

10 Key Stakeholders in the European Disability Sector

European Platform for Rehabilitation
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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
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CHAPTER 1 – EUROPEAN POLICY-MAKERS

Unit for Integration of People with Disabilities	4
Social Protection and Inclusion Policies Unit	5
European Parliament Disability Intergroup	6
Council of Europe	7

CHAPTER 2 – ORGANISATIONS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

European Disability Forum (EDF)	8
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CHAPTER 3 – SERVICE PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS

European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)	9
Workability Europe (WE)	10
European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)	11

CHAPTER 4 – OTHER RELEVANT NGOS

Platform of European Social NGOs	12
----------------------------------	----

CHAPTER 5 – EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS

Business & Disability: a European Network	13
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Introduction

The Report *10 Key Stakeholders in the European Disability Sector* provides a synopsis of the 10 major players in the field of disability at the European level.

Chapter 1 outlines three major European policy makers in the disability sector within the EU institutions and the Council of Europe.

Chapter 2 describes the European Disability Forum (EDF) as the umbrella organisation representing more than 50 million people with disabilities in Europe.

Chapter 3 discusses three leading networks of service providers to people with disabilities – the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR), Workability Europe (WE) and the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD).

Chapter 4 focuses on the Social Platform as the influential NGO representative of the social sector.

Finally **Chapter 5** presents an employers' organisation – Business & Disability: a European Network – specially dedicated to disability issues.

The Report provides a brief overview on each stakeholder, describes its aims and activities and membership base wherever relevant. Also, the contact details for all listed organisations/institutions are listed.

1. EUROPEAN POLICY-MAKERS



Unit for Integration of People with Disabilities

within DG Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities of the European Commission

Overview

The ultimate objective of all disability related activities at the European Commission is to promote equality of opportunities and to facilitate access to rights for all people with disabilities. These principles are expressed in the European Disability Strategy which, in practical terms, is implemented through the European Disability Action Plan.¹ The Disability Action Plan, established to ensure a coherent policy follow-up to the 2003 European Year of People with Disabilities, constitutes an operational framework for actions to be developed at EU level between 2004 and 2010. Regular, biannual updates of the Disability Action and continual dialogue with the main stakeholders ensure that actions carried out by the Commission are relevant and targeted. The most recent update of the EU Disability Action Plan was published in November 2005 within the framework of the Communication² "Situation of disabled people in the enlarged European Union: the European Action Plan 2006-2007".

Disability policies are essentially the responsibility of the Member States. The majority of policies to make society accessible to all can be achieved at national level. While respecting this subsidiarity principle, the European Commission does have an important role to play in the disability field. Through various coordination and support activities, it strengthens the cooperation with and between the Member States. The Commission promotes the collection, exchange and development of comparable data, statistics and good practices. To this end, the High Level Group on Disability³, made up of Member States and NGO representatives, has been established and functions as the main discussion and cooperation forum.

Aims & Activities

The Disability Unit is responsible for ensuring that disability issues are central to all levels of the policy making and legislative work of the Commission. This approach constitutes part of the mainstreaming concept. One of the main objectives of the unit is to increase people's awareness of disability issues. In this respect, the European Year of People with Disabilities in 2003 was a major initiative for the Commission and contributed considerably to raising the profile of these issues. Each year in December, at the occasion of the International Day of Disabled People, the Commission organises the European Day of Disabled People Conference. The conference is an integral part of the continuous dialogue between civil society, organisations representing disabled people and the Social Partners.

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¹ http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index/7003_en.html

² http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index/7003_en.html

³ http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/disability/contact_en.html#2



Social Protection and Inclusion Policies Unit

within DG Employment, Social Affairs & Equal Opportunities of the European Commission

Overview

The Unit delivers policy and analytical support to the modernisation of the European Social Model, in the framework of the Lisbon strategy, by promoting an Open Method of Co-ordination involving Member States' governments and other stakeholders through the exchange of good practice, the development of common indicators and policy monitoring and analysis.

Aims & Activities

The Unit has a leading role in respect of the following activities:

- Implementation of the EU process based on the common objectives on fighting poverty and social exclusion, including the examination of National Action Plans(NAPs/inclusion and the drafting of a periodic report;
- Implementation of the Community action programme to combat social exclusion (2002-2006), with the assistance of a programme committee;
- Coordination of the different strands of the Open Method of Coordination under the streamlining approach, including the evaluation of the OMC and the Joint Report on social protection and social inclusion;
- Development of social inclusion indicators on the basis of the Laeken list;
- Mainstreaming of the fight against poverty and social exclusion across other Community policies, including the structural funds;
- Analytical and administrative support to the work of the Social Protection Committee;
- Policy development in the field of 'making work pay' policies, including the consultation on measures to fight exclusion from the labour market;
- Cooperation with applicant countries and international organizations in the on-going process of EU co-ordination in the social inclusion area;

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European Parliament Disability Intergroup

Overview

Established in 1980 the Disability Intergroup is an informal grouping of MEPs from all nationalities and the major political groups working within the European Parliament on disability policy. It has no formal powers and is not a formal committee of the Parliament. Today there are about 80 MEPs on the Intergroup.⁴ Richard Howitt MEP (UK/PSE) is currently the President of the Disability Intergroup.

Aims & Activities

The Intergroup meets in Strasbourg every other month to discuss issues of concern to disabled people, disability groups and the EU institutions. The Intergroup members take follow-up action on priorities for disabled people, such as in putting forward Parliamentary questions to the Commission, tabling amendments to Parliaments reports on EU policy and programmes of interest and concern to disabled people, raising issues of concern to disabled people in their Parliamentary committees.

The Disability Intergroup communicates with the European Disability Forum, the umbrella organisation for the European disability movement, to ensure strong dialogue between the MEPs active on the Intergroup and the representative disability NGOs based at European, national and local level.

Key priorities for the Intergroup in the first months of the 6th European Parliamentary term (2004-2009) include:

- A call for the full and immediate transposition of the EU Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment 2000/78/EC relating to disabled persons;
- The campaign for a horizontal non-discrimination Directive on disability in order to remove barriers faced by disabled persons in all areas of life - transport, education, health care, social services and goods and services;
- Support for a legally binding UN Convention on the rights of disabled people which is currently being drafted;
- Mainstreaming of the disability rights agenda: ensuring that disability policy is recognised across all areas of EU policy and implemented accordingly;
- Support for the introduction of accessibility criteria attached to the disbursement of European funds, in particular the Structural Funds, in order that EU funding is used to build access environments for ALL persons in society.

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⁴ See the full list of MEPs of the new Parliamentary term (2004-2009) who are members of the Disability Intergroup: <http://www.edf-feph.org/apdg/members-en.htm>



Council of Europe

Overview

The Council of Europe is the pan-European organisation for the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms in everyday life. Human dignity, full citizenship, independent living and active participation in the life of the community form the heart of the Council of Europe's activities for the integration of people with disabilities. The overall objective is to promote social cohesion in Europe by reconciling the principles of equal rights for all individuals and the concept of special needs.

Aims & Activities

The activities of the Council of Europe for the integration of people with disabilities cover a wide range of areas: accessibility and universal design; ageing; assessment; assistance activities; cochlear implants; community living; discrimination; employment; International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (ICIDH); new technologies; prevention; sign languages spinal cord injury; teacher training; women violence and abuse.

The 1992 landmark *Recommendation No. R (92) 6 on A coherent policy for people with disabilities*⁵, contains policy principles for the rehabilitation and integration of people with disabilities. This model programme recommends that governments of all member States develop comprehensive and co-ordinated national disability policies taking account of all successive stages in the integration process and all areas of community life, such as prevention, diagnosis, treatment, education, vocational guidance and training, employment, social integration, information and research.

In April 2006, the Committee of Ministers has adopted a recommendation addressed to all 46 member states on the Council of Europe's *"Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation in society of people with disabilities: improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in Europe 2006-2015"*.⁶ The Plan is intended to serve as a roadmap for policy makers, enabling the design, adjustment and implementation of appropriate programmes and innovative strategies. It has a broad scope covering all key areas for people with disabilities, reflected in 15 action lines including participation in political, public and cultural life, education, information and communication, employment, accessibility of the built environment and transport. It also draws attention to the needs of women and children with disabilities and severely disabled people in need of a high level of support.

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⁵ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=612929&BackColorInternet=B9BDEE&BackColorIntranet=FFCD4F&BackColorLogged=FFC679>

⁶ [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec\(2006\)5&Sector=secCM&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFBB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Rec(2006)5&Sector=secCM&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFBB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75)

2. ORGANISATIONS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



European Disability Forum (EDF)

Overview

EDF is a European umbrella organisation representing more than 50 million disabled people in Europe. EDF exists to represent disabled people in dialogue with the European Union and other European authorities. Its mission is to promote equal opportunities for disabled people and to ensure disabled citizens' full access to fundamental and human rights through their active involvement in policy development and implementation in the European Union. EDF was created in 1996 by disabled people and parents of disabled who cannot represent themselves in order to defend issues of common concern to all disability groups and be the independent and strong voice of disabled citizens in dialogue with the EU.

Aims & Activities

EDF's scope of work is very wide, as many of the EU initiatives have an impact on disabled people's lives. The EDF activities are mainly to run policy actions based on the EU agenda and to establish contacts with EU Institutions, international and European organisations. The EU Social Policy Agenda is a key area for EDF. Disabled people in all aspects of their lives are particularly concerned with all EU Social Policy issues. Therefore, EDF acts as a proactive organisation in this field in order for predominant issues for disabled to be taken into account in EU legislation. The main areas addressed by EDF are: non-discrimination; employment; public procurement; the fight against social exclusion; EU Charter of fundamental rights and human rights.

Membership

EDF has member organisations reflecting a broad geographical base and a wide range of concerns across the disability movement. The EDF membership is the most valuable source of knowledge, experience and expertise on disability issues in the European Union. With National Councils in all EU and other EEA member states and European NGOs as members, the EDF covers all aspects of disability. Currently the EDF has 17 National Councils, 67 organisations on European level, 23 organisations on national, regional and local level and 32 individual members.

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3. SERVICE PROVIDER ORGANISATIONS



European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR)

Overview

The European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) is a network of leading European providers of rehabilitation services to people with disabilities and others experiencing disadvantage. These services include vocational training and reintegration in the open labour market, as well as medical rehabilitation and social care. All EPR members are committed to the values of equality, equal opportunities and human rights for their clients. Founded in 1993, the membership has continued to grow under the motto “learning, developing and producing together”. Quality, a holistic, multi-disciplinary view and a fundamental international approach are the cornerstones on which the EPR was founded. Thus, the results of EPR collaborations are indispensable to all those that are affiliated to the rehabilitation sector.

Aims & Activities

Drawing strength from global diversity, the EPR is an innovative force and generator of expertise increasing the quality of rehabilitation services. Recognised as the outstanding and influential forum of service providers in Europe and in cooperation with service-users, the EPR realises continuous improvement and lasting change through:

- Providing professional development platforms that enhance the capacity of individual professionals, service providers and the entire rehabilitation sector
- Researching and developing methods, models and modes of delivery that directly innovate and improve rehabilitation service systems
- Influencing policy development, promoting the rehabilitation sector, and providing information and assistance to service providers on European and international affairs

Membership

Membership of the EPR is not confined to organisations within the European Union, but may be drawn from all European countries. EPR's members are all independent, rather large, leading European providers of rehabilitation services to people with disabilities and others who are disadvantaged. EPR has about 20 member organisations across 14 European countries.

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Workability Europe (WE)

Overview

Workability International was established in Sweden in 1987 by founder members from 11 countries. Originally titled International Organisation for the Provision of Work for People with Disabilities who are occupationally Handicapped (IPWH), the organisation took on its current title at its World AGM in January 2002. Workability International is presented in several regions by its regional sub groups - Americas, Asia Pacific, Europe and Oceania. Workability Europe (WE) was the first regional group to be formed by the European members of Workability International. It is the largest employer body representing providers of work and employment services to people with disabilities in Europe.

WE's vision is for a European society in which equal employment opportunities are a reality for people with disabilities. WE's mission is to be recognised as the European leader in promoting and providing employment and work participation for people with disabilities.

Aims & Activities

Workability Europe structures its work and range of activities undertaken under four Strategic Pillars:

- **Pillar I: Business to Business & Corporate Social Responsibility** - to facilitate the exchange of experience in business and commercial matters between members.
- **Pillar II: Enlargement** - to achieve an active and diverse membership that truly represents organisations providing work activities for people with disabilities throughout Europe.
- **Pillar III: Communications & Networking** - to raise the organisation's profile and effectiveness by implementing a sustainable range of internal and external communication and creating networking opportunities.
- **Pillar IV: Routes to Employment & Best Practice** - to develop a framework for the development of programmes and/or processes and best practice that lead to the increased employment of disabled people.

Membership

Workability Europe's membership is composed of both single and umbrella organisations. Today Workability Europe has over 31 members located in 19 countries and provide work programmes for about 1,250 000 disabled people in more than 4, 000 work locations.

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European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)

Overview

The European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities promotes the affairs of social firms and their umbrella associations which provide services to approximately 35 million people with a disability throughout Europe. The EASPD participates in the development of social policy, informs service providers of relevant topics on the European Union and supports the innovation and improvement of service systems. In doing so, EASPD always keeps in mind the implementation of the UN Standard Rules with regard to equal opportunities and full citizenship for persons with a disability, so that all people whatever their abilities and disabilities might be, can contribute to society.

Aims & Activities

The main objective of EASPD is to promote the equalisation of opportunities for people with disabilities through effective and high quality service systems. This objective is achieved through:

- *Policy-influencing*: offering service providers a voice in Europe;
- *Services to members*: networking & exchange possibilities and every fortnight updated information on EU policy and programmes;
- *Research and Development* as basis for innovation and improvement of service provision.

EASPD aims at playing a key role on a European level as a representative of disability NGOs and non-profit organisations in working for an inclusive Europe. EASPD wants to significantly influence European disability & socio-economic policy by having a permanent presence in Brussels and by working with other European and international networks as: the Platform of European Social NGOs; IASSID (International Association for the Scientific Study of Intellectual Disability); ECAS (Euro Citizen Action Service); EDF (European Disability Forum); IE (Inclusion Europe).

EASPD aims to be recognised as a major partner in the disability field, having close contacts with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, DG Education and Culture, DG Enterprise, DG Research, DG Enlargement and DG Justice and Home Affairs. EASPD also wishes to be acknowledged as a major social partner in matters regarding the social economy by the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament and by the European Commission.

Membership

EASPD's membership is composed of national umbrella organisations and Single Agency Member Organisations spread across over 20 countries.

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4. OTHER RELEVANT NGOs



Platform of European Social NGOs

Overview

The Social Platform was established in 1995 and brings together some 45 European non-governmental organisations, federations and networks which are working to build an inclusive society and promote the social dimension of the European Union. The Social Platform channels the concerns of European citizens who have come together in these organisations throughout the Union on issues of common interest. It also ensures a wide circulation of information on EU activities and policies to its members at the national level. The members of the Social Platform insist that NGOs have a key role to play in promoting an equitable society based on the protection and advancement of human rights and the participation of all.

Aims & Activities

The Social Platform channels the concerns of European citizens who have come together in various socially-oriented organisations throughout the Union on issues of common interest. The Social Platform believes that the following objectives must shape European social policy: the development of an inclusive and cohesive society; the realization of fundamental rights for all; the promotion of a society based on gender equality and equality for all, and free from all forms of discrimination and prejudice; the sharing of created wealth to increase the welfare of all. These goals can only be achieved if the right mechanisms for developing a social Europe are put in place:

- Good governance: an open, and inclusive structured civil dialogue with a legal base
- Aiming higher: a commitment to measurable social targets and benchmarking
- Acting positively: not just declarations of intent but effective policy action
- Reaching deeper: the mainstreaming of key social policy objectives
- Moving closer: the closer integration of social and economic policies

Membership

The members of the Social Platform represent thousands of organisations, associations and voluntary groups at local, regional, national and European level representing the interests of a wide range of civil society. These include organisations of women, older people, people with disabilities, people who are unemployed, people affected by poverty, gays and lesbians, young people, children and families. Member organisations also include those campaigning on issues such as social justice, homelessness, life-long learning, health and reproductive rights and racism.

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5. EMPLOYERS' ORGANISATIONS



Business & Disability: a European Network

Overview

Business & Disability: a European Network grew out of the group of Corporate Partners formed during the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003 (EYPD). Business & Disability shares a determination to work together at European Union and national level for the furtherance of the aims of the Madrid Declaration.

Aims & Activities

Business & Disability works to raise awareness of the business case for disability, promotes disability inclusion initiatives, and encourages the exchange of ideas amongst business, political actors and people with disabilities. It is committed to the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of European society, and in particular as workers, consumers and policy-makers. Business & Disability's members are at the forefront of industry engagement on issues related to physical Accessibility, e-Accessibility of products and services and Employment.

Business & Disability: a European Network has been selected in the framework of the European Commission DG EMPL Open Call for Proposals for transnational projects VP/2004/008 featuring pilot projects on actions to mainstream disability policies. Implementing the project on "Promoting the economic case for the integration of people with disabilities into business and society throughout Europe" Business & Disability is seeking to collect Case Studies from across Europe on Accessibility, e-Accessibility and Employment inclusion projects for people with disabilities.

Membership

The founding members of Business & Disability are Adecco, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Manpower, Microsoft and Schindler. These companies are proud to be working in partnership with the European Disability Forum. Workability Europe is an associate member.

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