



## Informal Ministerial Meeting on Disability

### *“From Inclusive Education to Inclusive Employment for People with Disabilities”*

Riga, 11 May, 2015

### Presidency Conclusions

- i. Around 80 million<sup>1</sup> Europeans have different types of disability – these might be visible or invisible, reduced mobility or mental disorders or other types. Thus, persons with disabilities form one of the Europe's largest disadvantaged social group: over 15 % of the whole population in Europe have a disability and one in four Europeans has a family member with a disability.
- ii. Persons with disabilities are often socially excluded or at risk of social exclusion, and are deprived of many of life's most fundamental experiences. They are often, for instance, prevented from attending the same schools as students without a disability, getting a job in the labour market, living in their own homes, full enjoyment of a social and cultural life, voting or starting a family and raising children.
- iii. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) brought about a paradigm shift from a medical model to a social model of disability that defines persons with disabilities as persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
- iv. Implementation of the UNCRPD must affect positively all persons with disabilities; however, special attention should be given to promoting the rights of women and children with disabilities as they face multiple challenges due to gender and age.
- v. The European Commission has adopted the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 which aims to empower people with disabilities in order to enhance a full a full enjoyment of their rights and freedoms as well as to enable a full participation in society and in the European economy. This strategy contributes to the implementation of the UNCRPD, identifying actions to be performed at the European Union (EU) level that complement the national ones.

Thus,

*taking into account* the right of persons with disabilities to equal participation in economic, social, cultural and political life and the need to develop disability policies based on the

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<sup>1</sup> European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe - <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0636&from=EN>



human rights model,

*considering* the obligations enshrined in the UNCRPD, to which the EU and the majority of the Member States are parties, the willingness of the remaining Member States to ratify the Convention, and the commitment to work for the creation of a barrier-free Europe,

*recognising* the importance of inclusive education and employment in the future development of disability policies as fundamental prerequisites for social inclusion and economic independence of persons with disabilities,

*recognising* the importance of international cooperation at all levels, with a view to ensuring that persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights in everyday life,

ministerial meeting focused on the implementation and progress achieved five years after ratification of the UNCRPD in the EU. Ministers discussed the measures that Member States have implemented to support the shift from a passive medical approach to human rights and social approach in the disability policies. Having regard to the facts that the current generation of children is the first generation to grow up in the human rights based approach and that education and employment are the key elements for independent life, specific attention was given to the achievements in inclusive education, career guidance and employment opportunities. The objective of the meeting was to discuss and identify obstacles that have to be tackled and further needed measures to facilitate inclusive education and employment with the aim to secure social and economic independence of children with disabilities in the future.

***Participants of the meeting comprising of ministers and high level officials from EU Member States, in order to promote the rights of all persons with disabilities, especially children with disabilities, agreed on the need to:***

1. Implement comprehensive measures and take the necessary steps to ensure that persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights which have been identified in the UNCRPD and participate equally in economic, social, cultural as well as political life;
2. Fully implement the UNCRPD and give proper attention to disability issues in the national policy agendas;
3. Promote comprehensive solutions to support persons with disabilities and particularly children with disabilities, including by providing interdisciplinary solutions promoting full enjoyment of all human rights and ability to participate independently in all spheres of life;
4. Promote and support measures, in line with the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, to decrease the existing gaps between persons with and without disabilities, inter alia, in employment and education, in order to advance social inclusion of persons with disabilities;
5. Effectively implement and apply the existing equal treatment legislation so as to eliminate discrimination and to promote a barrier-free Europe for everyone through a



variety of means including reasonable accommodation, positive actions and other measures facilitating equal opportunities, accessibility, full and effective participation and inclusion in society;

6. Integrate the gender dimension into all disability policies and take measures to tackle multiple discrimination of women and men with disabilities and women and men caring for persons with disabilities and ensure their equal access to education, employment, health services, social security, as well as promote their equal participation in all areas of social and economic life;
7. Promote the participation of young people with disabilities in work based learning and quality apprenticeships as well as in targeted and effective active labour market policy measures that lead to sustainable labour market participation in order to improve their labour market prospects and reduce risks of long term unemployment and economic inactivity;
8. Strengthen the cooperation with civil society - in particular organisations representing persons with disabilities, as well as social partners - to promote the representation of the interests of persons with disabilities and their involvement in the policy consulting process;
9. Promote the use of new IT technologies and development of assistive technologies to improve the equal access to goods and services, including education at all levels, and take measures that foster accessible and inclusive education systems with a view to promote a full participation of persons with disabilities in the society and in the labour market ,
10. Use all relevant funds, including the EU Structural Funds, to improve accessibility and support social inclusion, especially for children with disabilities, as well as to encourage the de-institutionalisation and independent living, favouring personal choice, as determined in Articles 9, 19 and 23 of the UNCRPD;
11. Embed choice and control for service users through personal budgets in social service delivery schemes and promote strategies for inclusive local communities.