

European Day of Persons with Disabilities 2011

Europe's way out of the crisis: the disability rights perspective

Presentation Note

In 1992, the United Nations declared 3 December as the date for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. To mark European Day of Persons with Disabilities, the European Commission holds an annual policy conference on the 1 and 2 December, in close cooperation with the European Disability Forum¹.

The conference is part of the EU's wider efforts to promote the mainstreaming of disability issues in line with the EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020² and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).

The year 2011 was characterised by important positive achievements such as the entry into force of the UN CRPD, which was concluded by the EU in December 2010. However, the economic and financial crisis has continued to make life more difficult for European citizens and in particular for people with disabilities who are often more vulnerable to be adversely affected by recovery measures adopted by the EU Member States.

This is why this year's Conference will explore the way out of the crisis from the perspective of persons with disabilities. Following up to the presentation of the Commission's proposals for the post-2013 Multiannual Financial Framework and the future of the EU's Cohesion Policy, it is now timely to discuss how the European Union can support recovery for all in the context of Europe 2020. This conference will explore how EU legislation, policies and budget can contribute both to enhancing the enjoyment of their rights by people with disabilities and to finding a way out of the crisis.

The 2011 Conference will aim to:

1. Define the EU context of the financial and economic crisis and the impact on the enjoyment and realisation of human rights for people with disabilities; and

¹ The European Disability Forum is the umbrella organisation representing the interests of European citizens with disabilities in Europe. Its members include national umbrella organisations of persons with disabilities from all EU/EEA countries, the candidate countries and other European countries, as well as NGOs representing the various types of disabilities. More information is available at www.edf-feph.org.

² http://ec.europa.eu/news/justice/101115_en.htm

2. Explore how EU policy and funding instruments can be used to effectively implement the UN CRPD and create better conditions for the employment of disabled people, thereby contributing to finding a way out of the economic crisis.

Conference outline: four main sessions

Session 1: The global financial and economic crisis and the impact on the enjoyment and realisation of human rights for persons with disabilities

One of the main current concerns, in the situation of economic crisis, is the potential social impact of austerity measures. These measures, undertaken by Member State governments across the EU, can potentially be in conflict with the realisation of the rights of persons with disabilities enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities. The social targets of the Europe 2020 strategy and the European Disability Strategy 2010 – 2020 define a framework to promote social inclusion. During this session delegates will discuss which positive measures could be taken at political level with active participation of persons with disabilities in order to jointly find a way out of the crisis.

Sessions 2 and 3: EU instruments for recovery and implementation of the UN CRPD

Two sessions of parallel workshops:

a. Europe 2020 and its Flagship Initiatives: unfolding the potential for inclusive growth

One of the main pillars of the Europe 2020 strategy is to promote inclusive growth across Europe. This must be achieved by promoting inclusive education and employment for persons with disabilities; promoting social innovation and an inclusive use and development of new technologies; and by fighting against poverty and social exclusion. This session will focus on how to mainstream disability in the implementation of the EU 2020 focusing in particular on the following flagship initiatives: a **New Agenda for Skills and Jobs**, **Youth on the Move** and the **Platform Against Poverty and Social Exclusion**.

b. Exploiting the potential of EU funding instruments for recovery and implementation of the UN CRPD

Promoting equality in the European Union must be seen as an overarching objective that needs adequate financial resources in order to be fully achieved. The new legislation on **structural funds** should be a major instrument for the realisation of accessible European regions where discrimination is banned and employment and inclusion is promoted.

In times of crisis, investing in innovation and research is key to overcoming barriers faced by European citizens with disabilities. The participants will discuss how the new **Research Framework Programme post-2013** can ensure a sustainable and inclusive future for all.

Finally, we will look into how **Connecting Europe**, a proposal in the future Multiannual Financial Framework, can benefit the freedom of movement for persons with disabilities. The proposal should cover transport and ICT projects to bring more interconnectivity across Europe.

Session 4 Closing session and political outlook

Conclusions of the six workshops will be briefly presented to the plenary.

These will be followed by an intervention on future political challenges: a representative of the Danish presidency of the European Union will be invited to present its priority actions in the field of disability in the first half of 2012.

Format and deliverables

The three sessions will involve panels with presentations by people with disabilities, representatives of disability organisations, social partners, service-providers, disability and accessibility experts coming from the Member States and the European Commission. The focus will be on models of good policy practice, possible future policies and practical examples of problems and solutions.

During the panel sessions there will be substantial time for interactive discussions in which the audience is encouraged to take an active part.

The Commission will publish the conference proceedings online.

Access City Award 2012

After the success of the first Access City Award edition for 2011, the winner of the 2012 Award will be announced at a special ceremony during the conference. The three other finalists of the competition will also be presented. The selection was carried out by a European jury on the basis of their achievements and their future plans in the area of accessibility.

Contact:

European Commission
DG Justice
Unit D3 – Rights of persons with disabilities
Attention: Sofia Lourenço / Luca Mangiat
E-mail address: just-pwd-info@ec.europa.eu