



European Day of People with
Disabilities 2008



European Day of People with Disabilities 2008

Acting locally for a society for all

Brussels, 1 and 2 December 2008



The conference has been organised by the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Directorate G, Mainstreaming and International matters, Department G3, Inclusion of People with disabilities.

The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the viewpoint or the attitude of the European Commission.

This paper has been prepared by:

Helen Kerrison, Director, Insight in Business

January 2009



© European Communities, 2009

This publication, as well as further information, can be found on the Internet. They can be accessed via the Gateway to the European Union (<http://europa.eu>)

Table of Contents

1. Executive Summary.....	5
1.1 Background	5
1.2 The 2008 European Day of People with Disabilities conference	6
2. Opening Addresses	8
2.1 Mr Vladimír Špidla.....	8
2.2 Mr Yannis Vardakastanis.....	9
2.3 Ms Valérie Létard	10
3. Setting the scene: the issues at stake	12
3.1 Ms Ana Pelaez Narvaez	12
3.2 Mr Rudolf Niessler	12
4. Plenary session 1: Disability rights through mainstreaming at regional and local level: putting the UN Convention into practice.....	14
4.1 Presentations overview:.....	14
4.2 Participant observations and discussion.....	16
4.3 Conclusions and recommendations.....	17
4.3.1 <i>Conclusions</i>	17
4.3.2 <i>Recommendations from participants</i>	18
5. Plenary session 2: Involving persons with disabilities in all decisions affecting them.....	19
5.1 Presentations overview:.....	19
5.2 Participant observations and discussion.....	21
5.3 Conclusions and recommendations.....	23
5.3.1 <i>Conclusions</i>	23
5.3.2 <i>Recommendations from the participants</i>	23
6. First day conference closing	24
6.1 Mr Peter Moore.....	24
7. Plenary session 3: From EU to local community and from local community to EU	26
7.1 Presentations overview:.....	26
7.2 Key findings and implications of the debate.....	30
7.3 Conclusions and recommendations.....	31
7.3.1 <i>Conclusions</i>	31

7.3.2	<i>Recommendations from participants</i>	32
8.	Summary of major conclusions and implications emerging from the conference	33
8.1	Mr John Patrick Clarke	33
8.2	Mr Nikolaus van der Pas (represented by Johan ten Geuzendam) .	34
9.	Conference key recommendations made by participants	36
9.1	Mainstreaming:	36
9.2	Inclusive policies:.....	36
9.3	Consultation:.....	36
9.4	Funding:.....	37
10.	Looking forward	38
10.1	Key future disability issues at EU level	38
10.1.1	<i>What should the priorities be for the future European disability strategy until the year 2020?</i>	38
10.1.2	<i>What instruments should we be using in our strategy?</i>	38
10.1.3	<i>What are your suggestions for the theme of next year's conference?</i>	39
11.	Annexes - Details of demonstration area exhibitors	40
11.1	Association of Disabled Professionals.....	40
11.2	Sequoia Voting Systems.....	40
11.3	IDEASIS Ltd	40
11.4	DOLPHIN.....	40
11.5	Erik Lamens.....	40

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Background

Every year in the first week of December, the European Commission together with the European Disability Forum (EDF)¹, marks the International Day of Disabled People by organising a policy conference. The European Day of People with Disabilities conferences form part of the EU's wider efforts to promote the mainstreaming of disability issues, as set out in the EU Disability Action Plan 2003-2010².

The 2008 European Day of People with Disabilities conference focuses on how the substantial progress in the European policy process supporting people with disabilities works out at local level. The process of concluding the UN Convention³ on the Rights of Disabled People is under way. As such, it is acknowledged that disability is a broad human rights issue and a matter of law. Mainstreaming of disability issues in all policy areas is the main pillar of the Convention and inclusion at local level has to happen if it is to be successful.

While the Member States are largely responsible for disability policies, the European Union's policies act to complement and support national developments. A good example of this is the use of the European Structural Funds, which play a key role in supporting national, regional and local developments. Article 16 of the Structural Funds Regulation⁴ makes accessibility for people with disabilities one of the criteria to be observed in defining operations co-financed by the Funds and to be taken into account during the various stage of implementation.

In 2008, the Commission made a proposal for a new legislative initiative to complete the EU anti-discrimination legislative framework. This initiative aims to ensure non-discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation and religion or belief beyond the workplace. It will ensure equal treatment in the areas of social protection, including social security and health care, education and access to and supply of goods and services, including housing.

¹ EDF is the European umbrella organisation representing the interests of disabled citizens at EU level. EDF membership includes national umbrella organisations of people with disabilities from all EU/EEA countries, candidate countries and other European countries, as well as NGOs representing the different types of disabilities. More information is available at: www.edf-feph.org.

² <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=430&langId=en>.

³ <http://www.un.org/disabilities>.

⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:210:0025:0078:EN:PDF>.

1.2 The 2008 European Day of People with Disabilities conference

The conference is organised around three thematic sessions. The first session covers the mainstreaming of disability policies, the second, the participation of stakeholders, and the third, the active role of the local level.

During the first session entitled “**Disability rights through mainstreaming at regional and local level: putting the UN Convention into practice**”, practical examples are shared to illustrate the “how”, “what”, “where” and “by whom” of mainstreaming.

The conference learns of successful accessibility projects that have created an enabling urban environment that improves the quality of life for everyone, not just people with disabilities; that have made public spaces accessible while keeping the individual at the heart of the process; and that have involved all stakeholders in the management process.

Tools for mainstreaming disability in social and economic policy are also shared showing how engagement with people with disabilities, accessibility and financial and human resourcing and enforcement are necessary for effective mainstreaming.

The effectiveness of cooperation between local disability organisations and local authorities is illustrated by projects that promote the empowerment and training of people with disabilities in order to achieve dialogue and understanding between local governments and disability organisations.

The second session entitled “**Involving persons with disabilities in all decisions affecting them**”, deals with practice of a cooperative decision-making process which involves local authorities and organisations of people with disabilities.

The local level is an important platform for the implementation of the UN Convention. The conference learns of training projects that enable local disability organisations to understand the UN Convention and its implementation and share their understanding with local authorities.

Examples are also shared of how people with disabilities contribute to the effective implementation of the principles of non-discrimination and accessibility for people with disabilities within the monitoring committees of the European Structural Funds.

That regional and local authorities can address inclusion issues by bringing together working groups on key non-discrimination and accessibility issues, illustrates the importance of the regional level in creating a society for all.

The third session entitled “**From EU to local community and from local community to EU**”, deals with what direct support the European Commission can provide to local actors in order to achieve mainstreaming of disability

issues in various policy areas and gives good practice examples of utilising public procurement provisions on accessibility.

Accessible tourism depends on accessible communities which means accessible public transport and public places. The conference learns of actions in the area of accessible tourism and the main challenges that face Europe today.

The conference also learns of successful urban policy projects addressing the accessibility of street furniture using the Design for All concept and “Build for All” guidelines and how European regulations have had a direct beneficial impact on access to air transport and airport accessibility for people with disabilities.

Finally, 2010 is approaching and with it the end of the European Disability Action Plan 2003-2010. So, now is the time to talk about the future and start preparing the future strategy and the consultation process on strategies from 2011 onwards

2. Opening Addresses

2.1 Mr Vladimír Špidla

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities

Presentation key points:

- *Ratification of United Nation (UN) Convention on the Rights of Disabled People is underway with four member states having ratified the Convention so far and a proposal for conclusion by the European Communities being discussed by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament.*
- *In July 2008, the Commission adopted a new legislative initiative in the form of a draft directive, the provisions of which will ensure non-discrimination on the grounds of disability in areas other than employment.*
- *Call for reflection and sharing of ideas regarding the future priorities of the Commission's Action Plan for 2011 and onwards.*

Mr Špidla opens the conference by emphasising the European Commission's continuing commitment to improving the situation of people with disabilities throughout the European Union and its role as a driving force to bring new momentum into the process.

The European Structural funds, and in particular the European Social Fund, play a central role in providing direct, financial support at the local level where it can most effectively positively benefit the lives of people with disabilities. It has been established that there should be no discrimination in terms of the actions funded by the Structural Funds. All actions must be accessible to all.

Mr Špidla confirms that the process of ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People is underway. After ratification of the 20th signatory, the Convention entered into force on 3 May 2008. It has been ratified by four Member States to date, and a proposal for conclusion by the European Communities is being discussed by the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament.

Turning to the new legislative initiative adopted by the Commission in July 2008, Mr Špidla outlines several of the specific provisions within the draft directive that will ensure non-discrimination on the grounds of disability in areas other than employment. In addressing such areas as access to goods and services, education, health services and social protection, the directive will also support the general implementation of the UN Convention.

However, legislation is not enough in itself. Mr Špidla emphasises the need for a change in mindset, the need for society as a whole to become aware of, understand and embrace disability issues and the responsibilities they engender.

Finally, Mr Špidla calls for the conference to reflect on the new strategy for people with disabilities for the next decade; to share ideas about future priorities for the Commission's Action Plan for 2011 onwards in order to ensure we build the Europe we want to live in – an inclusive Europe.

2.2 Mr Yannis Vardakastanis

President of the European Disability Forum (EDF)

Presentation key points:

- *Social inclusion through a society for all where discrimination is no longer acceptable remains the fundamental objective for all involved in the disability movement.*
- *The requirement for consultation with disability organisations in the development and implementation of legislation and policies related to the UN Convention is a key achievement of the disability movement. However, empowerment of disability organisations and awareness-raising campaigns on the content and implications of the UN Convention is required at all levels in order to ensure that this important provision will be effectively implemented in practice.*
- *Interpretation and implementation of the UN Convention must be correct and harmonised across the European Union.*

Mr Vardakastanis opens the conference on behalf of the European Disability Forum (EDF) by underlining how important action at local level is to all people with disabilities. Equality for people with disabilities is dependant, among other things, on local level experiences being adapted to the needs of and responding to the basic human and civil rights of people with disabilities.

Although varying legal frameworks and decision-making systems across the European Union make defining precise methods for social inclusion through local action difficult, the objective for all of us – to progress towards a society for all where discrimination is no longer acceptable – remains the same.

The equality, non-discrimination and respect of fundamental civil and human rights of people with disabilities will not be achieved until all parts of the UN Convention are implemented unconditionally and in full.

Mr Vardakastanis singles out the fundamental relevance of Article 4, paragraph 3 of the UN Convention which requires consultation with disability organisations in the development and implementation of legislation and policies related to the Convention. This is a key achievement of the disability movement. At the same time, disability organisations at all levels need to face the responsibilities of this role; the challenges of raising awareness of the content and implications of the UN Convention and building capacity at regional and local levels, with support from the EU, Member States and local public authorities.

Mr Vardakastanis also points out the need to ensure that the interpretation of the UN Convention is correct and harmonised across the European Union, together with the need for a bottom-up approach – grassroots actions and demands making for government policies and not vice versa.

Finally, Mr Vardakastanis underlines the absolute necessity to ensure that people with disabilities do not face a worsening of their economic situation during these times of serious economic crisis.

2.3 Ms Valérie Létard

State Secretary for Solidarity, French Ministry of Labour, Social Relations, Family and Solidarity

Presentation key points:

- *Combating discrimination and providing legal security through legislation is a key objective of the French presidency.*
- *Specific projects, tools and instruments aid in the Implementation of the UN Convention requirements throughout Europe.*
- *Actions must be ambitious and coordinated across the European Union.*

Ms Létard opens by emphasising how commitment by all players at all levels is necessary for the successful implementation of non-discrimination legislation. Combating discrimination is one of the French presidency's priorities and providing more legal security through tighter, more wide-ranging legislation is a key objective.

Ratification of the UN Convention will be a big step forward; a step towards making Europe the most accessible continent in the world. However, legislation is one thing, practical implementation is another.

Ms Létard singles out a number of tools and instruments that are being used in projects across Europe to put the UN Convention into practice and refers to the EU Equality summit held in Paris in September 2008, where these tools and instruments and good practices in the area of equality were shared.

She also refers to the success of the "Handinnov" competition which in November 2008 brought together 22 projects from 20 European countries, all innovative initiatives addressing the issues of social integration and integration in education and employment for young disabled people.

The importance of education for young disabled people was also addressed and good practices shared in a conference on the subject in October 2008.

Ms Létard explains how the French government is encouraging the signature of a series of Charters to address specific areas of concern for people with disabilities. Such charters include one to make mobile telephones more

accessible, one covering the provision of sub-titling and audio-titling in schools and universities and one to improve the accessibility for young people of educational establishments and workplaces. Ms Létard points out that the accessibility of educational establishments is essential for the inclusion of young disabled people in the education system.

Ms Létard continues by explaining how Disability Labels are being used in a number of areas, notably accessible tourism and making goods and services accessible to all travellers. She adds that accessibility of public transport and the accessibility of public places are key priorities.

Finally, Ms Létard believes actions across Europe must be coordinated and as ambitious as possible, even in the current economic context. Countries need to work together for long term success and to be the source of inspiration for society as a whole.

3. Setting the scene: the issues at stake

3.1 Ms Ana Pelaez Narvaez

Member of the Committee on the rights of persons with disabilities of the UN CRPD, ONCE International Relations Director, CERMI International representative and EDF Executive member

Presentation key points:

- *Effective communication and feedback regarding the UN Convention between the European Union and disability organisations at local level is essential.*
- *Specific UN Convention articles relate to regional implementation, national follow-up, international implementation and monitoring.*
- *The objective in Spain is to adapt the Spanish legal system to the UN Convention.*

Ms Pelaez opens her address by stressing that all players need to be involved in making the UN Convention a reality for people with disabilities. Feedback on the UN Convention between the European Union and disability organisations at the local level is essential.

Ms Pelaez highlights the UN Convention Article 4 General Obligations which ensures full exercising of human rights and non-discrimination on the grounds of disability and the European Union's role to ensure the necessary legislative and administrative measures are taken.

Article 44, refers Regional Integration Organisations (RIOs) and their role in implementing matters covered by the UN Convention. It is relevant for the European Union as the European Commission is effectively a RIO. Ms Pelaez appeals to as many countries as possible within the European Union to ratify the UN Convention as quickly as possible.

Articles 33 and 34 regarding national follow-up and international implementation and monitoring are also relevant.

Ms Pelaez outlines how an Action Plan to analyse, follow-up and monitor the UN Convention implementation process in Spain has been put in place by disability organisations working within the National Disabilities Council in Spain; the objective to adapt the Spanish legal system to the UN Convention.

3.2 Mr Rudolf Niessler

European Commission, DG Regional Policy, Director for Policy Coordination

Presentation key points:

- *As mainstreaming disability is a part of economic development, regional development must also include all potentially active people.*
- *It is Member States responsibility to ensure the principles of non-discrimination and accessibility regarding people with disabilities is respected.*
- *The European Commission is developing a tool kit to support managing authorities of Structural Funds to ensure non-discrimination and accessibility of Funds for people with disabilities.*

Mr Niessler outlines the aims of Regional Policy as to reduce economic and social disparities between regions and to promote regional competitiveness in a sustainable way that will address the needs of all citizens.

The mainstreaming of disability issues is not only a social policy issue, rather an integral part of economic development so regional development must include all potentially active people in the labour market.

Mr Niessler makes reference to the Cohesion Policy and the relevant Council Regulation (specifically Article 16) which includes the principle of non-discrimination and accessibility regarding people with disabilities and provides scope for specific disability-related actions. Other priorities include improving access to finance, employment and social protection systems, education and skills.

Mr Niessler points out that it is the Member States' responsibility to ensure these principles are respected. He adds that disability organisation representatives could be members of the Monitoring committees.

Mr Niessler also informs the conference of a tool kit currently being developed by the European Commission to support managing authorities of the Structural Funds and intermediate organisations to ensure non-discrimination and accessibility of the Funds for people with disabilities.

Mr Niessler finishes by saying that regional policy has practical relevancy in meeting the needs of people with disabilities and society as a whole; it stimulates creativity and innovation as a driver for competitiveness for more and better jobs.

4. Plenary session 1: Disability rights through mainstreaming at regional and local level: putting the UN Convention into practice

4.1 Presentations overview:

Accessibility in the city – a users' perspective

Mr Alfonso Huertas Marchal, Regional Federation of People with Disabilities (FEJIDIF), Jaen

Presentation key points:

- *Successful accessibility of public spaces through involvement of all stakeholders, shared management, looking at the “big picture” and mainstreaming accessibility while keeping the individual at the heart of the process.*
- *Enabling environment that improves the quality of life for everyone, not just people with disabilities.*
- *Next challenge – addressing accessibility in businesses and private areas of the city.*

Mr Marchal opens his presentation by describing how committed people and new policies have brought about change in Jaen, a city in Spain.

Through the involvement of disability organisations, people with disabilities themselves, architects, engineers, government agencies, private companies and society as a whole in the development and implementation of accessibility plans for public spaces, Jaen has become a city where people with disabilities themselves manage accessibility. The basic premise is “nothing about us, without us”.

Over 400,000 people benefit from the implementation of accessibility plans for public spaces throughout the city. Training to raise awareness about accessibility issues, websites giving specialised information, media campaigns to access different sectors of the population, cooperation and consultation between all those involved has resulted in an enabling environment and improved quality of life for everyone.

Key success factors include: involving all players in shared management, looking at the “big picture”, mainstreaming accessibility throughout society and keeping the individual at the heart of the process.

Mr Marchal concludes with the next challenge for the Jaen project – to get everybody involved in addressing accessibility in businesses and private areas of the city.

Tools for mainstreaming disability in social and economic policy: the example of EDAMAT

Mr Raymond Lang, Research Fellow, Leonard Cheshire Disability and Inclusive Development Centre

Presentation key points:

- *Effective mainstreaming to remove barriers and achieve social inclusion covers the areas of engagement with people with disabilities, access for people with disabilities, financial and human resourcing and enforcement.*
- *EDAMAT has three main elements: guide policy planning, measure mainstreaming and provide lobbying tools / guidelines.*
- *Mainstreaming is an ongoing political process and must be based on the UN Convention tenants.*

Mr Lang opens his presentation by defining mainstreaming as the political process to bring down barriers and achieve social inclusion. Effective mainstreaming, based on the UN Convention, covers the areas of engagement (including people with disabilities at all levels in the development process), access (including Braille, other formats and voting access), resourcing (including financial and human resources) and enforcement (including effective tools to make it happen).

Mr Lang outlines EDAMAT, the European Disability Action for Mainstreaming Assessment Tool, which promotes and monitors mainstreaming in public policy through three main elements. The first is to guide policy planning by providing a framework for planning laws, the second is to measure mainstreaming by providing checklists that are comparable across countries and the third is to carry out government lobbying by providing lobbying tools and guidelines.

Mr Lang concludes by pointing out that mainstreaming is an ongoing political process. It must be based on the UN Convention tenants, have sufficient human and financial resources available and continuous dialogue between governments and civil society at all levels.

Cooperation between local disability organisations and local authorities

Mr Martijn da Costa, *Secretary-general*, Taskforce Disability and Local Society

Presentation key points:

- *Taskforce on Disability and the Local Community, involving people with disabilities and representatives from all areas of society, to bring about social inclusion.*

- *Empowerment of people with disabilities through training on government structures and procedures and support on presenting and presenting disability issues.*
- *Dialogue is an instrument of persuasion - local governments can be influenced and attitudes changed through dialogue.*

Mr Da Costa presents the Taskforce on Disability and the Local Community, the Dutch approach to acting locally for a society for all.

In 2004, the Dutch government set up a taskforce with members from all areas of society including people with disabilities. The taskforce's objectives are to focus on equal rights, empowerment, and building a positive image of disability; on promoting dialogue at a local level and as an instrument of persuasion.

Decentralised government responsibilities allow dialogue with disability organisations at a local level. To promote the empowerment of people with disabilities and to support them in presenting disability issues to local government, training on government structures and procedures, on presenting persuasive arguments and on preparing materials is given.

Dialogue is an instrument of persuasion at local level and disability organisations need to learn how to best influence local governments in order to promote attitude changes.

In conclusion, dialogue and developing mutual understanding are key to and the implementation of inclusive municipal policy.

4.2 Participant observations and discussion

During the discussion, the accessibility challenges raised by different types of disability are highlighted; in particular, the difficulties of ensuring that removing an accessibility barrier for one group does not result in erecting a further barrier for another group.

It is recognised that people with disabilities have different needs and accessibility standards must take this into account; hence, the principles of Design for All.

Access to funding and the difficulties in achieving 100% funding is raised as are the merits of *Agenda 22*⁵, as a valuable methodological tool for disability planning policy.

The findings of two EURO barometer surveys of European Union citizens carried out during 2008 show two-thirds of respondents believe there is less discrimination now than five years ago, although 45% still believe

⁵ <http://www.cfhe.org/UserFiles/File/fond-ue-accessib/Agenda22-.pdf>.

discrimination is widespread. Less people believe that being disabled is a disadvantage in accessing employment, although 80% of people surveyed believe positive action is necessary regarding employment of people with disabilities. Other areas of discrimination are access to housing, insurance and education.

The surveys reflect European Union citizens' support of legal measures to protect against discrimination.

4.3 Conclusions and recommendations

4.3.1 Conclusions

- There is **widespread support of the European Union taking legal measures** to protect people with disabilities against discrimination.
- The **UN Convention and the new draft directive are seen to have the potential to become key instruments** in the fight against non-discrimination and the implementation of disability policies.
- The **European Union has a specific role** to play in Articles 33 and 34 of the UN Convention which relate to national follow-up, international implementation and monitoring and in ensuring the necessary legislative and administrative measures are taken regarding Article 4 General Obligations.
- Article 4, paragraph 3 of the **UN Convention makes consultation with disability organisations at all levels a fundamental requirement** and those same organisations must receive support from the European Union, Member States and public authorities in order to respond.
- **Government policies must be as a result of grass-roots actions** and demands, the so-called “bottom-up” approach to policy making. Dialogue, consultation and feedback between local level and the European Union is a prerequisite.
- **Lack of awareness is a key factor.** The lack of awareness by people with disabilities of what the UN Convention means for them, by government agencies and public authorities regarding the implications of the UN Convention and a lack of awareness by society in general.

People with disabilities may not always be aware of their rights under the UN Convention nor be aware of how best to communicate those rights and influence policy-makers' decision-making.

- **Certain challenges remain.** Ensuring accessibility really does mean design for all; that cross-disability issues are taken into account; that European Structural Funds are not used to finance projects non-compliant with the UN Convention, etc.

- **A further challenge** is the need to maintain the individual person with a disability at the heart of the policy-making process; to determine how to meet the needs of all people with disabilities.

4.3.2 Recommendations from participants

- That **mainstreaming must be considered an integral part of economic development** on all levels, European, regional, national and local.
(To be implemented by European Commission, national governments)
- That **mainstreaming activities should be promoted and monitored** by all stakeholders to ensure respect of the basic principles.
(To be implemented by local authorities, in cooperation with organisations of people with disabilities, and relevant stakeholders)
- That **mainstreaming remains an ongoing political process**; a continuous dialogue between governments and civil society at all levels, requiring commitment and political will.
(To be implemented by European Commission, national governments, local authorities, disability organisations, civil society)
- That at a local level this dialogue to develop mutual understanding should be the **key to implementing inclusive municipal policy**.
(To be implemented by local authorities, in cooperation with people with disabilities and their organisations, and other relevant stakeholders)
- That **sharing of best practices at conferences and events** should be used as an effective way of spreading the word and replicating positive initiatives across the European Union.
(To be implemented by European Commission, national governments, local authorities, people with disabilities and their organisations, civil society, industry, etc)

5. Plenary session 2: Involving persons with disabilities in all decisions affecting them

5.1 Presentations overview:

“Pilots of the Convention” – training project for local representatives and authorities on the UN Convention

Ms Dorthe Stief Christensen and **Mr Freddy Nielsen**, Danish organisation of People with disabilities

Presentation key points:

- *“Pilots of the Convention” training project to empower local disability organisations and ensure implementation of the UN Convention.*
- *The local level is an important platform for implementation of the UN Convention.*
- *Knowledge gained from training on understanding and implementing the UN Convention is shared at local level with disability representatives and local authorities.*

Ms Stief Christensen and Mr Nielsen present the “Pilots of the Convention” training project. The objectives of the project are to empower local disability organisations to exert influence at a local level, primarily on local authorities, in order to ensure implementation of the UN Convention.

The entry into force of the UN Convention in 2008 also entails immediate obligations for municipalities in the countries that have ratified (soon all member states). For disability organisations, the UN Convention is a powerful tool for political negotiation and to strengthen human rights arguments. The local level is an important platform for UN Convention implementation. Tools are needed to aid the implementation process, namely to make local authorities aware of the demands of the UN Convention, to make local disability organisation representatives aware of their rights under the UN Convention and to raise awareness of the “Nothing about us – without us” premise.

The project itself allows for disability organisation representatives to be trained in understanding and implementing the UN Convention. These “Pilots” share this knowledge with local branch disability representatives and local authorities.

In conclusion, this project results in increased awareness of the content and implications of the UN Convention for both disability organisations and local authorities, improved self-image for people with disabilities and more and better new actions and initiatives around disability issues.

The contribution of people with disabilities to the work of the monitoring committees of the European Structural Funds – the Greek model

Ms Marily Christofi, NCDP, engineer, accessibility expert

Presentation key points:

- *The European Structural Funds represent the strongest weapon in the European Disability movement's fight for an inclusive society.*
- *Greek disability organisation (NCDP) actions are focused on horizontal application of the principles of non-discrimination and accessibility for people with disabilities. It also focuses on the inclusion into the Operational Programmes of the structural funds of actions targeted towards people with disabilities and their families and on the "widening" of the criteria for the potential beneficiaries' management ability certification, for national disability organisations to be able to be included among them.*
- *Disability organisations have a key role in ensuring new legislation implementation.*

Ms Christofi opens her presentation by stating that the European Structural Funds represent the most important financial instrument at European Union level for socio-economic development from 2007-2013. Due to Article 16 of the Council Regulation 1083/2006 which addresses gender equality, non-discrimination and accessibility, the Structural Funds can be the strongest weapon in the European disability movement's fight for an inclusive society.

Ms Christofi goes on to outline the Greek disability organisation's (NCDP) actions for the programming period 2007-2013. These are focused on the horizontal application of the principles of non-discrimination and accessibility for people with disabilities in all Operational Programmes, as well as on the ensuring of the access of disability organisations to the Funds. Actions include screening and critiquing of all operational programmes, specialising accessibility in each domain, disability organisations providing managing authorities with guidelines on non-discrimination and accessibility, providing training programmes for disability policy design and the involvement of disability organisations in the monitoring process.

Raising awareness and understanding of accessibility issues at local authority level is essential but more than that, local authorities must engage with disability organisations in constructive and open dialogue for the successful implementation of Operational Programmes supported by Structural Funds.

To conclude, Ms Christofi highlights the key role of disability organisations in ensuring new legislation implementation.

Acting for a society for all at a regional level

Ms Jean Paul Boré, Vice president of the Regional Council Languedoc Roussillon, Member of the Committee of Regions of Europe

Presentation key points:

- *Society must create the conditions for people with disabilities to live an inclusive life.*
- *In Languedoc-Roussillon inclusion is being addressed through a regional body bringing together working groups to address key issues.*
- *Non-discrimination for people with disabilities is a human rights issue; “Access to all, by all” must become the norm.*

Mr Boré opens his presentation with a word about demographics, noting the expected increase in people with disabilities as a percentage of the population over time. It is up to society to create the conditions for people with disabilities to live an inclusive life.

In Languedoc-Roussillon, inclusion is being addressed through the formation of a regional body which brings together the various actors – public and private sectors, people with disabilities, civil society – into six working groups. These working groups cover accessibility of public transport and buildings, access to sports and leisure, tourism and culture, employment and professional training, education and housing. Agenda 22 is the “compass” used for working across the different sectors and services.

In conclusion, non-discrimination for people with disabilities is a human rights issue, “access to all, by all” must be seen as the norm, we must raise awareness of disability in order to change attitudes and finally achieve a society for everyone.

5.2 Participant observations and discussion

The discussion raises a number of issues regarding accessibility.

The first concerns **inclusion of deaf people**. It is agreed that accessibility of information for deaf people through sign language is an area of concern and that action needs to be taken to inform and empower deaf people. The need for more sign language interpreters is recognised and the need to teach sign language from an early age. Training and education are essential. Training of public-facing employees in basic sign language could be an effective option in improving the accessibility of deaf people in public places.

Accessibility of information for people with **intellectual disabilities** is also an area of concern. Part of the solution could be to make available easily understandable versions of information. As with many accessibility issues,

this type of action is helpful to the population as a whole, not just for people with intellectual disabilities.

The issue of **training**, in its many different forms, is raised during the discussion. A key area is the training of local public administration staff in disability issues so that they better understand the issues and how these issues relate to public funding at all levels. Disability organisations working together with local authorities are involved in putting together training seminars for public authority staff in a number of member states. This type of training is recognised as a key issue in the UN Convention and is also recognised in the *European Commission's Disability Action Plan 2008-2009*.

The issue of training starting with needs is raised and how to ensure the right people receive the right training. It is agreed that education is key; putting in place the training from an early age, training people to accompany people with disabilities in order to prevent exclusion at a later age.

Training in all areas of disability, but particularly intellectual disability, is also essential within companies' human resources departments to ensure equal employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Training in relation to universal design or Design for All is also important for the **cross-disability perspective**; to ensure that the needs of one group of disabilities are not in conflict with the needs of another group.

The importance of creating cross-disability groups that present the views and needs of all types of disabilities and work in association with local authorities and policy makers is raised. It is recognised that a cross-disability perspective at local level is essential.

The issue of employment is discussed and the question of whether employment opportunities exist for people with disabilities as consultants to local or national authorities. It is recognised that a situation of increasing unemployment generally will undoubtedly impact negatively on the employment opportunities of people with disabilities. The difficulties of certain groups of disability are acknowledged, blind people and people with intellectual disabilities among them. The role of local authorities in promoting the employment of people with disabilities is raised.

Finally, mainstreaming and the inclusion of the community living principle in the **social structural funds** are raised. The current regulations go up to the year 2013, meaning that no modifications concerning introducing or expanding principles of mainstreaming could be made to these regulations; it would rather be a matter for future regulations after 2013.

However, Article 16 of the current regulations does provide the opportunity to address some living in the community issues through the social funds, such as certain aspects of accessibility, non-discrimination and community-based services. Some aspects of training could also be covered. This would need to be addressed on a case by case basis to see whether existing programmes

that have been negotiated and agreed among the member states can accommodate these issues.

5.3 Conclusions and recommendations

5.3.1 Conclusions

- **Cooperation, consultation and open dialogue between all stakeholders** at all levels is essential. People with disabilities must be a fundamental part of all decision-making processes, must be involved from the outset and, very importantly, must hold adequate resources (human and financial) to make this happen.
- Fostering an **understanding of each others point of view**, talking each others language, being clear about definitions and processes and remaining open and committed are essential for all stakeholders.
- **Key success factors** include training, sharing knowledge and information, raising awareness, monitoring and screening, user feedback, capacity building and the effective use of European Structural funds.
- **Training** of local public administration staff in disability issues and how these issues relate to public funding is essential, as is the involvement of disability organisations in putting together training.
- **Sharing knowledge and information** is crucial, particularly as it relates to the cross-disability perspective and in ensuring people with intellectual disabilities receive information adapted to their needs.

5.3.2 Recommendations from the participants

- That for **implementation of a cooperative decision-making process** all stakeholders – public and private sectors, people with disabilities, civil society – should be included in the consultative process at the outset. (To be implemented by local authorities, private sector, disability organisations, civil society)
- That **people with disabilities should be involved and implicated in political positions** at the local and regional level as an effective way of promoting the mainstreaming of disability issues. (To be implemented by European Commission, national governments, local authorities)

6. First day conference closing

6.1 Mr Peter Moore

Member of the Committee of Regions, Member of Sheffield City Council

Presentation key points:

- *Legislation is essential for turning words into actions; however with legislation comes education and information.*
- *Local policy makers must engage with local disability organisations in open and constructive dialogue.*
- *Disability groups must be seen as strong representatives of all people with disabilities and put in place the four pillars of mainstreaming – engagement, access, resourcing and enforcement.*

Mr Moore commences his closing address by reiterating the importance of the 1975 UN Declaration on human rights. This declaration made some 30 years ago, has underpinned the day's discussions. However, the EU is still along way from guaranteeing the human rights of people with disabilities and the situation on the ground varies considerably from one member state to another. Hence it was logical to proceed to a UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Mr Moore cites the employment market as an area of continued discrimination which is worse for women than for men and worse for those with learning or intellectual disabilities.

Mr Moore believes that legislation is essential in order to turn words into actions and to raise awareness against negative stereotyping. He applauds the non-discrimination directives introduced by the European Commission, without which such progress would not have been made.

However, looking at accessibility for people with disabilities across Europe we see a mixed picture; some good, some not so good. In cases, the legislation is in place; however people are not informed or educated as to what is required by it. Regarding negative stereotyping and changing attitudes to disability, much still needs to happen.

So, what can be done?

Local policy makers must engage with local disability organisations. There must be a constructive and open dialogue between disability organisations and local government, particularly local politicians. It is crucial for disability groups to be seen as strong and representative of all local people with disabilities, not just as people who are permanently complaining and to put in place the four pillars of mainstreaming – engagement, access, resourcing and enforcement.

In conclusion, Mr Moore underlines the need for common sense and a common respect for all. He shares with the conference the slogan of his home city in the UK: "Sheffield; the city where everyone matters", and his hope that across the European Union every town and city would be a place where everyone matters.

7. Plenary session 3: From EU to local community and from local community to EU

7.1 Presentations overview:

Example of pilot project

Mr Ivor Ambrose, Managing Director of the European Network for Accessible Tourism, ENAT

Presentation key points:

- *Accessibility of public transport and public places is a key issue for accessible tourism.*
- *Three main challenges in Europe are global competition in price and quality, demographic aging and the rights of people with disabilities to participate equally in society.*
- *Accessible tourism depends on accessible communities; public and private enterprises and disability organisations need to work together.*

Mr Ambrose introduces ENAT and goes on to explain why accessible tourism is a challenge for Europe and for every local community. He also points out that the way communities treat their visitors' influences the way communities are perceived, a crucial factor from a business point of view.

Accessibility of public transport is a key issue for accessible tourism, as it is for local people. Accessibility of public places, beaches for example, is also crucial. Having the right equipment and the right approach is very important in making tourist destinations really accessible.

Mr Ambrose outlined the three main challenges that are being faced in Europe, namely global competition in terms of price and quality, demographic aging which is happening now and the rights of people with disabilities to participate equally in society.

Improving accessibility enhances the overall quality of tourism offered to all customers and better accessibility broadens the customer base. Both of these improve sustainability and competitiveness, which is essential if Europe is to remain competitive as a tourist destination. Above all, the community as a whole also benefits. Information is a key element needed in order to plan and organise the accessible infrastructure, services and transport to all people.

Regarding demographics, society is getting older and the link between ageing and disability is shifting the type of services required by people when they go on holiday. Disability is no longer a "niche" market.

Although progress is being made, the travel and tourism industries still have not fully recognised the rights of people with disabilities to participate equally in society and the legal responsibilities this implies.

In conclusion, accessible tourism depends on accessible communities. Public and private enterprises and disability organisations need to work together to create these communities, to spread the word about accessible tourism and to market accessible European destinations.

Accessible street furniture in Münster through Public Procurement

Mr Peter Neumann, NeumannConsult Director, Münster

Presentation key points:

- *The successful outcome of an urban policy based on Design for All concept and using “Build for All” guidelines.*
- *An open, consultative planning process involving people with disabilities and all stakeholders, user feedback and monitoring are essential.*
- *Street furniture is a city’s business card.*

Mr Neumann opens his presentation by explaining how the city of Münster in Germany is following an inclusive urban policy based on the concept of Design for All. The city participates in projects at a European, regional and local level and established a network, “Design for All in Münster”.

Mr Neumann emphasises the need to exchange and transfer knowledge; to publicise the issues and convert research into practice. An open consultative planning process, continuous user feedback and constant monitoring are required. Also important are conferences and events to raise the awareness of decision-makers and civil servants to the issues of accessibility and design of the built environment, and in particular, the important role of public procurement. “Build for All” guidelines provide information for local municipalities and applicants regarding all phases of the public tender process. (www.build-for-all.net).

Street furniture is a city’s business card. High levels of design and technology are required to provide functional, safe, aesthetic and financially feasible (advertising spaces provide revenue to finance installation and running costs) street furniture.

In conclusion, Mr Neumann stresses the importance of creating an open planning process involving people with disabilities and all other stakeholders.

Easy access airport. The experience of Naples International Airport

Mr Antonio Pascale, Quality Manager of Naples International Airport

Presentation key points:

- *How European regulations can have a direct impact and be of direct benefit not only to people with disabilities but to all people.*
- *Involving all stakeholders is essential.*
- *Success depends on cooperation between public and private sectors working together with disability organisations that are able to adapt to the language of business.*

Mr Pascale outlines how the application of European regulations has had a direct impact on the way Naples International Airport is run. Procedures and guidelines, codes of conduct, responsibility for assistance, levels of cooperation between airport authorities and other associations, service quality standards and disability awareness and equality training have all been addressed.

Working with disability organisations, the airport management puts in place a Citizenship Test to define inclusive processes that take into account the needs and rights of people with disabilities in the design and construction of the built environment. Other key players include accessibility design experts and training experts. Improving infrastructure, the services provided for people with disabilities, maintaining quality standards and providing staff training are all essential elements of the process.

These actions result in an increased number of people with disabilities travelling and high levels of customer satisfaction. Importantly, they also result in the airport increasing its capacity to deal with the rights and needs of all passengers.

Finally, Mr Pascale stresses the valuable cooperation, including financial optimisation, which results from public and private companies working together with disability organisations. For successful cooperation between the two it is important that disability advocacy groups adapt to the language of private business and think about their interests and constraints.

Mr Richard Howitt, President of the European Parliament Disability Intergroup, Member of the Employment and social Affairs Committee, European Parliament

Presentation key points:

- *The new disability directive is an important piece of legislation; education issues should also be included in the directive.*
- *Accessibility is also a crucial issue; it is an issue of implementation at local level, not just of policy making in Brussels.*
- *Mainstreaming must mean everyone and everywhere.*

Mr Howitt introduces the plenary debate session by congratulating all those who have worked hard to achieve what has been achieved on disability issues to date. Ensuring that all the work carried out at national, regional and European level makes a difference at local level is the real test.

Mr Howitt applauds the commitment shown to the new disability directive by Commissioner Špidla and his staff and the Member States, stressing the importance and challenges of getting this directive agreed in the Council. He reiterates the need for a swift ratification of the UN Convention by the remaining countries, including the optional protocol, and the involvement of people with disabilities in all policy making on disability issues.

It is the difficult issues we all have to address; and whether education can be part of the horizontal directive is one of them. However, the real issue is that generations of disabled children have been consigned to a segregated education, lacking quality and lacking the choice of an inclusive, integrated mainstream education. Dealing with these issues requires education to be included in the new draft directive to be compatible with the UNC.

Accessibility is also a crucial issue that affects the daily lives of people with disabilities. The discussion, coordination, processes and recommendations at government level must be translated into actions at local level. This huge legal potential is not being fully realized – the issue is implementation, not policy making. European standards on accessible tourism are required; Design for All concepts must be implemented and integrated into the new directive text and we must audit the structural funds to check that the criteria put in place are being met.

Regarding mainstreaming, progress has been made particularly regarding transport and e-accessibility; however, mainstreaming must mean everyone and everywhere! The European Parliament believes that people with disabilities should not just be consulted with; they should be recruited as professionals and experts, researchers and policy makers; they should achieve senior, influential roles and it is working to achieve these ends.

Finally, the European Parliament faces the test in 2009 of making its elections accessible. None of the ambitious aims set out over the last two days can be

achieved unless people with disabilities can participate in the democratic voting process.

7.2 Key findings and implications of the debate

A number of issues are raised during the debate including: **accessibility**, notably accessible tourism for people with intellectual disabilities and access for guide dogs; **attitudes and inclusive education**; the use of **European Union funding** and **empowerment and training** of people with disabilities.

Accessibility for people with intellectual disabilities is an area that is often overlooked with the definition of accessibility frequently being limited to mobility and sensory impairment. People with intellectual disabilities must be able to travel to the same destinations as everyone else, rather than being restricted to centres catering for special needs. It is also an issue of raising awareness and changing society's attitudes toward intellectual disability.

Training of those people working in the tourism industry is essential. Although training needs to be implemented at local level, it is an area where, working together, much progress can be made at European level.

It is recognised that tourism and accessible tourism is an important dimension to people's lives. Regarding accessibility of people with learning and intellectual disabilities, ignorance is seen as a major barrier, followed by prejudice and intolerance. Combating these requires better education and integrated systems to ensure people with disabilities are not segregated from society. Information from people with disabilities and disability organisations and the successful dissemination of that information throughout society is essential.

The issue of discrimination of those people who use a dog to assist them is raised. Travelling with a dog is often difficult to arrange and may incur increased cost, with hotels and taxis often charging extra for an assistant dog. The need for European Union-wide access rights for people accompanied by assistant dogs is called for, together with legislation to formalise standards of the assistant dog industry. Accessibility in terms of assistance available at airports is also raised as an area of concern with information often lacking and inconsistent.

The negative **attitudes** of society towards people with disabilities and the lack of **inclusive education** are among the biggest barriers people with disabilities face. Children need to grow up together, those with disabilities and those without, in order to break down attitudinal barriers that still exist today. Only when we have a generation which looks on people with disabilities as being exactly the same as people without disabilities, will the barriers truly be broken down.

Regarding the allocation of **European Union funding**, it is again requested that measures be put in place to ensure that funding only goes to projects that are fully compliant with the UN Convention. The need for monitoring, review and auditing of projects receiving funding is seen as essential to ensuring this happens.

Empowerment and training of people with disabilities and disability organisations is crucial to the mainstreaming and implementation of good practices and projects taking place at European level. With this comes the need for adequate resources to enable capacity building of disability organisations at local level. The European Union is called upon to increase its empowerment of disability associations at local level.

It is also suggested that, in addition to European Union, regional, national and local levels, empowerment needs to take place on fourth level – the personal level. Empowering individuals with disabilities by building up their self-confidence and social competences on a personal level will result in a move towards changing attitudes, changing practices and changing society as a whole.

Empowerment is about influencing; to exert influence on governments, industry sectors and businesses in general people with disabilities need to be structured, organised and speak their language. Making the necessary resources available to build these competences is essential.

Empowerment is also about raising awareness. Bringing common cases on discrimination to court is an effective way of bringing the issues to public attention. There is a call for people with disabilities and disability organisations to hold governments at all levels accountable for shortcomings in non-discrimination practices. Communicating, understanding the issues, keeping the pressure on governments to make the right decisions is an essential part of empowering people with disabilities to really influence the decisions that are made.

7.3 Conclusions and recommendations

7.3.1 Conclusions

- **European legislation and other measures have contributed to a greater integration of** and more consistent approach to disability issues at local and regional levels across the European Union.
- The **European Commission gives direct support**, in addition to policy development support, to local actors in the form of funding for inclusion and accessibility projects mainly through the Structural Funds.

- **Negative attitudes of society** are a major barrier to inclusiveness of people with disabilities.
- **Empowerment of people with disabilities** and their organisations is essential to ensure change.

7.3.2 Recommendations from participants

- That measures should be put in place so that European Union **funding only goes to projects that are fully compliant with the UN Convention**.
(To be implemented by European Commission, national governments)
- That **adequate resources be made available** for organisations of persons with disabilities to build their capacity and discharge their consultative responsibilities.
(To be implemented by European Commission, national Governments, people with disabilities and their organisations)

8. Summary of major conclusions and implications emerging from the conference

8.1 Mr John Patrick Clarke

Member of the EDF Executive Committee

Presentation key points:

- *The human rights approach must be reflected at European, national and local level; legislation is a key tool as is sharing of best practice actions throughout the European Union.*
- *The correct interpretation and full implementation of the UN Convention is essential and the necessary funding for disability organisations must be made available for them to play their role effectively.*
- *A bottom-up approach is essential – translation of grass-roots actions into government policy, not vice versa.*

Mr Clarke opens his presentation by reiterating the UN Convention's obligation on mainstreaming. Legislation is a key tool in ensuring that the human rights approach is reflected in all policy work at European, national and local level. Complementing this are the many actions that are happening on the ground and which need to be shared and promoted throughout the European Union. To this end, the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions of Europe have an important role to play.

The value of the UN Convention lies in its correct and full implementation in practice, which in itself relies on the commitment and understanding of all stakeholders at all stages of the process. Mr Clarke agrees that the empowerment of disability organisations, capacity building and training are all essential to ensure all stakeholders understand the legislative framework and the human rights approach. In addition, the UN Convention obligation for consultation makes it crucial to ensure the necessary funding is made available for disability organisations to play their role effectively. Mr Clarke continues by stressing the need to ensure that the legislation is not interpreted incorrectly or in a too restrictive a manner.

The shift towards the human rights approach to disabilities needs to continue. People with disabilities must be involved at all stages of the decision-making process, which is particularly critical regarding implementation of the principles of Design for All.

Mr Clarke echoes previous concerns that the current financial crisis should not be used as an excuse to withdraw financing from disability issues. Rather, investing in accessibility should be seen as an economic opportunity.

He stresses the importance of a bottom-up approach – the translation of positive grass-roots actions and demands into government policies, not vice

versa. Legislation must be the result of a meaningful dialogue between all actors.

Finally, Mr Clarke underlines the need for the next European Union Action Plan to be a powerful pact between the European Union, national governments and disability organisations.

8.2 Mr Nikolaus van der Pas (represented by Johan ten Geuzendam)

European Commission, Director General of DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, (Head of Unit, Integration of people with disabilities)

Presentation key points:

- *The importance of Regional policy and European sectoral policies, which provide the tools and methodology for effective non-discrimination; mainstreaming facilitates implementation at local level.*
- *Society must create the conditions for the inclusion of people with disabilities using a cross-disability approach – access to all, by all.*
- *The European Commission is committed to working for the rights of people with disabilities; national governments must be encouraged to adopt non-discrimination without delay.*

Mr ten Geuzendam underlines the interactions required between all levels in today's globalised world – international, European, regional, national and local. He echoes previous conference speakers in calling for rapid ratification and implementation of the UN Convention.

Mr ten Geuzendam goes on to describe Regional policy as the crossroads of European sectoral policies. Europe's Cohesion policy provides the tools and methodology for effective non-discrimination; mainstreaming is required to facilitate implementation at local level. Mr ten Geuzendam suggests that the principles of Design for All should be made a permanent objective with all tools and methodology required to support this objective. If additional cost is incurred, this is a cost for society as a whole and the results are beneficial to society as a whole.

Mr ten Geuzendam cites some of the key ideas to come out of the conference: empowerment, involvement of people with disabilities in disability planning at local level, awareness-raising, dialogue, fostering public debate and training of local authorities and other stakeholders.

Society must create the conditions for people with disabilities to be included and this requires cooperation between disability organisations and authorities at local level, many examples of which have been shown during the conference. A cross-disability approach must be adopted and solutions thought through for everyone to ensure that by removing some barriers we are not creating new ones – Access to all, by all!

The European Commission remains committed to working for the rights of people with disabilities so that they are able to exercise their rights like everyone else in Europe, and is grateful for the inspiration, exchange of knowhow and good practices provided by this conference.

Mr ten Geuzendam calls on participants to speak to their national governments to ensure non-discrimination legislation is adopted quickly and reassures participants that the European Union remains totally committed to protecting all European Union citizens from discrimination.

9. Conference key recommendations made by participants

9.1 *Mainstreaming:*

- That **mainstreaming of disability issues, including accessibility of the built environment, e-accessibility, education, training, access to goods and services must be considered an integral part of economic development** on all levels, European, regional, national and local.
(To be implemented by European Commission, national governments, local and regional authorities)
- That **mainstreaming activities, including best practice sharing, enabling dialogue and consultation, capacity building, awareness raising should be promoted and monitored** by stakeholders to ensure respect of the basic principles.
(To be implemented by disability organisations, civil society, local authorities)
- That **mainstreaming of disability issues remains an ongoing political process**; a continuous dialogue between governments and civil society at all levels, requiring commitment and political will.
(To be implemented by European Commission, national governments, local authorities, disability organisations, civil society)

That **people with disabilities should be involved and implicated in political positions** at the local and regional level as an effective way of promoting the mainstreaming of disability issues.
(To be implemented by European Commission, national governments, local authorities, civil society through the electoral process)

9.2 *Inclusive policies:*

- That at a local level, dialogue to develop mutual understanding should be the **key to implementing inclusive municipal policy**.
(To be implemented by local authorities, disability organisations, civil society)

9.3 *Consultation:*

- That for **implementation of a cooperative decision-making process** all stakeholders – public and private sectors, people with disabilities, civil society – should be included in the consultative process at the outset.

(To be implemented by local authorities, private sector, disability organisations, civil society, at EU and national level)

- That **sharing of best practices at conferences and events** should be used as an effective way of spreading the word and replicating positive initiatives across the European Union.
(To be implemented by disability organisations, European Commission, national governments, public and private sectors)

9.4 Funding:

- That measures should be put in place so that European Union **funding only goes to projects that are fully compliant with the UN Convention**.
(To be implemented by European Commission, national governments, regional and local authorities)
- That **adequate resources be made available** for disability organisations to build their capacity and discharge their consultative responsibilities.
(To be implemented by European Commission, disability organisations)

10. Looking forward

10.1 Key future disability issues at EU level

More than 100 participants use the accessible voting booth on demonstration during the conference to record their responses to the following questions:

- **What should the priorities be for the future European disability strategy until the year 2020?**
- **What instruments should we be using in our strategy?**
- **What are your suggestions for the theme of next year's conference?**

The questions were posed to encourage participants to experience the accessibility features of the machines. The answers are an illustration of some options and are not intended to be taken as a comprehensive consultation.

10.1.1 What should the priorities be for the future European disability strategy until the year 2020?

When designing the strategy, attention will be given to the possibilities of addressing the top five priorities which received an almost identical number of votes, namely:

1. Employment
2. Education
3. Accessibility of the built environment, transport, ICT
4. Independent living
5. Political, civil and public participation

10.1.2 What instruments should we be using in our strategy?

1. Legislation
2. Participation of people with disabilities
3. Research
4. Awareness raising
5. Financial support, funds and subsidies

Participants send a clear message to the European Union regarding the importance of legislation as a strategic instrument.

10.1.3 What are your suggestions for the theme of next year's conference?

1. People with disabilities and their families
2. Accessibility of buildings, transport, infrastructure and ICT
3. UN Convention

The European Commission will take these suggestions into account when preparing next year's conference and welcome further suggestions.

11. Annexes - Details of demonstration area exhibitors

11.1 Association of Disabled Professionals

A UK-based association presents a reference book for people with disabilities who wish to start up their own businesses.

The book entitled "Setting up in Business" is written in Plain English Jargon free Language. It is available in Standard, Large print 16 bold and 18, CD rtf and CD pdf, Audio and Easy read. Braille is not available at the conference.

The book covers the experiences of people with disabilities.

11.2 Sequoia Voting Systems

An American company presents accessible voting booths that were used during the recent US presidential elections.

11.3 IDEASIS Ltd

A number of award-winning assistive technology devices are presented including:

- Integramouse, a mouth-controlled computer mouse
- Mytobii, an eye-tracking system that enables full control of the computer via the eyes.

11.4 DOLPHIN

This is another assistive device company providing assistive technology solution for people who are blind or who have low vision.

A Conference DVD showing examples of good practice in the area of non-discrimination and accessibility is provided to the participants. Three clips are shown during the conference, one of which is the following:

11.5 Erik Lamens

Erik Lamens presents his award-winning film dealing with his stuttering disability.

Mr Lamens explains some of the issues his stuttering disability raised for him both as a child and as a teenager growing into adulthood.

Stuttering is a social disability which has taken him some 25 years to overcome. Stuttering severely limits all types of social interaction. What is seen on the outside is only a small percentage of what is really there; the fears and psychological effects are far more devastating than the physical symptoms, resulting in depression and unfulfilled potential.

Sharing his experiences through the medium of film has raised awareness of stuttering and the severe social consequences this disability can bring.