

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

19 March 2015
DECS-RPD(2015)15

**Committee of Experts
on the Rights of People with Disabilities
(DECS-RPD)**

STRASBOURG, COUNCIL OF EUROPE - AGORA BUILDING
22-24 APRIL 2015

**Report by EASPD
Enjoyment of rights in practice: towards the new
CoE Disability Action Plan**

**Item 6.2 of the agenda
Evaluation report on the implementation
of the Disability Action Plan 2006-2015**

Document prepared by EASPD

*The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and
do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe*

This document is restricted. It will not be distributed at the meeting. Please bring this copy.

Contents

Contents.....2

Executive Summary3

List of Abbreviations3

1. Introduction4

2. Added value of the Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 for the European region.....4

3. Impact assessment on EASPD’s policies and actions6

 Action Line 1 - Participation in political and public life 6

 Action Line 2 - Participation in cultural life..... 7

 Action Line 3 - Information and communication..... 7

 Action Line 4 – Education 8

 Action Line 5 - Employment, vocation guidance and training 9

 Action Line 8 - Community living10

 Action Line 9 - Health care / Action Line 10 Rehabilitation12

 Action Line 11 – Social Protection.....12

 Action Line 12 – Protection against violence and abuse12

 Action Line 13 - Awareness rising13

 Cross-cutting issues.....14

 Ageing of Persons with Disabilities14

 People with disabilities in need of high level of support.....15

 Women and girls with disabilities15

 Children and young people with disabilities.....15

 Evaluation and Monitoring of the Plan.....16

4. The way forward: the new Disability Action Plan 2016-2020.....16

 The concept.....16

 Proposed domains of action.....18

5. Conclusions.....19

Executive Summary

The Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 has come to an end. The present report intends to underline its added value for the European region and to contribute to the new Plan for 2016-2020. The report starts by analysing the impact of the Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 on EASPD's work at the European level. For each action line, it examines the state of play and explains what our organisation has done in terms of policies, projects and events. In doing so, it highlights two important facts: the first is that the added value of the Plan lies in its ability to reflect the UNCRPD's articles. The second is that it has the merit of having reached out to other groups with support needs. With regard to the new Plan, the report gives suggestions and ideas on the domains of action (accessibility, legal capacity, disaster preparedness, etc.) and cross-cutting issues (young people with disabilities, migrants, etc.) on which to focus the future work. Moreover, it defines a new methodology based on the analysis of the current situation and of existing gaps. It also defines three types of actions to be carried out: collection of knowledge and know-how, gathering of models of promising practices and drafting of policy recommendation. The report concludes by reiterating that the ultimate objective of the Plan is to reach an inclusive society and that to do so, cooperation at all levels is fundamental.

List of Abbreviations

ANED – Academic Network of European Disability Expert
CoE – Council of Europe
DPOs – Disabled People's Organisations
EASPD – European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities
EU – European Union
FRA – European Fundamental Rights Agency
UNCRPD – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
Others such as CAHPAH, CAHPAH-PPL, etc

1. Introduction

The Council of Europe Action Plan “to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society: improving the quality of life of people with disabilities in Europe 2006-2015” has come to an end.

The Plan was built on the idea that the governments of the Council of Europe member states have the commitment to do everything possible, to ensure that persons with disabilities can access, participate and be actively included in the society. Moreover, it specifically recognises that a close cooperation between all actors of the civil society, from organisations of disability rights to individualised services ones working at the regional and national level, is needed to fight discrimination and ensure equal rights and opportunities. In fact, all other actors in society can be considered having an implicit obligation to work on the implementation of the Action Plan and the UN CRPD. It is for this reason that EASPD, as a civil society organisation of support providers, is specifically focusing on this.

EASPD is a European not-for-profit organisation, representing over 10,000 service providers working in the field of disability in 30 countries across Europe. Our members are national umbrella organisations or single national agencies providing support services to persons with disabilities ranging from education, to employment, to day-care services which work in rehabilitation, recreational activities and support. Our main objective is to promote equal opportunities for people with disabilities, through effective and high-quality services systems. We believe that services are human rights enablers, since they can empower persons with disabilities. In fact, they can participate in reinforcing social ties, paving the way towards their inclusion in society.

This report has the aim to analyse the added value of the CoE Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 for the European region. In the first instance, it will examine the contents of the Plan and the actions undertaken by the CoE in order to implement it. Specifically, it will focus on its impact on EASPD’s work, in terms of policies, projects¹ and events carried out at the European level. In doing so, it will also reflect the views of civil society organisations working in the sector of individualised service providers in Europe. The intent of this report is to give our contribution to the new CoE Disability Action Plan for 2016-2020. Starting with the major success factors, EASPD will provide the CoE with suggestions and ideas, together with tools and instruments to continue the work in the following years.

2. Added value of the Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 for the European region

EASPD develops its policies and actions according to the principles enshrined in the UNCRPD. At the European level, it refers to two main texts: the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 and the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020. EASPD recognises the relevance of both texts, and understands their complementary and different nature.

Within the frame of the CoE Disability Action Plan 2006-2015, EASPD contributed to the international debate on disability rights at the level of 47 member states. This was done by bringing to the table the knowledge and know-how of services and their expertise in providing individualised support and responding to the changing needs of persons with disabilities on a day-to-day basis. Specifically, EASPD took part as an observer to the CoE disability related meetings as well as to the CAHPAH, CS-RPD and DECS-RPD committees². In addition to this, representatives of our organisation were present, as participants or speakers, at many

¹ Information on all EASPD projects, mentioned in the report can be found through the provided web addresses

² CAHPAH, CS-RPD and DECS-RPD - full names will be included

relevant international conferences organised by the CoE and the countries holding the CoE Presidency.

Assessing the real impact of the Action Plan on services and support systems is extremely difficult. Nevertheless the Plan undeniably had a substantial influence on the overall understanding of disability and the challenges related to the correct implementation of the UNCRPD. The Action Plan had an awareness raising effect on support providers and amplified the attention on key issues regarding the implementation of the UNCRPD. The CoE Action Plan helped EASPD to focus its work over the last years on the action lines of most relevance to support providers: educational services, employment facilitating services, DI and community living, the use of technology and last but not least staff re-training. Moreover, thanks to the Action Plan the UNCRPD was discussed by the International NGOs (INGO) enjoying participatory status at the CoE, which explored the role and responsibility of civil society organisations in this respect. One should not underestimate also the impact of the CoE committee that monitored the progressive implementation of the Action Plan. This committee provided a platform for debate and exchange of models of promising practices amongst member states and civil society actors. This contributed to the development of a common jargon and mutual understanding.

The new CoE Disability Plan should put emphasis on collecting knowledge and know-how, gathering models of promising practices and drafting of policy recommendations

Overall, the added value of the Plan lies in the ability to reflect the ideas underpinning the articles of the UNCRPD, both in its action lines and recommendations to member states. In this context, EASPD specifically underlines the relevance of Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life³ drafted by the CAHPAH-PPL and of Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)3 on ensuring full, equal and effective participation of persons with disabilities in culture, sports, tourism and leisure activities as guidelines for the work of service providers. However, these recommendations have not been followed by an assessment of the real outcomes of the actions undertaken afterwards. In this context, being able to evaluate and measure the impact of these actions, through the use of appropriate tools, would be crucial to plan the work ahead. With regard to the methodology, the new Plan has to analyse the current situation and identify existing gaps. This has to be carried out through three types of actions: collection of knowledge and know-how, gathering of models of promising practices and drafting of policy recommendations. The aim of the new Plan is to provide tools and instruments such as support systems, services and legal frameworks enabling individualised and inclusive responses to the needs of persons with disabilities.

Finally, an important merit of the Plan is that of reaching out to other groups with support needs and to other domains in which disability should be mainstreamed as a cross-cutting issue itself. EASPD believes that cooperation is essential for ensuring that disability remains a political priority. With regard to the work developed under the Plan in the past years, the focus was particularly on the rights of children with disabilities, ageing of persons with disabilities, as well as on new technologies, education, employment and political participation. EASPD recognises the importance of all actions undertaken in these fields. For the future, the Association underlines that higher attention should be paid to the topics of legal protection, disaster and risk preparedness and to other groups with support needs such as migrants and people with intellectual, mental or psychological disabilities. Through our suggestions, we intend to stress that substantially disability is just another human condition.

³ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1871285&Site=CM>

3. Impact assessment on EASPD's policies and actions

The impact of the CoE Disability Action Plan on EASPD's policies and actions can be evaluated by analysing the work carried out with regard to each of the following action lines:

Action Line 1 - Participation in political and public life

With regard to participation of persons with disabilities in political and public life, inclusion at this level remains unachieved. This is due to the fact that in the majority of the member states, the decision to deprive a person of the legal capacity, still results in the denial of the right to vote and to stand as a candidate. This is particularly the case for persons with intellectual and mental disability under guardianship. In addition to this, information and campaign materials in alternative formats such as easy-to-read, large print or Braille are not always provided. Finally, public authority buildings and procedures remain largely inaccessible, preventing persons with disabilities from registering to vote and accessing polling stations.

EASPD considers that inclusion of persons with disabilities in the political and public life remains unachieved. The implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2011)14 should be monitored.

On this topic, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the Plan by:

- Participating to the CoE Subcommittee on the Participation of the people with disabilities in Political and Public Life (CAHPAH-PPL), through its representative, Mr. Franz Wolfmayr;
- Getting involved in a project on Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities (AJUPID)⁴, to promote the right to legal capacity and supported decision-making for persons with disabilities. The project works on improving the professional practice to foster access to justice for adults with intellectual disabilities under legal guardianship by reshaping the role of legal guardian from substitute decision making to supported decision making;
- Monitoring the work of FRA⁵ and ANED⁶ to provide information, data and statistics on the political participation of persons with disability;
- Reiterating the request to adopt a European Accessibility Act that would make accessibility requirements and “design for all” compulsory within the EU, also continuing to underline the importance to recognise its human support factors.

⁴ www.ajupid.eu

⁵ www.fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2014/right-political-participation-persons-disabilities-summary

⁶ www.disability-europe.net/

Action Line 2 - Participation in cultural life

With regard to the participation of persons with disabilities in cultural life, it refers to a variety of activities, such as leisure, media, sport and tourism. These activities are linked to the issues of accessibility, universal design, independent living and individualised support services. Despite improvements in these fields and particularly in relation to the accessibility of cultural events and centres, this right still remains unachieved.

On this topic, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the Plan by:

- Supporting its members in the organisation of the Euro Song Festival of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities in Austria, Portugal, Ireland and Sweden, respectively in 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2013. Its next edition will take place in Portugal in 2016. With a participation of around 15 groups of musicians coming from different European countries and a really good media coverage, it can be considered the Para-Olympics of the Euro Song festivals;
- Setting up an Interest Group on Arts, which will officially start working in 2015. EASPD strategy on Arts will focus on three pillars: project development, best practices exchange and policy work. A number of activities related to art will be organised, starting from EASPD's 20th Anniversary celebrations in 2016 in Brussels.

Despite improvements observed across Europe, regarding better participation in cultural life a lot remains to be achieved.

Action Line 3 - Information and communication

With regard to information and communication across Europe, e-communications generally remain unavailable in alternative formats, such as easy-to-read, large print, Braille. Moreover, digital technologies still do not comply with design-for-all standards.

On this topic, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the Plan by:

- Taking part to the CoE Taskforce on ICT through its Secretary General;
- Launching the Interest Group on Person Centred Technology (IG PCT)⁷, which takes a user centred, user empowering and user involving approach to support the use of technologies such as Electronic Assistive Technologies, Environmental Controls, Telecare, Telehealth and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Its aim is to promote the access to the mainstream information society and to enhance people's independence and safety, in order to make them less dependent on cares;
- Coordinated the ImPaCT in Europe ⁸ project stimulate the effective use of ICT-enabled services and providing competence building opportunities for the end users of Person Centred Technology (PCT) and their care providers via education and training services.

EASPD is deeply concerned with the lack of design-for-all standards implemented in the information and communication technologies. New barriers might be created.

⁷ <http://easpd.eu/en/content/person-centered-technology>

⁸ <https://www.ldw.org.uk/projects/past-projects/impact-in-europe.aspx>

- Getting involved in the projects ETNA⁹ and ENTELIS¹⁰: two networks which respectively aim to provide information on ICT-based assistive products and e-accessibility solutions and to promote the acquisition of digital skills for persons with disabilities of all ages.
- Partner in the W2ID¹¹ project, to research and develop the use of the Web 2.0 applications for the benefit of people with intellectual disabilities and to improve their self-advocacy opportunities.

Action Line 4 – Education

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in society through education remains far from being achieved. In fact, many CoE member states still rely on special education systems for persons with disabilities. Moreover, segregated institutions continue to be created, despite what stated by the UNCRPD (specifically, articles 19 and 24). Access to education and lifelong learning programmes in mainstream schools is still difficult. This is due to the lack of training for professionals and adequate support that could facilitate the inclusion of pupils and students with disabilities. Structures and tools have yet to be fully adapted to universal design principles. Access to higher education and vocational training opportunities have to be developed. Finally, prejudices on the skills and potential of persons with disabilities continue to represent barriers against future improvements.

Access to mainstream education and inclusive lifelong learning programmes continues to be very problematic. As education is one of the most powerful levers for inclusion this should be a top priority.

On this topic, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the Plan by:

- Organising, in close cooperation with the CoE, a two day conference with the title “Salamanca - 15 years on Inclusion – A school for all” in Dublin, Ireland, in November 2009. The Conference raised a great interest and was attended by almost 300 people, from over 20 CoE member states. It opened the project “Pathways to inclusion” and launched the Dublin Manifesto on Inclusive Education¹²;
- Holding a two-day international conference with the title “Inclusive education and learning, challenges and opportunities” in Budapest, Hungary, in September 2012. The conference was attended by 235 people from 33 different countries. Participants included persons with disabilities, politicians and decision-makers working on education, administrators, principals and staff of mainstream and special schools, teachers and staff of universities, parents, teachers and students’ associations, social and educational service providers and DPOs. It closed the project “Pathways to inclusion”¹³ which aimed at establishing new tools for measuring and implementing inclusion and creating a network of ideas and support to make inclusion happen. It also launched the Budapest Manifesto on Inclusive Learning¹⁴, whose objective is to promote inclusive education for all, from children, to adults and across all minority groups;

⁹ www.etna-project.eu/

¹⁰ www.entelis.net/

¹¹ <http://blog.klikin.eu/>

¹² www.easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/SCEDUC/dublin_manifesto_on_inclusive_education.pdf

¹³ www.investt.eu/pathways-inclusion

¹⁴ www.easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/budapest-manifesto-on-inclusive-learning-eng.pdf

- Implementing a number of European projects in the field of education, such as TIDE¹⁵, on inclusive development, ALDO¹⁶ on education of adults with learning disabilities.

Action Line 5 - Employment, vocation guidance and training

Across Europe, barriers posed by society continue to exclude persons with disability from the labour market. This structural disadvantage leaves them in a situation of persistent underemployment. A variety of work and employment models and methodologies, from occupational services and sheltered workshops, to supported employment, still mark the difference from country to country. Support measures, such as vocational and educational training (VET), reasonable accommodation, technical guidance, personal assistance measures and subsidies for employers, are yet to be implemented. These measures would particularly help to overcome structural and functional hindrances, unlocking the job potential and shifting the focus away from the disability, on to the skills and competences of a person.

Remaining structural and attitudinal barriers leave persons with disabilities in a situation of persistent underemployment

On this topic, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the plan by:

- Organising since 2006, trainings on the implementation of supported employment in Turkey, Moldova, Bulgaria and Macedonia;
- Developing, in 2012, together with the CoE, an initial training programme for social care workers: “Getting the basics right in care using the European Care Certificate (ECC) and human rights based approach”. The training covers the Basic European Social Care Learning Outcomes (BESCLO) and aims to obtaining the European Care Certificate.
- Delivering a three days training on the BESCLO, in Sarajevo, Bosnia, in June 2012 to 30 staff working in the social care sector. The final report underlines that the training was successful, since participants obtained the ECC and showed interested in introducing the learning outcomes to the staff of their own services;
- Holding a two days international conference “The employment of persons with disabilities: raising awareness and employment opportunities” in Istanbul, Turkey, in September 2013.

¹⁵ www.tideproject.eu

¹⁶ www.aldo-project.eu

This event was attended by around 450 participants and represented an important moment to link with local actors and to build bridges between the different regions of Europe. It was concluded by an award ceremony on best practices in the field of employment, coming from various organisations based in Europe, Asia and USA¹⁷;

- Launching the new EASPD Employment Declaration¹⁸ which follows the 2009 Thessaloniki Declaration¹⁹ and was approved by our governance bodies on the 4th December 2014. This new document underlines our involvement to improve the employment situation of persons with disabilities, also calling for a clear commitment of EU institutions;
- Taking part, through the years, to numerous European projects which can be divided in three categories. The first, focusing on the employment of persons with disabilities and on services supporting the transition from sheltered employment, to the open labour market (Happy Farm²⁰, Pass it On²¹, Race²², T-EST²³). The second, looking at the retraining of professionals to the human-rights based approach and community-living (Conversion²⁴, IBB2²⁵, ECL, ECC, No Patients but Citizens with Rights²⁶). The third, taking into account the transition from education to vocational training or employment (Quality of Life Measures²⁷, NQF inclusive²⁸, IGOS²⁹, BITSE³⁰, INVESTT³¹, New Services for Employment³², EQF meets ECVET³³, IVET4D³⁴).

Action Line 8 - Community living

Across Europe, the transition from institutional, to community-based services has started, and is now under way. Situations differ widely according to the country and region of residence. However, many persons with disabilities still live in large segregating institutions, with detrimental consequences for their individual's life and personal development. They remain exposed to high risks of abuses and violations of their human rights and dignity. Person-centred and individualised services such as personal assistance, social housing etc. remain underdeveloped, due to the consequences of the economic and financial crisis. Signs of re-institutionalisation are also multiplying.

¹⁷ www.easpd.eu/en/content/employment-all-award-2013

¹⁸ http://www.easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/News/new_easpd_employment_declaration_-_final_english.pdf

¹⁹ www.easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/final_easpd_thessaloniki_declaration.pdf

²⁰ www.happy-farm.si/en/

²¹ www.employmentforall.eu/Home/PassItOn/

²² www.easpd.all2all.org/en/content/race

²³ www.easpd.all2all.org/en/content/t-est

²⁴ www.employmentforall.eu/Home/Projects/Conversion/

²⁵ www.en.lebenshilfe-guv.at

²⁶ www.eccertificate.eu

²⁷ www.easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/brochure_gol.pdf

²⁸ www.nqfinclusive.org

²⁹ www.employmentforall.eu/Home/IGOSInterestGrouponOccupationalServices/

³⁰ www.easpd.eu/en/content/bitse

³¹ www.investt.eu

³² www.easpd.all2all.org/en/content/new-services-employment

³³ www.easpd.eu/en/content/eqf-meets-ecvet

³⁴ www.vet4d.eu

On this topic, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the Plan by:

- Organising a one day seminar on personalised budgets and direct payments in May 2007, in Sofia, Bulgaria. This saw the participation of our members, as well as local authorities and external stakeholders;
- Holding the two days international conference “Towards community-living: current realities and future challenges” in October 2010 in Skopje, FYROM. Attended by over 200 people from 25 European countries, this was an exceptional networking opportunity in this region, but also an occasion to build bridges between the different regions of Europe. Its main outcome was the launching of the Skopje Manifesto;
- Launching the Roadmap on deinstitutionalisation and the transition to community-based services³⁵ in December 2013, during the Policy Impact Group Seminar that took place in Brussels at the presence of around 30 participants;
- Holding a two days international conference with the title “A Home for All”³⁶ on the topic of the integration of support and housing services, in October 2014 in Oslo, Norway.

Person-centred and individualised services remain underdeveloped. Signs of re-institutionalisation are noticed more and more often. A shift towards an ‘investment in people’ approach is absolutely needed.

This event was organised as part of the activities of the PUSH Network³⁷ and in cooperation with the ELOSH project³⁸ and was attended by 200 participants. Hosting interventions from international organisations’ representatives of the CoE, OESCE and hosts of the USA, it represented an opportunity to network, during workshops and informal events, with colleagues from across Europe, representatives of local authorities and of the civil society. During the conference, relevant CoE materials were distributed. A final report was produced as a main outcome;

- Taking part to a number of European projects on deinstitutionalisation and community-based services (Comparative Cost Analysis³⁹, UNIQ, Partnership for Dignified and Independent Life, Adapting Services for persons with Disabilities to New Users⁴⁰);
- Constantly advocating for the provision of person-centred, community-based and individualised services, also through the work of the EU Disability High Level Group and of the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care.

³⁵ www.easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/Policy/easpd_di_roadmap_final.pdf

³⁶ www.easpd.eu/en/content/annual-conference-2014-norway

³⁷ www.easpd.eu/en/content/push-europe

³⁸ www.easpd.eu/en/content/elosh

³⁹ www.kent.ac.uk/tizard/research/documents/EU%20Comparative%20Costs%20Information.pdf

⁴⁰ www.easpd.eu/en/content/adapting-services-persons-disabilities-new-users

Action Line 9 - Health care / Action Line 10 Rehabilitation

Across Europe, access to quality and affordable health care as well as preventive healthcare and rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities has to still be ensured. Professionals have to be provided with better training on early intervention and long-term care. Actions to reduce the risks of acquiring a disability during the working life have to be encouraged. In addition to this, health rehabilitation services in the community have to be developed. Finally, sharing knowledge, expertise and cooperation between health and disability professionals, as well as parents remains fundamental.

There is a need to better train professionals on early intervention and empowering long-term care

On this topic, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the Plan by:

- Supporting the WHO formulation of the correct understanding of health service, which includes social sector. A declaration on deinstitutionalisation has also been launched by the WHO in Europe;
- Underlining, in relation to the medical sector, the correct way to intend the system of international function classification (ICF), which is that it brings function limitation.

Action Line 11 – Social Protection

Across Europe, social security systems, social assistance and support, and social services are confronted to the lack of appropriate resources, caused by the continuing withdrawing of public authorities, which is hindering the quality of our welfares. Also due to the consequences of the economic crisis, governments are focusing more on financial measures than on social and inclusive policies. In this situation, in which social inequalities are increasingly wider, persons with disabilities remain one of the categories mostly exposed to the risks of poverty and of social exclusion.

Overall in Europe social security and assistance schemes lack appropriate resources which affect the quality of life of people.

On this topic, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the Plan by working to influence the European Semester process and the EU2020 Strategy, particularly in relation to the issues of poverty and social exclusion. In order to do so, we are working at the European level, taking part to the Semester Alliance, which is composed of civil society's organisations, to reorient European policies towards a more social and inclusive growth. We are also working at the national level, organising capacity-building sessions for our members and other organisations of the civil society at the local level. Specifically, we are explaining to them how to effectively have an impact on the social policies implemented or planned by their governments, showing how these are relevant to their work.

Action Line 12 – Protection against violence and abuse

As stated by the CoE Action Plan, the cases of abuse and violence against persons with disabilities are higher than for the general population. This is particularly the case of women, who are affected by severe disabilities. Such cases are frequent within institutions, but can also occur in other types of support or familiar environments.

In order to prevent abuses on persons with disabilities, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the Plan by:

- Coordinating, from 2005 to 2009, 3 projects on the sexual abuse of persons with intellectual disabilities. Through them we have developed three tools: the first, an instrument for people working in the field to do an assessment of abused people (mainly woman) and to recognise signs of abuse; the second, a concept for effective networking and for the design of support networks; the third, a training for people working in courts and police to support persons with disabilities in a correct way. The three projects also saw the involvement of the CoE Special Rapporteur on sexual abuse, Ms Hillary Brown as consultant;
- Currently working to set up a “rapid alert” systems at country level to report on abuses of persons with disabilities in CoE member states. This system, which is already established in four countries, has the objective to strengthen the ability of our members to report on all types of abuses. Moreover, it has the intent to give EASPD the opportunity to put these issues on the table, both at the level of the CoE, and of the Human Rights Court;
- Publicly denouncing cases of violence and abuse on persons with disabilities which take place across Europe and continuing to strongly advocate for the respect of their human rights and dignity; also calling national and European authorities to act more effectively.

Abuse and violence are still part of life for too many persons with disabilities, not only in institutions but also in other environments.

Action Line 13 - Awareness rising

Rising awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities and working to advocate for the provision of services of high quality to respond to their individual needs is crucial to combat prejudices and stigma. In fact, particularly in fields such as education or employment, discrimination still represents a barrier preventing the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in the society.

It is crucial to advocate for the provision of high quality services and to raise awareness on the consequences of discrimination if we want to achieve a fully inclusive society

On this topic, EASPD has contributed to the implementation of the Plan by:

- Translating the CoE Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 in easy-to-read format, as well as EASPD's website⁴¹ and documents, in order to enhance accessibility for persons with intellectual disabilities;
- Organising numerous international conferences, with 250 to 500 participants, to which the CoE took part or contributed by sending a representative or speaker. Furthermore, organising workshops and seminars, with 20 to 100 participants, where CoE documents and materials relevant to the respective topic were distributed.

Outcomes of the events were: policy papers and declarations, training materials and good practices. These materials were made available at Member State level, to authorities and civil societies' actors and at the European level, to the CoE. Since 2006 EASPD and local partners organised annually around 7 Provider Fora as key tools for building local capacity. These events took place in CoE member states, with particular regard to Turkey, Serbia, Moldova, FYROM, Bosnia and Albania. Through national and local networking and putting the UNCPRD and the CoE Action Plan in practice, their objective is to improve the structure of social service providers throughout Europe:

- Launching EASPD 'Reaching Out' Strategy⁴² with the title "building an inclusive society" for the years 2014-2017. This document has the objective to promote alliances with people, members, EU institutions and external stakeholders, to support and include persons with disabilities in the society;
- Presenting EASPD new Communication Strategy in 2014, with the intent to promote positive attitudes and combat stigma, also through the use of media and social networks;
- Taking part to a number of European projects, in order to raise awareness on the individual needs of persons with disabilities (All Inclusive, Connecting Citizens in Europe, Sharing Knowledge in Europe, My Rights-My Voice⁴³).

The impact envisaged is to implement this "train-the-trainer" approach into the curriculum of educational institutions providing training and education for staff of service providers in the disability sector. This will have a positive effect on the quality of services people with disabilities receive and will improve their life according to the UNCPRD.

The analysis of the Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 does not directly cover action lines 6 on the built environment, 7 on transports and 14 on research and development. These are linked to the issues of accessibility, knowledge and innovation which are treated respectively in the sections on political participation and when referring to our participation to European projects.

Cross-cutting issues

During the past years, EASPD has specifically focused on the following issues, contributing to the implementation of the Plan by:

Ageing of Persons with Disabilities

- Taking part in the work of the CoE Committee of Experts on Ageing of Persons with Disabilities (CAHPAH-VPH) through its representative, Ms Carmen Duarte;

⁴¹ www.easpd.eu

⁴² www.easpd.eu/en/content/reaching-out-easpd-strategic-choices-2014-2017-building-inclusive-society

⁴³ www.myrightsmyvoice.eu/

- Launching the 2006 Graz Declaration on Disability and Ageing⁴⁴ together with other organisations and institutions. This document recognises the link between ageing, disability and support needs, such as long-term care provision and healthy and active ageing policies;
- Holding, in June 2011, a two days conference in Linz, Austria, entitled: “So old, so what? Independent Living for Seniors with Disabilities”, which was attended by around 300 participants and brought together important stakeholders and experts from all over Europe to discuss independent living and individualised support in mainstream services for elderly persons with disabilities. Its outcomes are summarised in the Linz Declaration which includes what is required to correctly implement the UNCRPD and details the policies needed when developing a more inclusive society and high quality support systems;
- Co-organising, in March 2009, a two days European conference in Barcelona, Spain, with the title "Bridging knowledge in long term care and support - crossing boundaries between Ageing and Disability" which also saw the participation of the CoE;
- Taking part to the EU project SensAge⁴⁵, focusing on maintaining the independence and improving the quality of life of ageing people with sensory disabilities. Within the project EASPD researched the needs of the elderly persons with sensory disabilities and draw a set of recommendations⁴⁶ for improving their situation across Europe.

People with disabilities in need of high level of support

- Holding, in June 2010, a two days conference in Helsinki, Finland, entitled: “What about me? Including the most excluded: improving the quality of life of people with profound disability”, which was attended by around 200 people coming from 30 countries across Europe. Participants ranged from people with disabilities, families, government officials, policy makers, professionals and researchers from the social sector, human rights and the medical sectors. Its outcome was the production of a final report and the launching of the Helsinki Manifesto;
- Constantly advocating for a higher attention and for a better support to respond to the needs of people with intellectual, mental and psychological disability, in order to fully include them in the society.

Women and girls with disabilities

- Giving our contribution to the work in this field and specifically to the drafting of the related Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection and promotion of the rights of women and girls with disabilities⁴⁷.

Children and young people with disabilities

- giving our contribution to the work in this field and specifically to the drafting of the related Recommendation CM/Rec(2013)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member

⁴⁴ www.dielebenshilfe.at/fileadmin/inhalte/pdfs/GRAZDECLARATION_final.pdf

⁴⁵ www.sensage.eu

⁴⁶ http://www.easpd.eu/sites/default/files/sites/default/files/SensAge/d5-raising_awareness_on_the_needs_of_ageing_people_with_sensory_impairments.pdf

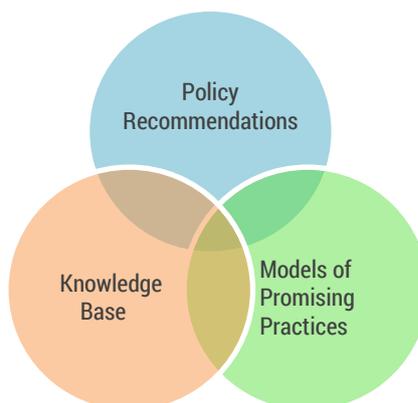
⁴⁷ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1871285&Site=CM>

states on ensuring full inclusion of children and young persons with disabilities into society⁴⁸.

Evaluation and Monitoring of the Plan

With the role of observer, EASPD took part to the CoE Committee of Experts on the monitoring of the implementation of the CoE Action Plan (CAHPAH-DCEC), through the Secretary General. Moreover, it contributed to the works of the following CoE Committee of Experts on the rights of people with disabilities (CS-RPD and DECS-RPD).

4. The way forward: the new Disability Action Plan 2016-2020



In EASPD's view, the new Disability Action Plan should continue to develop and implement viable strategies to include people with disabilities in society and ultimately to mainstream disability throughout all the policy areas, both at the European and at the national level. Moreover, the new Plan should specifically strengthen the cooperation with mainstream sectors and provide guidance to member states, tackling issues that require a cross-cutting response.

The concept

The new Plan should bring tools and instruments to bridge the gap between where we are and where we want to go to fully respond to the needs of persons with disabilities. For each topic, it should give the state of play, and analyse strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, it should consider steps needed to improve the condition of persons with disabilities in that specific domain and desired outcomes of possible actions. The final objective of the Plan should be to fully realise the principles enshrined in the UNCRPD.

The new CoE Plan should promote cooperation with mainstream actors.

For each domain, three types of actions should be envisaged by the new Plan. These are: knowledge base, best practices collection and policy recommendation.

Firstly, it should be oriented to collect knowledge and know-how, with the objective to identify current gaps. This could be done by developing a variety of knowledge platforms such as knowledge exchange events (conferences, seminars, working groups, etc.) or web based platforms. Knowledge platforms should aim at producing tangible results, which can take two forms. The first, that of information on the know-how present in the NGO world, as well as within CoE Members States. The second, that of trainings made available by the CoE to key

⁴⁸ <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2115367&Site=CM>

actors in member states, to national and regional authorities and to civil society players on specific issues.

Secondly, it should focus on gathering Models of Promising Practices coming from all across Europe, which could be published online by NGOs, as well as by all CoE Members States. The outcome of this exercise should be mutual learning and should include these Models of Promising Practices in the previous mentioned trainings.

Thirdly, the new Plan should aim at drafting policy recommendations in order to provide guidance to Members States in relation to the further development of legal frameworks and practices. These recommendations must be focused and oriented towards practical results.

The added value of the work that the CoE carries out daily is that of fostering the rights of persons with disabilities throughout Europe. With the launch of the Disability Action Plan 2006-2015, the CoE has focused its attention on the needs of the disability community. The approval and entering into force of the UNCRPD, has de facto recognised the CoE as one of the guardians of their rights in Europe. The Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 has led the way, becoming the instrument to continue focusing the attention on these needs and on the importance to implement the UNCRPD.

Further opportunities to realise the rights of persons with disabilities have been provided by the inclusion of the CoE Disability Committee within a wider framework dealing with social and integration issues. This new framework leads towards new avenues of reaching out to other groups of people with support needs (children and young people, migrants and ethnic minorities, elderly, etc.) while carrying out actions related to disability. Moreover, it represents the chance to strengthen the cooperation with partner organisations, persons with disabilities, their families and friends. Specifically, it is an important opportunity to work closely with external stakeholders and with the mainstream sector, in order to reach a more inclusive society, always maintaining a focus on the rights of persons with disabilities.

Finally, it is well known that numerous difficulties exist in collecting information on policies and actions undertaken by member states to implement what is recommended by the CoE. To measure outcomes/results, it would therefore be fundamental to include in the new action Plan some elements (success indicators, targets) to facilitate this assessment. At the same time, it would also be important to make them follow by an implementation strategy. This last point should specifically have the objective to evaluate the need and possibility of having training and/or to collect statistics and data on a specific topic.

Proposed domains of action

Based on the work done in the past, EASPD proposes to focus on a number of domains of action that could more effectively contribute to the implementation of the UNCRPD in the future.

Domains included within the articles of the UN CRPD:

- **Legislation, support systems and services promoting accessibility (Art 9).** This is a key requirement for societal participation. Still many legal frameworks do not promote, nor understand the importance of the concept of “design for all”. A reform of the legislation and increasing knowledge of this topic is needed to make progresses in this field.
- **Empowering ICT (Art 9).** Since our societies are increasingly focused on new technologies, making information and communication accessible for persons with disabilities would be crucial to create a truly inclusive society.
- **Disaster Preparedness and Response (Art 11).** For the first time at European level, substantial work has been done to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk. It is important to continue sharing the knowledge available and adapt national legislation, to be ready to effectively respond to emergencies, taking into account individual needs.
- **Legal capacity and supported decision making (Art 12).** According to the UN CRPD, all member states have to reform their legal systems and legislation related to guardianship. In this context, support is particularly needed in order to understand how to implement this transition at the national level and to develop supported decision-making solutions in practical terms.
- **Community based support and independent living (Art 19).** Community-based support is a key element to avoid that persons with disabilities are warehoused in institutions and to allow them to live independently and be included in their community’s life. Deinstitutionalisation and the provision of person-centred and good-quality services are becoming crucial in an increasingly ageing society. In this context, the disability world could therefore inspire political change in other domains of action.
- **Inclusive education (Art 24).** Mainstream education, not excluding persons with disabilities is crucial to promote the idea of an inclusive society from the very beginning. A reform of the education system is strongly needed in all CoE member states, while knowledge sharing continues to be fundamental to support it.
- **Employment (Art 26 – 27).** Employment is the most crucial element to avoid poverty and exclusion. Reducing barriers preventing the access to work of persons with disabilities and fostering their inclusion in the labour market is crucial to break the connection between disability, poverty and exclusion.
- **Cultural participation (Art 30).** Next to education and employment, cultural activities are keys to ensure the active participation of persons with disability in the society and the full enjoyment of their rights. It is for this reason that all member states should orient their cultural policies towards the promotion of access and participation of persons with disabilities.

Cooperation with mainstream and civil society actors should be envisaged in all domains tackled by the new Plan:

- Public services (e.g. public administration, public transport, social housing);
- Health sector (e.g. general practitioners, dentists, hospitals, etc.);
- Organisations for leisure and cultural activities, and youth organisations;
- Trade unions;
- Business community;
- Media.

Cross-cutting issues, targeting groups with individual needs, should be given higher attention:

- People with high support needs (people with intellectual, mental or psychological disabilities);
- Children and young people;
- Migrants and ethnic minorities;
- Elderly.

5. Conclusions

Thanks to the work carried out by EASPD in the frame of the CoE Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 throughout the years, two important conclusions can be drawn. The first is that the Plan has contributed to raise awareness on the importance to implement the UNCRPD and to fully realise the ideals enshrined in it. Meanwhile, it has also highlighted the complexity of this task, clearly indicating that stronger efforts have to be made. The second is that the work carried out in the frame of the CoE Disability Action Plan 2006-2015 has revealed that the situation of persons with disabilities is different from one region to another and that the implementation level of the UNCRPD is different from country to country, making it difficult to find a common denominator. Despite these considerations, EASPD believes that cooperation should be possible, and that it should take place in many different domains, such as societal participation, community-based and inclusive support systems and emergency situations. Through the Disability Action Plan 2006-2015, the CoE has already demonstrated this, paving the way towards the inclusion of persons with disability in the society. It is for this reasons that EASPD is committed to continue its work, together with the CoE, the member states and DPOs, and all other relevant stakeholders. Using the words of Mr Dimitris Nikolsky, Chair of the CoE Committee of Experts on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we want to stress that: “the Disability Action Plan of the CoE, the EU2020 Strategy and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities is enough to make the necessary changes towards an inclusive society”. Using these tools EASPD believes that we can achieve the ultimate goal of realising an inclusive society where there is a place for everybody regardless of one’s abilities, disabilities, age, gender, and race. In order to do that, we should stop thinking of working in 'silos' and start working together.

**An inclusive society, we can build
together...or not...**

This report was compiled by **Giulia Quarta** on behalf of EASPD.

For additional information, please contact:

Luk Zelderloo

Secretary General

T. +32 2 282 46 10

info@easpd.eu

www.easpd.eu