

# Council of Europe Action Plan – 2006–2015

## Promoting the rights of people with disabilities

### Background

— In 2006, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted Recommendation (Rec(2006)5) to member states launching 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.

— The recommendation urged member states to integrate the Action Plan's principles in their policy, legislation and practice, and implement the actions set out in it. It also recommended that member states promote the Action Plan and disseminate it within the relevant private sector and civil society stakeholders.

— The same year, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) was adopted. To date it has been ratified by 41 Council of Europe member states and the European Union.

— Both documents – the UN Convention and the Council of Europe Action Plan – are based on the paradigm shift from a historical, medical and rehabilitation model to a human rights-based approach, from patient to citizen, the main aim being to remove existing barriers, strive for full participation of people with disabilities in society and mainstream disability into all policies and at all levels in member states.

### The Action Plan

— The Action Plan is a practical tool to enable societal developments and demographic changes and to promote the rights of people with disabilities. Its core principles include: independence, freedom of choice, full participation and equal access to political and public life.

— The Action Plan consists of **15 action lines to be implemented by the member states:**

1. Participation in political and public life
2. Participation in cultural life
3. Information and communication
4. Education
5. Employment, vocational guidance and training
6. The built environment
7. Transport
8. Community living
9. Health care
10. Rehabilitation
11. Social protection
12. Legal protection
13. Protection against violence and abuse
14. Research and development
15. Awareness-raising

**Cross-cutting aspects:** Persons with disabilities are often at risk of **multiple discrimination** and **violence**. This concerns especially women, girls, children and elderly persons with disabilities, persons in institutionalised care or in need of other support, and persons with disabilities belonging to minorities or migrant communities.

In this regard, the Council of Europe Action Plan encourages a twin-track approach to promote the development of strategies built on effective cross-cutting and integrated policies. This means ensuring that policy makers acknowledge the barriers and challenges faced by each of these groups and include actions to remove those barriers and ensure that individuals can reach their full potential.

## Evaluation

Co-ordinated and monitored by the Council of Europe, the evaluation of the Action Plan involved all key stakeholders: member states, civil society and independent experts. The evaluation process, combined with the on-going monitoring of the implementation of the UNCRPD by member states at national level, provide useful information about remaining gaps and areas requiring further work in the future:

### Participation in political and public life

#### Objective

- ▶ create an environment in which people with disabilities are encouraged to take part in political life and are able and empowered to do so.

#### Challenges

- ▶ eliminating legal barriers;
- ▶ making polling stations more accessible;
- ▶ combating prejudices regarding intellectual and psycho-social disabilities.

### Community living

#### Objective

- ▶ ensure good living conditions and independent living (deinstitutionalisation).

#### Challenges

- ▶ working on alternatives to institutionalisation, as institutions are often inadequate and of poor quality;
- ▶ strengthening the concepts of independent living;
- ▶ addressing the lack of appropriate legal frameworks and systems.

### Legal protection

#### Objective

- ▶ legal capacity for everyone;
- ▶ equal access to justice.

#### Challenges

- ▶ combating discriminatory practices entailing deprivation of certain fundamental rights;
- ▶ tackling the lack of information concerning legal protection;
- ▶ legislating to remedy the lack of an appropriate anti-discrimination system;
- ▶ reducing the prevalence of guardianship.

## Protection against violence and abuse

#### Objective

- ▶ combat all forms of violence and abuse by developing safeguards and support services;
- ▶ improve the detection of cases of violence and abuse and the dissemination of information about the subject.

#### Challenges

- ▶ reducing the level of (direct or indirect) violence towards people with disabilities;
- ▶ developing legal protection (safeguards and penalties);
- ▶ dealing with large numbers of neglected or unreported cases of violence and abuse;
- ▶ improving awareness-raising and information.

The evaluation report puts forward a set of recommendations to address remaining challenges:

- ▶ universally apply and promote the human rights-based approach to disability;
- ▶ ensure accessibility by means of reasonable accommodation and universal design;
- ▶ ensure collaboration and co-operation at local level between the various stakeholders (member states, civil society, service providers, including people with disabilities);
- ▶ provide human rights-based training for professionals;
- ▶ include people with disabilities in decision-making processes;
- ▶ take account of the situation and needs of people with disabilities, in particular those at risk of multiple discrimination.

## What next?

The Council of Europe will continue to work with member states, with regional and international partners, notably the European Union and the United Nations, as well as with non-governmental organisations, including those representing the interests of people with disabilities, to ensure full respect of human rights of people with disabilities including equal opportunities and independence of people with disabilities; freedom of choice; improved quality of life; full citizenship and active participation in the life of the community on an equal footing with everyone else.

## About the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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