

## **Statement<sup>1</sup> of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, 3 December 2017**

We, the Advisory Council on Youth,<sup>2</sup> representing young people in the decision-making processes of the Council of Europe youth sector, celebrate the [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#). This Day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and to mobilise support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities.

We take this opportunity to emphasise that young people must not be viewed only as a single, homogeneous subset of society defined exclusively by age or disability. Multiple identities of young people should be celebrated for the added diversity and richness they bring to society.

Mainstreaming disability as a cross-cutting issue within all policies as well as support at national and European levels for the independent living of young people with disabilities will help ensure full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities in various spheres of society.

The pervasive obstacles faced by young people with disabilities, intertwined with negative attitudes, physical and structural barriers in society, require urgent policy responses. The general lack of awareness of many of the challenges faced by young people with disabilities remains challenging in many countries. Young people with disabilities continue to face barriers from a lack of adequate support and opportunities that could ease their transition from youth to adulthood. Improving their economic situation and providing them with increased employment opportunities will, in turn, improve their life chances which are key to ensuring they can live independently in society.

To empower young people with disabilities and create an inclusive society, the effective implementation of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) and an emphasis on the importance of mainstreaming disability issues as an integral part of relevant strategies of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) are necessary. In line with the 2017 theme: “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all”, Agenda 2030 pledges to “leave no one behind”. Persons with disabilities and various other stakeholders are agents of change towards an inclusive and sustainable development, they promote a resilient society for all, including in the context of urban development, disaster risk reduction, and humanitarian action.

We, the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe, are dedicated to:

- standing against all forms of discrimination, exclusion and hate speech towards people with disabilities;
- encouraging various stakeholders to explore further the possibilities for making their structures and programmes more inclusive for all young people from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities;
- encouraging the member States of the Council of Europe to actively implement the provisions of the [Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023](#) at national and local levels including the protection and promotion of the rights of young refugees and migrant with disabilities.

The Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe remains committed to supporting the full participation and inclusion of young people with disabilities in Council of Europe member States and beyond.

Marko Grdasic

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<sup>1</sup> The opinions expressed in this statement are those of the Advisory Council on Youth and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe.

<sup>2</sup>The Advisory Council on Youth is part of the co-management structure of the Council of Europe youth sector and is made up of representatives of youth NGOs and networks that provide opinions on all youth sector activities. Together with the government representatives responsible for youth matters, they come together in a co-decision-making body - the Joint Council on Youth - where the youth sector's priorities and objectives are established.

Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe