



EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM 1997-2007: TEN YEARS FIGHTING FOR DISABILITY RIGHTS

Let's Make Disability Discrimination History Fighting discrimination towards disabled people is an issue for ALL.

In 1997, European and national organisations of disabled persons and parents of disabled persons who were unable to represent themselves joined together to establish the European Disability Forum (EDF).

EDF is an independent and unique platform in Europe, with a proactive role towards the European Union institutions and decision-makers seeking to protect and defend the rights of disabled persons. Its ambition and day to day activities are to influence the European Union legislation, as each EU decision and initiative has a direct impact on the everyday lives of European citizens with disabilities at all levels.

A decade has passed since the beginning of our struggle. Today, we, persons with disabilities and the parents of persons with disabilities who cannot represent themselves can look back and be proud of our contribution to the advancement of disability rights in Europe. Today, we must also look ahead and continue to exert influence to strengthen non-discrimination legislative measures in Europe, to ensure that the full integration of disabled persons in society becomes a reality. We must do this because disability is a Human Rights issue and because disability is an issue that concerns us all.

DISABILITY BEHIND THE SCENES

- Disabled people are not a small minority: we are more than 50 million EU citizens with a disability, representing more than **10% of the EU population**.
- **One family in four** has a member with a disability.
- We are **more than twice as unlikely** to reach third level education as non disabled persons.
- Many disabled children do not have equal opportunities to **access education**.

- Our source of **income** is less likely to be earnings and more likely to be a statutory benefit. Moreover, our income **is generally significantly lower** than the income of non-disabled persons.
- We face **unemployment, twice as high** than non-disabled persons.
- We live in an **inaccessible environment**, despite the fact that we represent, together with other persons with temporarily reduced mobility, 40% of the population.
- Amongst disabled persons, **one out of two persons has never participated in leisure, cultural or sport activities**, and has never had access to theatres, to cinemas, to concerts, to libraries...
- We are confronted with **isolation and prejudice**.
- There are more than 200.000 persons with disabilities **forced to live in closed institutions**, without the right to make choices in life and deprived of the most fundamental human rights.
- The **free movement of persons** in the European Union is just an ideal for us, because most of the time barriers prevent us from leaving the place we live in.

1997-2007: TEN YEARS PAVING THE WAY

The very first achievement of the European Disability Forum in 1997 opened the path to a new era for persons with disabilities in Europe: the adoption of non-discrimination Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty, the very first and unique reference to disability in the EU Treaty. A major success that established the legal basis to protect disabled people from discrimination and gave the European Union responsibility to work towards this end. Such an achievement would have never been possible without the European wide mobilization of disabled persons and their representative organisations.

After ten years of intensive work at EU and national level, the European Disability Forum has been behind countless European initiatives and legislative decisions that have changed and will continue to change the lives of disabled people in all Europe:

- An increasing number of European cities offer accessible public transport to persons with reduced mobility, contributing to their autonomy and mobility;
- Employers must apply recruitment procedures on the basis of equal opportunities and offer to adapt the workplace to meet the needs of the disabled person;
- A disabled person can start a legal complaint procedure after he/she found himself/herself discriminated by his/her employer while applying to a job or for a training;

- An increasing number of public websites are accessible to persons with disabilities;
- An increasing number of lifts are designed to meet accessibility standards;
- An increasing number of information and communication technology products and services such as mobile phones, computer hardware and software,... are now accessible to blind and partially sighted persons;
- Euro coins and banknotes are the most accessible currency ever in Europe for visually impaired persons;
- An increasing number of medicines are sold with informative labelling in Braille;
- Persons with disabilities are entitled to benefit from a full quality assistance service when travelling by air from airport of departure to airport of arrival;
- Initiated by EDF, the European Year of Persons with Disabilities in 2003, created the opportunity to raise awareness about disability from the European to local level and many governmental and legislative initiatives have been put in place in various EU countries;
- When awarding public contracts for products or services, public authorities must take into consideration accessibility requirements for persons with disabilities;
- 35 % of EU funding for regional and local areas must respect the principles of non-discrimination and full accessibility for disabled persons.
- The International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, strongly promoted by the European Disability Forum, and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2006, is the first legally binding international instrument applicable on the European Union and its member states.

2007 AND BEYOND: WE MUST MOBILIZE TO PROTECT OUR RIGHTS!

> Access to legal protection, legal capacity and equal recognition before the law

We, persons with disabilities, should be entitled just as any other European citizen, to recognition before the law. In line with the existing international Human Rights instruments, we must be able to enjoy legal capacity and when needed, benefit from support to enjoy this legal capacity in all aspects of life, including the right to property, to manage our own finances, to take decisions and make choices affecting our lives and participation in society.

> Education for All

We, as disabled children and adults, must benefit from **equal access** to education; be able to receive education, be special or ordinary, in **inclusive settings** and must be given the **choice** to decide, in dialogue with our families, on our educational needs and wishes.

> **Equal treatment in employment**

We, like other citizens, must benefit from **equal treatment** when applying for employment and in job retention. Furthermore, we must benefit from **equal salary and rights** for equal professional status and competences. Finally, employers must be ready to adapt the workplace to accommodate to the needs of the disabled person.

> **Social protection, including social security**

We, disabled citizens, have a right to equal opportunities to move to another EU country, to study, to work, to join a family member, etc. This requires the removal of obstacles in social protection systems.

> **To live independently in the community and make our own choices in life**

We, like other citizens, must be given the possibility to live in the place of our **choice**, to make our **own decisions**, to use services ensuring our **independence** and **equal participation** (e.g. right for personal assistance). Families must be recognized as playing a vital role in the life choices, education and social inclusion of disabled children and persons with complex dependency needs who are unable to represent themselves. Resources and support, tailored to the needs of disabled persons and their families, must be provided.

> **Access to health and long term care**

We, like other citizens, and in particular as persons whose physical and/or mental integrity is compromised, must have the right to access **quality, effective and affordable health and care services** tailored to the needs and consent of each individual, including early diagnosis, prompt intervention, rehabilitation and provision of the necessary resources for our maximum development.

> **Access to goods and services**

We, like other consumers, must be able to benefit and choose from the same full range of goods and services. Legislative measures must be taken to ensure that all goods and services are to be designed and delivered so that they are fully accessible on the basis of the **“design for all” principle**.

> **Access to culture, leisure and sports**

We, like other citizens, must be able to **fully participate** in all cultural, leisure and sports activities, which must be fully accessible, and we must be able to express ourselves culturally and artistically.

> **Access to public transport**

We, like all other citizens, must be enabled to **travel around freely and independently**, by bus, train, plane or boat, to our chosen destination.

> **Access to public infrastructures**

We, like other citizens, must be able to access fully, freely and independently, also when accompanied by a guide or service dog, any **public buildings and public space**, such as parks, playgrounds, restaurants, bars, theaters, shopping malls, museums, or any part of the **built environment**, such as pavements, streets, pedestrian crossings in safety. Legislative measures must be taken to make the built environment fully accessible on the basis of the “**design for all**” **principle**.

> Accessible communication and information

We, like other citizens, must have full access to **all information** in the private and public sector in accessible formats (electronic format, writing, Braille, large print, sign language, audio, subtitling, easy to understand text). We must have access to the full range of **electronic communication tools** offered on the market, to enable us to fully participate in the socio-economic life of society.

> Banning all discriminatory and stereotyping perceptions of persons with disabilities

We, disabled women and men, call for **respect of our dignity** in political and public life, in advertising and in the media.

> Equal access for voting and participation in electoral campaigns

We, like other citizens, must enjoy freely and independently our voting rights (including the right to vote in secret and the provision of accessible venues, voting materials and electoral documents) and our right to be elected to public office.

THE DISABILITY MOVEMENT IS CALLING FOR:

1. **Comprehensive non-discrimination legislation to protect persons with disabilities**, to remove existing barriers, to avoid the establishment of new barriers, to achieve equal opportunities and equal participation in all aspects of life.
2. A **swift signature and ratification** process by the European Communities and the EU Member States of the **International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.
3. Concrete measures, targets and objectives ensuring **equal treatment in education** and participation in social life for disabled children through regional, national and European policies.
4. Concrete measures, targets and objectives ensuring **equal treatment in employment** through regional, national and European policies.

5. National reforms aiming at **deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities and provision of alternatives for independent and community living**, through quality and affordable services supported by adequate funding, including at EU level;
6. Basic standards of **accessibility and non-discrimination requirements in all funding instruments**, including at EU level, to avoid creating new barriers;
7. **Facts and figures about disability**, that will reflect the real situation and living conditions of disabled people in Europe to provide a sound basis for the development of legislative measures and initiatives to effectively protect our rights.
8. **Common standards and legislation to ensure full access to products and services** across the European Union;

We, people with disabilities in Europe, call on the European Union, the national, regional and local authorities, in close cooperation with all the civil society actors to banish discrimination to the annals of European History!

TAKE A STEP, MAKE A CHANGE

**One minute of your time can change
the lives of more than 50 million persons**

SIGN at www.1million4disability.eu