed at raising awareness and understanding of the need to coordinate all policies amongst EU Member States and institutions to promote the rights of persons with disabilities. Although the need to mainstreaming disability has already been understood and partially implemented through the 2003-2010 Disability Action Plan, the policies implemented so far have been of a sector nature, are fragmented and have suffered from a lack of a unified, structured Community strategy bringing in all the Institutions and Member States. This was already confirmed in the Mid-term Evaluation of the European Action Plan 2003-2010 published in June 2009.

In this context, the EFC considers that the following elements and actions should be taken into consideration when designing the new EU Disability Strategy, namely:

- The adoption of a **European Disability Pact**. Alongside the European Disability Forum (EDF) –the representative organisation of people with disabilities in Europe-, EFC proposes the adoption of a European Disability Pact. This Pact should constitute a political agreement on the basis of the Lisbon Treaty, anchored in the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It would significantly raise the profile of disability as an issue, seeking a commitment on the part of all institutional and social actors to information, training and dissemination and exchange of best practice in this area.
- The development and implementation of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. In this sense, the EFC calls on the European Commission to take in consideration the final outputs and recommendations from the study on the "Challenges and Good Practices in the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities" which was commissioned to the EFC Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability by the European Commission. The objective of the study is to analyse in detail the obligations set out by the UN Convention and in particular to gather information about the various practices in the implementation of the Convention, from a legal and practical point of view, identifying challenges and measures to facilitate the achievement of the UN Convention objectives. This venture is inherently worthwhile since it will lead to a product that will help shape the debate at European level about the strategic direction and dynamics of European disability law reform. For more information please visit the study website: www.study-uncrpd.eu
- The revision of the **Structural Funds post-2013** and the **mainstreaming of disability** in all EU policies, programmes and funding instruments. The new EU Disability Strategy should adopt a comprehensive approach. Hence, the European Commission should consider the development of a comprehensive European disability directive that will protect disabled people from discrimination at all levels. Current European legislation against disability discrimination only exists in the employment field. However, disabled people face barriers and prejudice in many areas: education, transport, employment, insurances access to the information, access to building and infrastructures.

With regard to mainstreaming disability, a lot has still to be done. At a policy level we would like to make a plea for ensuring coordinated actions between the national and European policies, and the inclusion of the disability dimension as a horizontal principle in all programmes and funding instruments post 2013 including Structural Funds, in a consistent and systematic manner.

- The availability of **European statistics on disability** to paint a more accurate picture of the situation in which people with disabilities live. Comprehensively collected, statistical information will help better target the issues affecting the lives of people with disabilities on a daily basis, such as discrimination. This is crucial for developing comprehensive policies and monitoring their implementation. The statistical data can also be used to measure how the situation improves over time.
- A commitment to **accessibility** is a commitment to the fundamental rights of European citizenship. Building on the Communication from the Commission on e-accessibility, there is a pressing need for e-accessibility legislation to be presented by the Commission which must cover fields such as the accessibility of websites, digital technology and ATMs, for example. The new EU Strategy should encourage EU Member States to continue efforts already made to ensure accessibility for public buildings, buildings of public interest, private companies, access to goods and services, tourism, transport, technology and communication.
- The reinforcement of the **participation of organisations of people with disabilities** at national and EU level. Their representative bodies should be fully involved at all decision-making levels when reflecting on specific policies through public consultation, reinforcement of civil society dialogue as well as other existing participative tools, in order to achieve the goals of equal access to education, employment, social protection, independent living as well as access to goods, services and transportation as full citizens. This would be in line with the important policy principle: "Nothing about disabled people, without disabled people".

Background

Many EFC members have long-standing experience in disability-related issues and within the EFC constituency, an ad-hoc Consortium was created to bring together funders and other stakeholders interested in the implementation of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (UNCRPD). This major project is led by the European Foundation Centre with the participation of ONCE Foundation (Spain), the Atlantic Philanthropies (Ireland/US), Sabanci Foundation (Turkey), Banca del Monte di Lucca Foundation (Italy), Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal) and Fondation de France (France).

The Consortium seeks to encourage and support the ratification and the effective application of the UN Convention, working with other stakeholders in order to ensure the maximum impact of actions promoting the rights of persons with disabilities. The group also seeks to convene foundations, corporate funders and their partners active in the disability field with a view to facilitating networking and information exchange, stimulating critical reflection, fostering cooperation, increasing awareness and mobilising funders. We wish to make a distinctive contribution and mobilise the foundation sector to play a catalytic role and ensure that European governments and other relevant stakeholders commit to and support both the ratification and implementation of the Convention.

Additionally, through its Disability Interest Group, the EFC coordinates programmes aimed at mainstreaming disability in the activities of foundations throughout Europe.