



PRESS RELEASE

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European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability Successful launch event at European Parliament in Brussels

The European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability, an innovative initiative aimed at promoting the ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, was officially launched at the European Parliament in Brussels on Wednesday 1 April 2009. The launch event was attended by around 100 persons, including Members of the European Parliament, representatives of the European Commission, members of the Commission’s High Level Group on Disability (appointed by the EU Member States), representatives of civil society organisations (NGOs) working to defend the rights of people with disabilities, and representatives of the European Foundation Centre (EFC) and the foundations that have joined together to create the Consortium.

The European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability has been created with the aim of bringing together funders and other stakeholders interested in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The Consortium is led by the European Foundation Centre (EFC) and Fundacion ONCE (Spain), with the participation of Fondazione Banca del Monte di Lucca (Italy), Fondation de France, Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian (Portugal), Sabanci Foundation (Turkey), and The Atlantic Philanthropies (Ireland/USA).

The Consortium was presented by one of its co-chairs: **Mr Miguel Angel Cabra de Luna**, Director of International and Social Affairs and Strategic Planning at the ONCE Foundation in Spain. *“The European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability is an innovative project that seeks to bring together key stakeholders interested in the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The aims of the Consortium are to encourage and support both the ratification and the effective application of the Convention in Europe. The most innovative aspect of the Consortium is that foundations will work together with human rights organisations, disability rights organisations and other key stakeholders in the field. A number of these key stakeholders will be European associations of legal professionals who have an essential role to play in the implementation of any new legislation in the countries that sign the Convention.”*

Mr Cabra de Luna said that the partners in the Consortium will bring together resources, expertise and know-how to contribute to the success of this pioneering initiative. *“The Consortium will also work in close co-operation with the EU institutions – in particular the European Commission, the European*

Parliament, and the European Economic and Social Committee – in order to ensure the maximum impact of actions to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities.”

The launch event was co-hosted by **Ms Ljudmila Novak MEP** (Slovenia, EPP-ED), Vice-Chair of the European Parliament’s Disability Intergroup, who welcomed the initiative. *“The project we are launching today aims at promoting both the ratification and the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities through concrete grassroots-level initiatives complementing those carried out by disability rights organisations and public and private institutions. I believe the European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability marks a milestone in the work of foundations active in the disability field as it creates an innovative partnership bringing together funders, disability and human rights organisations and other stakeholders.”*

[...]

[...]

Mr Richard Howitt MEP (United Kingdom, PES), Chair of the European Parliament’s Disability Intergroup, also thanked the partners of the Consortium. *“We thank those of you that have chosen to join the disability organisations and disability movement in this joint endeavour and the work that you’re doing in researching and publicising the Convention, and having a conference for example on the issue of legal capacity which is a very important area. (...) On behalf of our Disability Intergroup I wish you absolute success in your endeavours, and I am sure I and my European Parliamentary colleagues will do everything possible to support your work.”*

The European Commission was represented by **Ms Belinda Pyke**, Head of the Directorate for Equality between women and men, Action against discrimination, and Civil Society. She chairs the High Level Group on Disability, which brings together representatives of Member States, people with disabilities, other members of civil society and service providers. Ms Pyke congratulated the Consortium and commended its approach which is also based on the idea of partnership.

The launch event was also addressed by **Mr Rudi Delarue**, representing the International Labour Organisation – which as a body of the UN system is closely involved with the Convention.

Initially created for a two-year period (2009-2010), the European Consortium of Foundations on Human Rights and Disability will organise various activities including: a Symposium on the Legal Capacity of Persons with Disabilities (in Brussels on 4 June 2009); a Seminar on the concept of “reasonable adjustments” at the workplace; and a compilation of best practices on implementing the UN Convention. The Consortium is also coordinating a Study for the European Commission on the challenges and best practices of implementing the UN Convention in the European Union.

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For more information:

United Nations website: www.un.org/disabilities

EFC website: www.efc.be/projects/disabilities

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Notes to Editors

- **The European Foundation Centre (EFC)**, founded in 1989, is the leading membership association representing public-benefit foundations at European level. It is based in Brussels.
- The EFC currently has 236 members including community and independent foundations as well as corporate funders spread across 40 countries. A majority (86%) are based in Europe.
- The EFC has established a range of Interest Groups and Forums which facilitate cooperation and exchanges of good practice among members across a wide range of fields of activity including: diversity, migration and integration; human rights and disability; protecting the environment; HIV/AIDS; global health challenges; social investment; central and eastern Europe.
- The EFC hosts the secretariat of **Donors and Foundations' Networks in Europe (DAFNE)**, which supports cooperation among national networks covering 22 European countries.
- For more information about the EFC and its members please see: www.efc.be

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