

# Awareness raising on the rights of persons with disabilities

## Contribution to the Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



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# **Awareness raising on the rights of persons with disabilities**

## **Contribution to the Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

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Cover design and layout: Documents and Publications Production Department (SPDP), Council of Europe

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# Context

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## Purpose of the study

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The Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023 (“the Strategy”) has five rights-based priority areas. “Each of them is ... connected to corresponding Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)[<sup>1</sup>], aiming at its implementation in practice.”<sup>2</sup> This study addresses the second priority area of the Strategy which focuses on awareness raising (Article 8 of the UNCRPD).<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this study is to suggest current and useful good practices to policy makers and practitioners in the area of raising awareness and sensitising a wide range of stakeholders. The study begins with an explanation of its scope, followed by the key origins of misunderstanding about disability. Myths and stereotypes result in barriers to the full enjoyment of rights for persons with disabilities. The study refers to possible strategies and actions in approaching public awareness campaigns and other relevant actions in a holistic way, always with the objective to promote inclusion, respect and dignity.

Furthermore, good practices are presented, either initiated by authorities or by civil society. As practice demonstrates, a vertical (bottom-up) and horizontal (across sectors) approach has paid off and led to successful implementation of awareness-raising campaigns or other actions on the rights of persons with disabilities.

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1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), available at: [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/ConventionRightsPersonsWithDisabilities.aspx).
  2. Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023 – Human rights: a reality for all, available at: [www.coe.int/en/web/disability/strategy-2017-2023](http://www.coe.int/en/web/disability/strategy-2017-2023).
  3. Without prejudice to the monitoring of the implementation of the UNCRPD by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its parties-specific recommendations, this study aims at identifying ways and means with which to implement Article 8 of the UNCRPD on awareness-raising, including through the educational system, for the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities.

Finally, a few challenging questions are put forward in concluding this study and a checklist is available for member states at all level wishing to design an awareness-raising campaign and interested in following a systematic step-by-step approach, for a long-term impact.

## Current challenges

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In 2015, an evaluation was carried out on the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plan to promote the rights and full participation of people with disabilities in society (2006-2015).<sup>4</sup> The evaluation report highlights specific challenges in the implementation of Action line 15 on awareness raising:

- ▶ Lack of awareness of positive and realistic images of persons with disabilities in all sectors and strata of society.
- ▶ Lack of targeted, long-term and systemic awareness-raising inclusion campaigns and strategies, especially for children at the earliest possible age.
- ▶ Failure to make use of innovative technologies and approaches in awareness-raising campaigns and in disseminating good practices.<sup>5</sup>
- ▶ Insufficient use of the potential for personal participation of persons with disabilities in promoting a realistic and positive perception of the persons concerned based on real-life experiences.<sup>6</sup>

The section of this study on “Successful examples of awareness raising via policy and practice” discusses examples to address some of these challenges. Another important issue to keep in mind when developing awareness-raising strategies and actions is the one of multiple discrimination. Persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group and some persons may face additional and specific barriers due to a combination between disability and other features such as their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, ethnicity, complex needs, intersecting impairments, type of disabilities, place of living, etc.

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4. Implementation of 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, Abridged Evaluation Report (2015). See also, Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)8 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on achieving full participation through Universal Design.
  5. See also, Council of Europe, Resolution ResAP(2001)3 towards full citizenship of persons with disabilities through inclusive new technologies.
  6. Abridged Evaluation Report, p. 67.

While authorities at all levels and the public sector are the main recipients of this study, the private sector (for profit and social profit companies) could be inspired by some of the initiatives across the member states.

## **Implementation gap**

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The Council of Europe's evaluation of the Action Plan 2006-2015 showed that "the disparity between the standards and practice, referred to as the implementation gap, needs to be addressed as a matter of priority"<sup>7</sup>

There is often a lack of transposition of policy or legislation into practice, resulting in concrete changes on the ground. It may take months, even years, before some transpositions take place, leaving persons with disabilities facing discrimination. As the "governments of [the Council of Europe] member States drive the implementation of the Strategy ... in close co-operation with persons with disabilities and their families ... and all other relevant stakeholders"<sup>8</sup> it is essential to focus on models which have already proved their usefulness and success (see section 4 of this study on "Successful examples").

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7. Ibid., p. 11.

8. Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023, p. 12.



# Scope

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## Article 8 of the UNCRPD

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1. States Parties undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures:

- a. To raise awareness throughout society, including at the family level, regarding persons with disabilities, and to foster respect for the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities;
- b. To combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age, in all areas of life;
- c. To promote awareness of the capabilities and contributions of persons with disabilities.

2. Measures to this end include:

- a. Initiating and maintaining effective public awareness campaigns designed:
  - i. To nurture receptiveness to the rights of persons with disabilities;
  - ii. To promote positive perceptions and greater social awareness towards persons with disabilities;
  - iii. To promote recognition of the skills, merits and abilities of persons with disabilities, and of their contributions to the workplace and the labour market;
- b. Fostering at all levels of the education system, including in all children from an early age, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities;
- c. Encouraging all organs of the media to portray persons with disabilities in a manner consistent with the purpose of the present Convention;
- d. Promoting awareness-training programmes regarding persons with disabilities and the rights of persons with disabilities.

## Why is Article 8 on awareness raising part of the UNCRPD?

Article 8 was included in the Convention in part to try to address the underlying causes of discrimination on the basis of disability – namely the prevailing attitudes towards persons with disabilities in many societies. Even in countries where disability-related legislation exists (such as non-discrimination legislation), the efficacy of such legislation is often hindered by public assumptions and stereotypes of persons with disabilities. Such was the concern of delegates about these problems that a version of the article was included in the original draft prepared by the Working Group of the [Ad Hoc Committee].<sup>9</sup>

## **Multi-sector and multi-level approach in public services**

The success of awareness-raising strategies taken by the authorities at any level in any state will depend on the extent to which they apply a multi-sector approach, thus including all relevant stakeholders in the public and private arena. Both community initiative and high-level political action are indispensable to build a wide enough support base.

The checklist at the end of this study will provide specific questions to ensure that a holistic and sustainable approach has been adopted. Elements of success from good practices can be selected based on specific needs and interests of a particular organisation/institute and locally adapted.

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9. Guernsey K., Nicoli M. and Ninio A. (2007), “Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities: its implementation and relevance for the World Bank” (SP Discussion Paper No. 0712), p. 10. The article was initially included in the Working Group Text (which formed the basis for all further negotiations) as Article 5, “Promotion of positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities”. During subsequent debates a number of governmental and civil society organisations noted concerns regarding the prominent use of the term “positive”, and the risk of potentially paternalistic interpretations of the article’s terms. The final version of Article 8 therefore adopts a broader approach, focusing on awareness raising more generally, of which promoting positive perceptions is just one element.

# Public awareness and understanding of disability

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## Origins of misunderstanding

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### Myths about disability – the importance of focusing on facts when raising awareness

Raising public awareness on disability can have multifold objectives such as sharing information to citizens without disabilities, including employers, about the rights and abilities of persons with disabilities and the existence of prejudices which are difficult to eradicate and often based on myths. Public campaigns can also focus on raising awareness among persons with disabilities themselves about their rights, their abilities and the need to co-create with relevant stakeholders.

In its guidelines for the media on reporting on disability, the International Labour Office of the International Labour Organization (ILO) debunks some of the most common myths on disability and persons with disabilities:<sup>10</sup>

*“MYTH: There aren’t many people with disabilities, so it’s not really an issue.*

**FACT:** People with disabilities are present in all societies. Many are hidden or excluded from society, either in their homes or in institutions because of social stigma. There may be barriers – physical, attitudinal, legal, regulatory, policy, lack of information in accessible formats – that limit their opportunity to participate in a variety of activities. Furthermore, a disability may not be visible. Some people who have a disability may not even think of themselves as “disabled”.

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10. International Labour Office, Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch (2015), “Reporting on disability: guidelines for the media” (2nd edn), pp. 12-13.

*MYTH: Disability is a health issue.*

**FACT:** [The adoption of the UNCRPD marked the international agreement to shift from a “medical model” to a “social one.”] Health is important for everyone – whether [one has disabilities] or not. But health is not the only, or in some cases, most important issue. For many people with disabilities, participation in work, education, politics, among other spheres of life, is equally important.

*MYTH: Persons with disabilities are unable to meet performance standards, thereby making them an employment risk.*

**FACT:** Employers of workers [with disabilities] consistently report that, as a group, people with disabilities perform on par or better than their peers [without disabilities] on measures such as productivity, safety and attendance. In addition, people with disabilities are more likely to stay on the job.

*MYTH: Accessibility only benefits people with disabilities.[11]*

**FACT:** Good accessibility benefits everyone. Accessibility is strongly linked to the design of products, devices, services or environments and takes into consideration everyone’s needs – whether or not they have a disability.

*MYTH: Considerable expense is necessary to make workplace adjustments for workers with disabilities.*

**FACT:** Making reasonable adjustments in the workplace refers to measures or actions taken by employers to help [persons with disabilities] work or to take part in training on the same basis as individuals [without disabilities]. Most workers with disabilities require no special adjustments and the cost for those who do is minimal or much lower than many employers believe.”

The Nationwide Health & Disability Advocacy Service of New Zealand identified other common myths and stereotypes. These include considering disability as a “monumental tragedy” and persons with disabilities as “shameful or embarrassing”, as “objects of pity and charity” who “lead boring and uneventful lives”. Persons with disabilities who excel in a field are seen as superheroes rather than successful students, sportspersons, artists, etc. Due to the belief that persons with disabilities are asexual and do not have the same emotional needs or desires as persons without disabilities, getting married and creating a family are seen as “extraordinary” and partners are considered to be “heroic or special”.<sup>12</sup>

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11. For more information, see the Council of Europe study on accessibility of information, technologies and communication for persons with disabilities (2017). See also, UNCRPD Committee (2014) General Comment 2, Article 9: Accessibility.

12. New Zealand Nationwide Health & Disability Advocacy Service, Disability competencies for health and disability advocates (based on the disability resource developed for HDC staff by Hemant Thakker), p. 7.

Myths and stereotypes are common and constitute one of the many forms of barriers to the full enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities.

## Barriers based on disability

The “World report on disability” of the World Health Organization (WHO) has documented widespread evidence of barriers, including the following:<sup>13</sup>

- ▶ **Inadequate policies and standards.** Policy design does not always take into account the needs of people with disabilities, or existing policies and standards are not enforced. Examples include a lack of clear policy of inclusive education, a lack of enforceable access standards in physical environments, and the low priority accorded to rehabilitation.
- ▶ **Negative attitudes.** Beliefs and prejudices constitute barriers when healthcare workers cannot see past the disability, teachers do not see the value in teaching children with disabilities, employers discriminate against people with disabilities, and family members have low expectations of their relatives with disabilities.
- ▶ **Lack of provision of services.** People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to deficiencies in services such as health care, rehabilitation, or support and assistance.
- ▶ **Problems with service delivery.** Issues such as poor co-ordination among services, inadequate staffing, staff competencies, and training affect the quality and adequacy of services for persons with disabilities.
- ▶ **Inadequate funding.** Resources allocated to implementing policies and plans are often inadequate. ...
- ▶ **Lack of accessibility.** Built environments (including public accommodations) transport systems and information are often inaccessible. Lack of access to transport is a frequent reason for a person with a disability being discouraged from seeking work or prevented from accessing healthcare. Even in countries with laws on accessibility, compliance in public buildings is often very low. ... Information is frequently unavailable in accessible formats, and some people with disabilities are unable to access basic information and communication technologies such as telephones and television.
- ▶ **Lack of consultation and involvement.** Often people with disabilities are excluded from decision-making in matters directly affecting their lives.
- ▶ **Lack of data and evidence [on programmes that work].**

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13. World Health Organization (2011), “World report on disability”, pp. 262-63.

The lack of consistent and comparable data on disability in many countries prevents benchmarking and measuring progress based on relevant and jointly agreed indicators, with quantity and quality of life elements of persons with disabilities. Policy makers often want organisations to provide them with evidence before allocating funds while organisations need funds in order to set up an evidence-based programme. This study recommends setting up a programme, carried out by grassroots organisations, in co-operation with universities or research centres, funded via public resources and co-monitored by the public authorities and grassroots organisations. Relevant stakeholders are encouraged to collect comparable and comprehensive data on disability in all fields (for example education, justice, employment).

In some countries, there is an additional legal barrier. The lack of recognition of legal capacity for persons with disabilities can impede them to fully take part and contribute to society. The Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023 emphasises the need to raise awareness on “the importance of legal capacity and supported decision-making options”<sup>14</sup>

Negative attitudes, stereotypes and myths must be challenged. Education and awareness raising are powerful tools to change mindsets in the long term. Examples of campaigns can be found all around the world using various tools to raise awareness of the experience and rights of persons with disabilities. For instance, in Singapore, a five-year campaign was launched in 2016 to promote a positive and realistic image of persons with disabilities free from stereotypes, by understanding what disability means and how to interact with each other in a respectful manner.<sup>15</sup>

The initiative promotes the principle of inclusion of persons with disabilities in mainstream society to enable mutual understanding and respect for the benefit of all. Inclusion from early age allows seeing beyond the disability to recognise one’s own abilities and strengths.<sup>16</sup> Entitled “See the True Me”, this education programme for the public is organised by the National Council of Social Service and the Tote Board-Enabling Lives Initiative. Advertising campaigns will be launched in addition to disability awareness talks. The website

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14. For more information, see the Council of Europe study on equal recognition before the law of persons with disabilities (2017). See also, UNCRPD Committee (2014), General Comment 1, Article 12: Equal recognition before the law.

15. Singapore, See the True Me campaign.

16. See also, Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)9 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the education and social inclusion of children and young people with autism spectrum disorders.

already includes stories of persons with disabilities, videos and resources such as information on disabilities, communication tips to engage with persons with disabilities, a glossary of disability terminology, a resource guide for employers, and a parent’s guide to choosing the right school for children with special educational needs.

Other examples can be found in videos, which are a significant ally to widely raise awareness and spark discussions in just a couple of minutes. There are many powerful video examples which educate society by shining a light on the experience of persons with disabilities and promoting their rights and abilities.<sup>17</sup> Among them is a series of videos developed by the French association LADAPT which promotes the social and professional inclusion of persons with disabilities. Under the hashtag “Kill Stupidity” the short videos challenge stereotypes, beliefs and reactions of persons without disabilities when interacting with persons with disabilities. Topics include accessibility, employment, sport, political representation, citizenship, sexuality, culture, school, parenthood.<sup>18</sup>

Other successful examples include a short film entitled *Seconds Matter* which sheds light on the difficulties of executing daily tasks for a person with arthritis compared to a person without arthritis, or a video about public perception and different treatment of persons with disabilities by persons without disabilities.<sup>19</sup>

The Council of Europe Disability Strategy highlights the role of media as a relevant stakeholder in raising awareness on disability and in particular on the skills and capabilities of persons with disabilities. Traditional media, publicity and new social media networks can be used to shift the current mindset, making persons with disabilities visible and spreading a positive and realistic image. This can be done for instance by talking about disabilities in mainstream news (in a non-sensational way) or including persons with disabilities in publicity along with persons without disabilities.

A recent French campaign entitled “#Melaniecandoit” (“#Melaniepeutlefaire”) was launched by a federation of associations for persons with mental disabilities and their families to highlight the capabilities of persons with mental disabilities. The general public was encouraged to show its support to Mélanie,

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17. See for example the videos of the Council of Europe on disabilities and Disabled United, “Top five trending disability awareness campaigns”.

18. LADAPT, “KillLaBetise” videos.

19. Disabled United “Top five trending disability awareness campaigns”.

a woman with mental disabilities, in her wish to present the weather forecast on national television. More than 250 000 persons supported the initiative on social networks and Mélanie presented the weather forecast in March 2017, raising national awareness on persons with mental disabilities.<sup>20</sup>

While raising awareness on the barriers to the enjoyment of rights of persons with disabilities is primordial, a full inclusion necessitates the involvement of persons with disabilities as full partners and colleagues. This means that persons with disabilities should not appear or be invited only when the topic is disability or because of their disability but be involved, as full members of society, in all issues. Most importantly, for lasting and sustainable impact, initiatives must go beyond “traditional” ways of raising awareness such as TV and video campaigns. To this aim, the last section of this study privileges successful examples of awareness-raising initiatives based on inclusion of persons with disabilities.

## **Strategies, objectives and actions**

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### **Multiple-level thinking and acting**

It is important to understand the “awareness-raising logic” to build effective strategies. Strategies to combat discrimination or existing prejudices against persons with disabilities which use awareness raising must be designed to impact on various levels at the same time, as each level links to possible causes of the problem (for example: insufficient awareness about the legal rights, labelling persons with disabilities as one group and prejudices about the individual abilities of persons with disabilities).

The figure below shows a relationship between various levels and how to influence them. One can identify the individual level (micro), the social-organisational level (meso), and the institutional level (macro) of thinking and acting.<sup>21</sup> What is important to influence is the way people think and reason, which touches upon their identity and attitude. Aiming to change behaviour is the hardest when campaigning or taking action. The social-organisational level can be considered as the meso level where people interact with their environment, colleagues, friends, and where organisational culture also plays a role. It is likely that people will share similar ideas and opinions with people they have most frequent contact with. When trying to influence the meso

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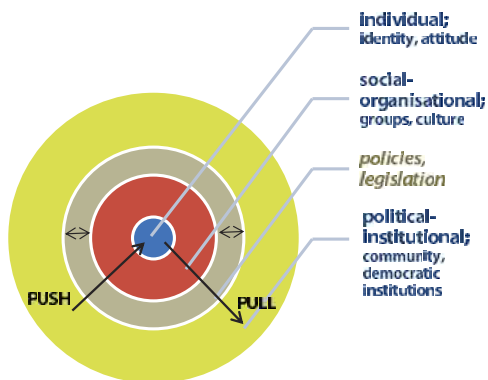
20. Adapei website, campaign “Melaniecandoit”.

21. Jepperson R. and Meyer J. W. (2011), “Multiple levels of analysis and the limitations of methodological individualisms”, *Sociological Theory* No. 29, pp. 54-73.



level (for example to combat prejudices), people can be influenced via their social environment and networks. The macro level, the broader society, is considered to be the political-institutional level where legislation and policies are created, where democratic institutions fulfil a public role. These institutions influence the possibilities for people to work, live and learn.

**Figure 1. Awareness-raising logic**



For awareness-raising strategies to be effective and sustainable, action on the three areas, at these three levels, is needed. It is important that authorities do not only think at macro level how they would like society (which might be interpreted as “the others”) to deal with disability, but also analyse themselves as an organism to raise awareness within the public organisation(s) (meso level). Thirdly, the way in which each individual within the organisation/institute acts on a day-to-day basis (micro level) is more than crucial to contribute to the success of such strategies. The meso and micro levels should be further taken into consideration as they make actions more tangible. The three levels reinforce each other.

According to the “PUSH-principle”, people and organisations/companies are told what to do or not to do. This approach only works well due to the repetition of the message, people need to be reminded of the message time and again and sanctions need to be installed. Much more effective and flexible in a contemporary environment is applying the “PULL-principle”. Measures to be taken need to be co-created by various stakeholder groups and solutions must be shared. Creating self-awareness of people can change things on the ground. This is more than just raising awareness, it is using people’s skills, knowledge and energy so they are motivated to make it work and last in the long run.

## Examples of strategies for non-discrimination<sup>22</sup>

### A strategy example in Spain

Proposals on awareness-raising objectives and actions can be found within strategies to fight other types of discrimination such as sexism, LGBTI-phobia, racism, xenophobia, etc. For example, the Ministry of Labour and Immigration of Spain published in 2011 a Comprehensive Strategy against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance, which includes a chapter dedicated to awareness raising.<sup>23</sup> The following elements can be applied to the disability context.

1) Implement awareness-raising measures aimed at the population at large, at public institutions, the media, and the police and security services in order to prevent and combat prejudice and attitudes of intolerance, discriminatory social conduct, hatred, [...] and] violence.

1.1 Hold meetings and workshops to exchange and spread experience and best practice linked to awareness raising.

1.2 *Disseminate informative material on how the population's perception of the fight against discrimination and related intolerance against persons with disabilities has evolved.*

1.3 Foster and implement action to disseminate the anti-discrimination legislation among those working in protecting rights.

1.4 Foster and implement action to disseminate European anti-discrimination legislation.

1.5 *Recommend to political parties to avoid making generalisations about persons with disabilities as well as using pejorative or discriminatory language in their public discourse as this fosters the perpetuation of negative stereotypes, prejudice, and attitudes of rejection.*

1.6 *Foster inclusive political discourse that reflects understanding and respect for differences, and that fosters the right to equality and promotes the value of a diverse society in order to ensure that all citizens can actively exercise their prerogatives as such.*

1.7 *Publicly condemn acts of discrimination, rejection and violence against persons with disabilities.*

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22. For more information, see the Council of Europe study on promoting equality and non-discrimination for persons with disabilities (2017).

23. Ministry of Labour and Immigration of Spain (2011), Comprehensive Strategy against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related Intolerance, pp. 136-43.

2) Capacitate and involve social partners, public employees, and professionals associated with government in the fight against *discrimination towards persons with disabilities*.

2.1 Carry out training: courses, seminars, workshops, etc. for civil servants and public employees, primarily in the areas of health, employment, social services, security, and justice.

2.2 Develop training plans for social partners and anti-discrimination professionals.

2.3 Develop specific awareness raising aimed at civil servants in the Justice administration and the police force.

3) *Encourage companies to carry out action in the field of social responsibility aimed at promoting conditions of equal treatment and non-discrimination within their companies and in their social environments, and to include measures and action on diversity in their human resources policies.*

4) Include equal treatment and non-discrimination in all public policy.

4.1. Work towards the establishment of awareness-raising plans and strategies on both the regional and local levels.

4.2 Establish forums so that equal treatment and non-discrimination policies from the various levels of government can be shared and compared.

4.3 *Support initiatives between associations, establishment of forums and/or platforms, or any other initiative geared towards awareness raising on the rights of persons with disabilities.*

5) Promote social awareness-raising strategy plans tied to harmonious interaction and participation on a local scale.

5.1 Promote action to analyse the degree of harmony or conflict on a local level, at work, in neighbourhoods, public areas, building associations, schools, associations, and leisure and recreational spheres.

5.2 Promote meeting places so that awareness-raising strategies can be built through participation among the three leading groups on the local level: citizens themselves – *experts by experience in the first place*, experts and professionals, and the local government authorities.<sup>24</sup>

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24. Changes to the original text are marked in italics.

## A strategy example in the United States of America

The “End Abuse of People with Disabilities” website is managed by the Center on Victimization and Safety (CVS) at the Vera Institute of Justice in the USA.<sup>25</sup>

Based on the alarming rate of violence against persons with disabilities but also on the growth of its awareness, the CVS emphasises “the need to connect with practitioners, organisations, government agencies, communities, and individuals that make up the growing movement to end abuse of persons with disabilities”. The Center works in partnership with public and private funders. Some of the successful strategic proposals to raise awareness include the following:

### 1. Convening issue-specific task forces across the country

The suggestion is to create task forces with “champions and experts” in the field of awareness raising. “Task forces [should] serve an important role within organizations as they can ensure that this issue becomes and remains a priority.”

### 2. Addressing this issue at community awareness events

The Center propose to use existing awareness months (in the USA), such as Sexual Assault Awareness month (April) and Disability Awareness and Domestic Violence Awareness month (October), to highlight the way that these issues impact people with disabilities.

### 3. Supporting legislative action days

Organisations could sponsor legislative action days in an effort to raise their issues to policy makers. By co-organising these kinds of events, policy makers would receive direct input and feedback.

Furthermore, the Center sums up the steps that one can take to raise awareness on the experience of persons with disabilities:

- ▶ **Gathering the facts.** It is important to “learn about the incidence rate, the dynamics of abuse of people with disabilities, and the recommended strategies for addressing that abuse before starting any awareness campaign”.<sup>[26]</sup>

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25. Centre on Victimization and Safety, Vera Institute of Justice (USA), End Abuse of People with Disabilities.

26. See also, Council of Europe, Resolution ResAP(2005)1 on safeguarding adults and children with disabilities against abuse.

- ▶ **Tailoring your message.** “When raising awareness about abuse of people with disabilities, it is critical that the strategy used resonates with the audience. ... Before selecting a set of strategies, [organisations need to] get to know the intended audience and tailor [their] approach accordingly.”
- ▶ **Leveraging existing forums.** It is most of the time not needed to reinvent the wheel or start from scratch. There are a number of existing forums and annual awareness-raising campaigns which can be used to start from by integrating abuse of persons with disabilities into the existing awareness efforts. The Center also proposes to “author opinion pieces in the local newspaper[s] to highlight this issue to the broader community”.
- ▶ **Creating new opportunities.** The Center mainly proposes to set up public and private events (for example within the workplace) specifically dedicated to the issue of abuse of persons with disabilities. “Public event[s] [can] invite the larger community to learn directly from individuals with disabilities about their experiences.” Organisations could take the opportunity to host a side-event on a specific topic.

The website also sums up some useful resources such as how to find local domestic and sexual violence organisations in a specific US state.

After having looked at examples of strategies, the next section of this study will present some successful examples of awareness raising.

# Successful examples of awareness raising via policy and practice

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“It is time to move from law to practice in the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities.”

*UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities*

Once strategies and objectives are set and clear, the next step is implementation and actions. In her statement to mark the 10th anniversary of the UNCRPD, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities highlighted the slow advancement in the implementation of this convention and the numerous persons left behind. The statement also emphasised the need for “an active engagement with communities and persons with disabilities”<sup>27</sup> Awareness raising should involve diverse actors, and can take many forms, be creative and use new information and communication technologies. Below is a selection of practices from various countries which have proved to be successful in their own specific area. Elements of success include: direct involvement of persons with disabilities (Nothing About Us Without Us), multidisciplinary co-operation, shared values between grassroots organisations and authorities, financial and other support from the authorities to self-advocates and their representative organisations and/or providers of services who instigated change, well-thought-out strategies and carefully planned actions which make a difference, and above all, the will and enthusiasm to make it happen.

The best way to raise awareness and avoid discrimination is for persons with disabilities to be fully included as part of mainstream society, by living in the community, following class in mainstream schools and being employed in mainstream jobs. This will educate society to recognise persons with disabilities as full members and partners.

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27. UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (2016), Statement to mark the 10th anniversary of the UNCRPD.

## **Raising awareness on opportunities for recruitment and employability of persons with disabilities**

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### **The multifaceted approach: Belfast City Council – Employers for Disability Northern Ireland (EFDNI)**

In 2015, the Belfast City Council (BCC) developed its first Disability Strategy and Action Plan (2015-2018) in advance of legislation. As part of the overarching Equality Scheme, the plan is reviewed, developed and updated annually, and overseen by the Disability Access Group.<sup>28</sup> The aim of the strategy is to give coherence and to guide the Council's activities across specific areas of policy that impact on persons with disabilities by establishing a high-level framework. Six key strategic themes to be addressed were identified: participation and active citizenship; awareness raising; accessibility; independent choice and control; employment and employability; and being part of the community.

The BCC received the 2012 Disability Best Practice Employer Award from the NGO Employers for Disability Northern Ireland and Irish News.<sup>29</sup> The BCC's initiatives in employment and employability were praised for their fairness and equity at all stages of employment. For instance, these include that, in addition to traditional platforms, disability organisations are notified directly of job advertisements which are also published on the Employers for Disability Northern Ireland's Jobs Bulletin Board. A computer-based skills test is undertaken for some basic grade administrative posts instead of requiring applicants to possess formal qualifications.

Other initiatives include raising awareness of line managers on the need for reasonable adjustments, for which a budget is made available, and training for employees on equal opportunities and good relations which include talking about disability. Additionally, employees are being trained on disability awareness and train-the-trainer sessions. Disability events for staff and external partners with the focus on disability awareness and best practice are held by the BCC and a comprehensive investment programme has been launched, highlighting the need for proactive employability initiatives for persons with disabilities.

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28. Belfast City Council (2015), Disability strategy and action plans.

29. EFDNI (2012), Showcasing Disability Best Practice.

The BCC has a representative on the Special Schools Business Education Partnership Board and on the Orchardville Employer Strategic Group and has promoted its disability policies and practices at events organised by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Orchardville Society.

The BCC also carried out in-depth access audits at all locations and physical access improvements are now included in normal facilities management resource planning.

Finally, the BCC reviews and monitors the experiences and views of all applicants and employees. It established internal equality groups following staff surveys, held disability focus groups and has established a disability staff network to continue this work.

## **Self-advocacy as the key to mainstream employment: Centre Draga, Slovenia**

The training, occupation and care Centre Draga is “an organisation for education, training, work, healthcare and rehabilitation of children, adolescents and adults with moderate, severe and profound intellectual disabilities and additional impairment.”<sup>30</sup> Many years ago, the Centre started supporting self-advocates to organise themselves and raise awareness on their rights. Five self-advocacy groups were initially established. There are now 18 self-advocacy groups and about five years ago a board of service users was established. The board formulates propositions on things they would like to see differently in the organisation (for example if they disagree on a decision or activity impacting them). They now organise workshops at other organisations around Slovenia about self-advocacy, teaching others about their rights and how to exercise them. There is also a self-advocacy network. After having carefully listened to the needs of the self-advocates, the Centre took the initiative to start a deinstitutionalisation process and to aim for better living conditions, which included mainstream employment opportunities, such as in the example below.

The Centre opened the restaurant Druga Violina in June 2012 in Ljubljana, where persons with disabilities are employed. The restaurant is much more than a workplace. It serves as a guidance, care and supported employment service, enabling its users to engage in socially and economically useful activities, suited to their abilities, to acquire knowledge and all kinds of new

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30. Training, Occupation and Care Centre Draga.



competencies, to develop new social and work abilities and finally to stimulate their own ideas and let them gain self-confidence.

This kind of service has been innovative in Slovenia, as it does not only help the people employed, but it also raises awareness in the broader community about the importance of accepting diversity. The case of the restaurant demonstrates that there are opportunities for the so-called “hard-to-employ”. Importantly, after four years, the restaurant is financially independent and there is a good collaboration with the media.

At the local level, the municipality supports the Centre by not charging for the use of the restaurant’s terrace and by promoting and disseminating information about the restaurant through the Tourist Information Centre of Ljubljana.

The national authorities offer support by promoting the restaurant through protocol events (guests are presidents, athletes, actors, journalists, etc.). These events promote the visibility of the restaurant and persons with disabilities in a regular work environment. There are also calls and tenders for projects relating to the inclusion of persons with disabilities. There is a constructive collaboration between the Centre and competent ministries, as well as with trade unions and the Ombudsperson for human rights.

This model has also influenced other interested parties and encouraged initiatives in other areas like horticulture, landscaping in public and private areas, cleaning services, etc.

Using the model of an “open” restaurant, the following objectives should be fulfilled for persons with disabilities:

- ▶ provide the opportunity to work in an ordinary social environment;
- ▶ test their capabilities;
- ▶ see how clients of the restaurant interact with them;
- ▶ verify their need for support and determine the extent of help needed;
- ▶ determine the requirements of potential employers to offer regular employment to persons with disabilities.

It is also important that legislation ensures that the rights of persons with disabilities are not only a social issue but also an economic (employment) one.

# Raising awareness on the right for persons with disabilities to have their own home and to live autonomously by changing the situation on the ground<sup>31</sup>

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## One of the Neighbours – Deinstitutionalisation in Finland

“As the project started in 2011, the idea was met with a lot of suspicion, prejudice and fear. During the past few years, faith in independent living in the community has grown in the minds of clients, their family members, carers and professionals, as well as in political decision making.”<sup>32</sup>

One of the Neighbours – Deinstitutionalisation in Finland was a project carried out by the Service Foundation for People with an Intellectual Disability which was itself founded by Inclusion Finland KVTL,<sup>33</sup> an NGO promoting equal opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities and their families. The start of the project was met with the notion that deinstitutionalisation was an illusion. It was considered impossible for persons living in institutions to live anywhere else due to their disabilities. Deinstitutionalisation was also seen as a criticism of institutional care. However, “deinstitutionalisation is based on ... people’s right to live in the community where everyone else is living”. In 2010, the Government of Finland issued a resolution to provide housing and related services for persons with intellectual disabilities, but covering only the downsizing of institutional care. In 2012, a strong resolution declared this time that care for persons with intellectual disabilities in residential institutions would have to end by 2020.<sup>34</sup>

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland adopted the 2010-2015 Housing Programme for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (the KEHAS programme). The aims of the programme were to:

- ▶ enable individual housing for both persons moving from institutions and childhood homes into accessible and functional flats in ordinary living environments;

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31. See also, Council of Europe, Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on deinstitutionalisation and community living of children with disabilities.

32. Service Foundation for People with an Intellectual Disability (2015), “An institution can never beat a home”, Final report of the project One of the Neighbours – Deinstitutionalisation in Finland 2011-2014, p. 4.

33. Service Foundation for People with an Intellectual Disability, Website.

34. “An institution can never beat a home”, p. 4.

- ▶ systematically reduce the capacity in institutions for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities in a controlled way;
- ▶ develop individual services which meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

The key principles of the programme were:

- ▶ individual service design in all the phases of the process, taking into account individual needs and hopes when planning and providing services;
- ▶ respecting the rights of service users and involving them and their families in the decision-making process;
- ▶ developing new models for organising support at the same time as closing institutions;
- ▶ enough well-trained staff which is committed to work according to common values;
- ▶ efficient use of resources, taking into account the quality of life factors.

Key barriers were highlighted and included the existence of big differences between areas in the availability of services; institutionalised structure and practice; the underdevelopment of basic services such as healthcare; communication and co-operation between different fields of administration; implementation of assistive technology and attitudes towards persons with an intellectual disability, including attitudes within basic services.

## Examples of implementation

The One of the Neighbours project and the regional sub-programme of the National Development Programme for Disability Services (VammaisKaste) in Pirkanmaa jointly organised training on human rights, the right to self-determination, person-centred planning and supported decision making. The training events provided tools for staff which supported persons living in the institution or persons moving out of the institution. In 2013, the One of the Neighbours project and VammaisKaste organised information events on disability services for local politicians of the Pirkanmaa region.<sup>35</sup>

“The City of Joensuu made the development of services for persons with intellectual disabilities into one of its key projects.” The co-operation between the city and the One of the Neighbours project started by the development of a

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35. Ibid., p. 8.

strategy. "The departments of child welfare, education, home care, and healthcare identified new opportunities for ... co-operation with the disability services. ... One of the aims of the disability services was to make service users' voices heard in all decision making about them. ... The city used the information to plan housing arrangements and prepare personal service plans."<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health considered the following elements within the deinstitutionalisation process as positive levers for developing new services:

- ▶ professional and well-educated staff;
- ▶ strong third sector taking care of service users' rights and many providers;
- ▶ legislation based on non-discrimination and equality;
- ▶ commitment to international treaties;
- ▶ the availability of good practices;
- ▶ co-operation between stakeholders.

### **Quality of life assessment in long-term care institutions: Latvian Movement for Independent Living (LATMIL)**

In 2012, the Latvian Movement for Independent Living (LATMIL) wanted to take action with regard to persons with disabilities living in institutions as only minor attention was paid to their quality of life.

LATMIL elaborated a quality of life assessment methodology to assess institutions for persons with disabilities.<sup>37</sup> The methodology is based on Schalock's Quality of Life framework, using a number of indicators linked with the eight quality of life dimensions.<sup>38</sup> The results are written down in assessment reports and consist of both a qualitative and quantitative evaluation. LATMIL has now trained 10 experts on this methodology.

In negotiations with the Latvian Welfare Ministry, a common understanding about the necessity to evaluate the quality of life of persons in long-term care institutions was reached and a co-operation agreement signed. A particular point of the agreement is that LATMIL is performing the quality of life assessments in long-term care institutions and will present proposals to the Ministry about necessary improvements and change in the social care system.

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36. Ibid., pp. 29-30.

37. Latvian Movement for Independent Living.

38. Emotional well-being, interpersonal relations, material well-being, personal development, physical well-being, self-determination, social inclusion, and rights.

Over the last few years, 18 quality of life assessments in long-term care institutions have been performed in Latvia, involving more than 400 persons with disabilities. After each assessment, a detailed report is developed by LATMIL. Every report has been the basis for negotiation with the Welfare Ministry. The assessment reports have also been used to organise a training session for representatives of the bureau of the Latvian Ombudsperson to raise awareness about the quality of life of persons with disabilities. There will also be training of persons with disabilities and staff. Moreover, the development of community-based services is essential to ensure there is an alternative to the institutions.

This co-operation has been one of the milestones for the evidence-based social policy change in the country towards deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities, which resulted in an Action Plan for Implementation of Deinstitutionalisation 2015-2020.<sup>39</sup> The action plan has been developed in close co-operation between the Latvian Welfare Ministry and non-governmental organisations, such as LATMIL, and was approved by the government. The action plan contains concrete measurable outcomes, a timeline for implementation and activities to implement the plan on the ground.

## **Raising awareness about abuse of persons with disabilities**

### **Raising awareness on abuse and empowering persons with disabilities**

In March 2013, the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN) Regional Office launched a two-year initiative across Europe with the co-funding of the European Commission. Several of its member associations were involved in the Keep Me Safe project “Empowering young people with learning disabilities to protect themselves against sexual abuse and violence across Europe”. The project included a mapping of the skills and needs within the partnership, sharing best practices, expertise and strategies, the creation of a comprehensive package of tools and its implementation and dissemination via training, technical assistance, mentoring and exchange visits.<sup>40</sup>

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39. Ministry for Welfare of Latvia (2015), Action Plan for Implementation of Deinstitutionalisation 2015-2020.

40. IPPF EN, Keep Me Safe project.

## Raising awareness on violence against women and girls with disabilities

Women and girls with disabilities have been recognised to be particularly exposed to violence, abuse and exploitation, and their sexual forms. Their specific experience has been recognised by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1991 in its General Recommendation 18 and by the UNCRPD Committee in 2016 in its General Comment No. 3 focusing on women and girls.<sup>41</sup> The two following examples are based on the understanding that women and girls with disabilities face additional and specific barriers to the full enjoyment of their rights that must be highlighted and combat.

### Violence against women with disabilities, a taboo subject: The DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada (DAWN)

The DisAbleD Women's Network of Canada (DAWN) is an organisation that works towards the elimination of violence and discrimination against women with disabilities and deaf women.<sup>42</sup> Based on the recognition that women with disabilities and deaf women are vulnerable to violence and experience it at alarming rates, DAWN launched a multi-year initiative on 25 November 2015 (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women). Entitled Legislation, Policy and Service Responses to Violence Against Women with Disabilities and Deaf Women, it aims "to examine and address the gaps in policy and service provision ... that contribute to the high levels of violence against this group of women". It also includes working groups to identify best practices and the opportunity for women with disabilities to directly propose responses to policy makers and service providers to improve the public response. In 2014, DAWN launched the campaign We Can Tell and We Will to encourage persons with disabilities to report sexual assault and abuse. It is based on the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of *R. v. D.A.I.* which recognises the right of persons with disabilities to be believed when

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41. For more information, see the Council of Europe study on freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse of persons with disabilities (2017). See also Article 16 of the UNCRPD and UNCRPD Committee (2016), General Comment 3 on women and girls; CEDAW Committee (1991), General Recommendation 18, Women with disabilities, contained in document A/46/38; the Istanbul Convention (2011) which includes disability, has a ground for non-discrimination in its Article 4 and refers to the UNCRPD in its Preamble.

42. They intentionally do not include deaf people within the group of people with disabilities. The organisation is sponsored by the federal government organisation "Status of Women Canada". DisAbleD Women's Network (DAWN), website.

they report sexual assault and abuse. The campaign included a public service announcement video.<sup>43</sup>

## One Billion Rising: Women are victims of violence across the world

Since 2012, the event “One Billion Rising” has been organised across the world with thousands of local events using art performance such as dances, music and plays and gathering people from diverse backgrounds. It includes sharing activists’ stories, videos and using social media. Each year, from 14 February (Valentine’s Day) to 8 March (International Women’s Day), this global campaign raises awareness on violence against women and girls, its prevalence and forms.<sup>44</sup>

In 2016, One Billion Rising: Rise for Revolution “Listen, Act, Rise” focused on marginalised women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities, with the aim of changing the system to effectively end violence. Examples of action include highlighting violence against women with disabilities by using sign language as part of a dancing choreography in Italy.<sup>45</sup> The Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities (SOIH) has also been involved in the campaign since its beginning. In 2016, the Union organised events in more than 40 cities across Croatia to raise the issue of violence against women with disabilities.<sup>46</sup> The Union will be involved in the 2017 campaign on the exploitation of women. As women and girls with disabilities are at higher risk of exploitation, violence and abuse, SOIH will highlight the specific situation of women with disabilities.

## **Raising awareness on the sexual and reproductive health of persons with disabilities**

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The UNCRPD refers to the sexual and reproductive health of persons with disabilities in its Article 25.<sup>47</sup> While practice may exclude persons with disabilities from decisions concerning their health, the UNCRPD requires informed consent. Sexual and healthcare encompasses issues such as providing

43. DAWN, We Can Tell and We Will campaign.

44. One Billion Rising, website.

45. One Billion Rising, press release.

46. One Billion Rising, SOIH.

47. Other relevant articles of the UNCRPD on health include Article 9 on accessibility, Article 16 on freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse, Article 22 on respect for privacy and Article 23 on respect for home and the family.

information to enable free and informed consent, preventing and responding to violence (for example gender-based violence) and sexually transmitted infections, access to family planning and maternal healthcare (including freedom from unwanted pregnancy, abortion and sterilisation), and the right to be treated with dignity and respect when using health-related services.

## National and European initiatives

Raising awareness in society about sexual and reproductive rights is not an easy task in general, especially when it comes to children and young people. However, persons with disabilities encounter additional difficulties at all ages to access the information and healthcare they need, when it is not simply denied, and education on this topic is lacking. This is due to various factors which include the taboo surrounding sexuality of persons with disabilities, enhanced by negative views, stereotypes and myths such as the one that persons with disabilities are asexual. Debunking myths and spreading a positive and realistic image is therefore essential. Difficulties may also arise from inaccessibility or a lack of reasonable accommodation in providing health-related services and information. For instance, a woman with a disability may find it difficult to access family planning. Multiple grounds can also combine to create additional barriers (for example women with disabilities, LGBTI persons, persons living in institutions, persons with complex impairments). Furthermore, studies and funding in this particular field are scarce.

### Examples of initiatives on sexual and reproductive health

From 2007 to 2010, British charity Leonard Cheshire Disability ran a project entitled In Touch. The project aimed at providing access to services and accessible information on sexual health for young persons with disabilities to make informed and safer choices.<sup>48</sup> Films and a training resource were made available.<sup>49</sup>

In “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” a sexual education programme was developed by the Health Education and Research Association (HERA). It aimed at teaching sexual health to young persons with learning disabilities so they can make informed sexual choices. HERA is a member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN).<sup>50</sup>

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48. Leonard Cheshire Disability, In Touch project (2007-2010).

49. Leonard Cheshire Disability, training resource.

50. HERA, sexual education programme.



In parallel to raising awareness of the general public and persons with disabilities on sexual and reproductive health, it is also important to raise awareness of public authorities.

**Sexual Education for Adults with Disabilities** was an EU-funded project which gathered nine partner organisations in seven countries (Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Finland, Lithuania, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) from October 2012 to September 2015.<sup>51</sup> The aim of the project was to map current sex education in the partner countries and see how this could be improved. A toolkit on sex and relationships education aimed at persons with learning disabilities was developed. Creative arts approaches are put forward such as drama play, photos, and card game.<sup>52</sup>

Some of the barriers that persons with disabilities face when accessing health-related services in general can be uncovered by employing user-led checking tools. As an example, the British organisation CHANGE has partnered with Leeds University and the National Health Service in England to create user-led quality checking tools for persons with learning disabilities to address the gaps and inequalities they experience when using services such as dentists, acute hospitals, mental health services, learning disability services, etc.<sup>53</sup> This method also contributes to the shift from the medical model to the social model where persons with disabilities are full partners in building and improving health services properly tailored to respond to their needs.

## **Co-creation of strategies and actions**

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### **Joint forum of disability stakeholders as a vehicle to a nationwide structure: Bulgarian National Alliance for Social Responsibility (NASO)**

In 2007, the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) and the Bulgarian Agency for Social Development “Vision” organised the first national forum to bring together service providers for persons with disabilities, municipalities, the Ministry of Labour and Social

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51. Sexual Education for Adults with Disabilities (SEAD).

52. SEADS Toolkit on Sexual Education for Adults with Disabilities (2015).

53. CHANGE, NHS Learning Disability Quality Checkers Project, website.

Policy and other state agencies and institutions working in the social sector in Bulgaria. Two years later, the NGO National Alliance for Social Responsibility (NASO) was founded. Its mission

is to combine, motivate and support the possibilities and efforts of profit and non-profit legal entities, municipalities, municipal and regional bodies and organisations by providing national and international partnership and participation in the establishment and implementation of socially responsible behaviour, policies and activities in support of different social communities for a better quality of life and accelerated social development of Bulgaria.<sup>54</sup>

Members of NASO include the National Association of Municipalities. As municipalities are the main social service providers in Bulgaria, the impact, co-ordination of actions and fine-tuning are increased.<sup>55</sup>

The forum takes place every year to discuss, share information and fine-tune opinions and initiatives among a variety of actors in the disability field. The uniqueness of the forum consists of the openness and effectiveness of the partnership between all kinds of structures and institutions working in the social sector, not only including social service providers and employers/businesses, but also municipalities and state authorities. As a result of the forums, innovative actions have been taken which have for instance led to the establishment of social service quality standards and the introduction of supported employment.

This nationwide partnership model is only possible when realistic goals are set and actions on the ground initiated. A mutual understanding, respect and trust among all partners and active involvement of each partner are essential. The activities must also be adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries and to the context. Possible barriers include the unequal availability of professional staff in different organisations and areas, funding and low financial standards. Hence, the need remains to keep looking for common solutions with all stakeholders, but also to keep on organising forums every year to get the stakeholders together and to raise awareness on rights which have not yet been realised.

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54. Bulgarian National Alliance for Social Responsibility, website.

55. Ibid.

## Co-creating a campaign with and for persons with disabilities: Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (Unia), Belgium

To mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December) and the 10th anniversary of the UNCRPD in 2016, the Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities of Belgium (Unia) launched a campaign by, and for, persons with disabilities entitled “I have a disability and I have rights”.<sup>56</sup> A survey commissioned by Unia in 2012, highlighted that many persons with disabilities did not know their rights sufficiently. The intention was therefore to empower persons with disabilities to know and speak up about their rights, to take action and contact Unia when one of their rights is being violated.

The campaign started with what was called a “shoe statement”, placing shoes on different places across Belgium to stand against the invisibility of persons with disabilities.

The campaign also targeted persons with disabilities who are more difficult to reach; hence the materials were also spread to the users’ councils in service provider organisations. In this regard, it was crucial that the campaign was designed in close co-operation by, and with, persons with disabilities who have made their own film to underline their rights. The rights Unia wants persons with disabilities to be aware of and to invoke, if needed, are the following: “the right to:

- ▶ have a voice in the development of policy and legislation;
- ▶ have access to buildings, schools, housing and their place of work and to be able to use public transport;
- ▶ make decisions and have control over their own finances and property;
- ▶ have protection against all forms of physical and psychological violence and abuse, and to be treated with respect;
- ▶ live where and with whom they wish and to receive the necessary support to make this possible;
- ▶ inclusive education, so that students do not have to attend separate schools;
- ▶ reasonable accommodation within the general education system, both collectively and individually;
- ▶ work on the regular labour market and on an equal basis with others.”<sup>57</sup>

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56. Unia, campaign “I have a disability and I have rights”.

57. Ibid.

## **Awareness-raising programme in mainstream nurseries and schools: Hand in Hand Hungarian Foundation – Kézenfogva Alapítvány**

The intention of the programme “Közös a Napunk!” (“We share the same sun”) was to raise awareness among children in kindergarten and schools about children with disabilities and their equal right to be part of the community.<sup>58</sup>

As the Hand in Hand Foundation had run the programme successfully in 10 schools in the countryside, the municipality of the XI District approached the Foundation to adapt the programme to the needs of the nurseries in the district. Since 2013, the Hand in Hand Foundation has worked together with the municipality and has trained about 70 kindergarten teachers, reached about 500 children, met about 50 parents and held six campaigning days. The programme basically consists of 30 hours of accredited staff training (school teachers or kindergarten teachers) and 18 hours of residential training for persons with disabilities.

For the success and the sustainability of the programme, it was important to make persons with disabilities and teachers able to work together. The Foundation taught them how to conduct a class together and during the process persons with disabilities were considered as partners. At the end of the trainings, a moderated and structured meeting was held in a supported environment where everyone could prepare for the first class. In total, in 2014, in Békéscsaba, Pécs and Budapest, 59 teachers, 33 persons with disabilities and 20 facilitators were trained and more than 60 special classes held.

There was also a disability awareness week conducted by teachers, a full-day activity to raise awareness among children without disabilities together with children with disabilities, and a meeting with parents. The programme brought the world of children with disabilities closer to the world of children without disabilities. Carrying out an activity together facilitates acceptance.

In 2014, the Hand in Hand Foundation concentrated on sports by having all children play together. A nationwide competition was organised for pupils aged 7-18 years to meet and play sports together in their free time. It was promoted via online tools and social websites. Twenty schools applied for the competition and more than 110 activities were organised. Around 1 380 pupils were mobilised and 300 persons with disabilities got directly involved.

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58. Hand in Hand Foundation, website.

Opportunities were also offered for children to try special Paralympic sports such as sitting volleyball and table tennis for blind persons.

Other effects of the 2014 programme were:

- ▶ ensuring sustainability: the 59 trained teachers will continue to conduct the special classes for more pupils every year;
- ▶ positive effects in the quality of living of the trained persons with disabilities by enabling them to stand up for themselves, talk about themselves and interact with other people;
- ▶ deepening the consciousness of persons without disabilities gained during the jointly conducted classes but also by enabling them to do sports with persons with disabilities in their free time, not only limited to the classroom;
- ▶ a good relationship with the media, as press releases were sent to the relevant press at regular intervals (35 press coverages in the end).

The programme was very well received by all participants. As one teacher emphasised “Every educator should participate in a similar programme to change the social attitude to persons with disabilities.” The Hand in Hand Foundation monitors further implementation. However, a possible barrier is the complexity of the programme. As it is also quite expensive, without committed supporters, sustainability remains an issue.

# Conclusion

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What is the cost of not raising awareness? What is the cost of not educating society which still mainly expects persons with disabilities to adapt to their environment instead of vice versa? Why is there a lack of long-lasting awareness-raising campaigns in most countries? Ask anyone on the street if they remember the latest campaign, if it was successful in reaching a large audience and in creating impact, they will be able to tell you. People are generally not against equal rights for persons with disabilities, but they do not necessarily see the benefits either.

“Awareness raising” has become a concept like “mainstreaming”. Everyone has heard about it and has an interpretation of what successful elements are necessary to get there. This study aimed at providing a navigation map of awareness-raising strategies, campaigns and initiatives. It should be kept in mind that what to design and to implement is not as important as how you do it, and the involvement of persons with disabilities is more than crucial.

As the recent developments in Europe, but also beyond Europe, have shown over the past years, it is not merely a question of disability, but one of diversity. We are afraid of losing our prosperity and identity when we share with others with a different background, culture or even intellectual or physical ability. People are hesitant to take a new direction and to make brave choices because their past choices have taken them where they are now. Whether this is positive or not, at least we often have the illusion that we have all circumstances under control. In a globalised world where “cloud communication” has gained ground and has removed physical and mental borders, we clearly do not.

In this study, barriers, prejudices and ignorance that persons with disabilities experience on a daily basis were described. It also looked at measures which would enable persons with disabilities to live independently, build a network, spend their leisure time to learn, get a job and feel useful, and to have a feeling of self-worth, self-realisation and self-determination. Not enough people in society know what the difference is between the causes and consequences of feeling “disabled” and of the difference between the latter and disability.

Attitudes and knowledge should be targeted when the objective is to create influential and sustainable awareness-raising campaigns and other initiatives. Good practices show that change, positive change for everyone involved, is possible if there is enough (political) will and leadership, as well as a wide-enough support base. Additionally, strong reciprocal partnerships are needed to achieve goals of equal rights for persons with disabilities.

There is not one model which will work everywhere, but some elements of successful models are transferable. The main message here is to start from common denominators, rather than differences or implementation problems.

The examples mentioned use the bottom-up strategy previously described in this study. They all use the energy of the people and organisations/institutions affected when enabling the rights of persons with disabilities. Involving persons with disabilities in strategies is not enough. When it comes to the rights of persons with disabilities to mainstream jobs, employers from industry and services and their representatives should also be involved in the co-creation of strategies. When it comes to the right to independent living, current institutions and service providers should also be involved, no matter how long it takes. One could argue that if they are part of the problem, they should also be part of the solution. When it comes to the right to education, mainstream and special school boards – where relevant – need to be there when creating strategies for change.

Making persons with disabilities part of mainstream activities is the best choice to enable their rights. To get there, working with all stakeholders on sustainable solutions, using the “PULL-principle”, may be the most effective strategy.<sup>59</sup>

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59. See “Awareness-raising logic” in section 3.2.1. of this study.

# Checklist for promoting awareness on disability

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As a general trend, developing more consciousness among people about problems they do not experience themselves can take a long time. Hence, the key importance of listening to the experts by experience (persons with disabilities) and co-developing a well-thought-out awareness-raising strategy and corresponding actions.

As illustrated in the examples above, there is not one way, nor an easy and quick way to get results. The following questions are meant to help policy decision makers at any level not to forget about the elements in their campaign or strategy which might be crucial for it to succeed, for instance because of the required involvement of certain stakeholders or because the communication is not adequate to the goal.

## Strategies

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- ▶ **Are you co-creating** awareness-raising strategies and actions together with persons with disabilities; experts by experience? This way, you will naturally address questions such as:
  - Across policy departments, does every project avoid potentially adverse effects on persons with disabilities?
  - Do you have a disability impact assessment tool to that end?
  - Have you created enough visibility of persons with disabilities and a momentum by having the public talk about the subject?
  - Have you sufficiently challenged the idea of disability as a taboo subject? Have you taken into account the multiple discrimination dimension?
- ▶ Have you built in the PULL-principle to mobilise stakeholders, in order to obtain the required support base for your initiatives, which will follow on from your strategy?



- ▶ Is a **media strategy** part of your overall **communication strategy**?
  - Does it include guidelines to communicate with the media and external partners, so that all staff is aligned?
- ▶ Can you **lead by example** and raise awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities in your own institute/organisation?
  - Have you checked examples of effective good practices of recruitment strategies for instance?
  - Have you talked to institutes/organisations in your country or abroad who tried it, to know the obstacles and to avoid making similar mistakes?
  - Have you checked that your strategies are also targeting the two other levels next to the meso (social-organisational) level, i.e. the macro (political/institutional level) and micro (individual) level?

## Objectives and actions

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- ▶ Do you have a **database** to know whom to contact in terms of self-advocacy organisations, organisations representing persons with disabilities and/or their families, service provider organisations and other relevant stakeholders to form partnerships with?
  - Have you talked to experts in your country/region to help you update your network?
- ▶ Have you defined specific strategic and operational objectives? Are the **objectives SMART** (specific, measurable, achievable, result-oriented and time-bound)?
- ▶ Have various **alternatives** been considered before taking a decision on the action?
  - Did you involve all relevant stakeholders to see the issue from their perspective?
- ▶ Does the action build on or **address a gap** in current actions and strategies, or respond to evidence that current actions or strategies are not working?
  - In other words, what are the benefits and costs of taking action as well as not taking action? Have you mapped these?
- ▶ Have you thought about **co-operation with national and local media** to deliver disability-sensitive messages which can contribute to raising public awareness on disability?

- ▶ Have you planned to involve persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the **monitoring and evaluation** of the actions?
  - How will you know if you have succeeded? The use of indicators is helpful for measuring progress.
- ▶ Does the action demonstrate the value of a human rights-based approach by explicit reference to international **human rights standards**?
- ▶ Are your actions in alignment with the **principles of good governance** of the Council of Europe? ([www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Strategy\\_Innovation/12principles\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/localdemocracy/Strategy_Innovation/12principles_en.asp))

# Key resources

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All URLs referenced in this document were checked on 29 April 2017.

Numerous awareness-raising initiatives are available online. Below is a non-exhaustive list of examples of campaigns, strategies and actions from different kinds of stakeholders in the public and private disability and the social services sectors.

## **Council of Europe**

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The Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023 – Human rights: a reality for all, available at: [www.coe.int/en/web/disability/strategy-2017-2023](http://www.coe.int/en/web/disability/strategy-2017-2023)

The Council of Europe Disability Action Plan 2006-2015: quality of life and full participation in society, available at: [www.coe.int/en/web/disability/action-plan-2006-2015](http://www.coe.int/en/web/disability/action-plan-2006-2015)

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Council of Europe (2017), “Study on equal recognition before the law of persons with disabilities”.

Council of Europe (2017), “Study on freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse of persons with disabilities”.

Council of Europe (2017), “Study on promoting equality and non-discrimination for persons with disabilities”.

Videos of the Council of Europe on disabilities, available at: [www.coe.int/en/web/disability/videos](http://www.coe.int/en/web/disability/videos)

## European Commission

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Awareness-raising information campaigns on anti-discrimination including against persons with disabilities, media, NGOs and training seminars to raise awareness.<sup>60</sup>

### European Expert Group (EEG) on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care

“The EEG is a broad coalition gathering stakeholders representing people with care or support needs including children, people with disabilities, people experiencing mental health problems, families, people experiencing homelessness; as well as service providers, public authorities and intergovernmental organisations. The Group has as its mission the promotion of person-centred, quality and empowering models of services and formal and informal care that fully respect the human rights of all people with care or support needs. [It] supports national efforts to implement the necessary reforms, in compliance with the UNCRPD (in particular with Article 19), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Fundamental Rights Charter.

Raising awareness: in 2013 and 2014, with the support of the European Commission, the EEG organised training seminars on the transition from institutional to community-based care in 12 European countries, as well as a high-level debate in the European Parliament on 10 December 2014.

The Group also produced guidelines, aimed to raise awareness among national policy makers on the transition to community-based care as well as a toolkit for authorities at any level on the use of European funds to support this transition.”<sup>61</sup>

### World Health Organization and United Nations Population Fund

Guidance note on “Promoting sexual and reproductive health for persons with disabilities” (2009).<sup>62</sup>

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60. European Commission, Awareness-raising information and initiatives, available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/awareness/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/awareness/index_en.htm).

61. European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care, available at: <https://deinstitutionalisation.com/>.

62. WHO and UNFPA (2009), “Promoting sexual and reproductive health for persons with disabilities”, available at: [www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/srh\\_for\\_disabilities.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/srh_for_disabilities.pdf).

## Eurochild

“The ‘Opening Doors for Europe’s Children’ campaign of 2016 aimed to support national efforts to develop child protection systems that strengthen families and ensure high-quality family and community-based alternative care for children, by leveraging EU funding and policy and building capacity in civil society.” The campaign also raised awareness on the rights of children with disabilities which are violated, as among children in institutions, there are many children with disabilities.

It is a partnership between five international organisations and civil society across 15 European countries.<sup>63</sup>

## European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)

EASPD organises an employment conference bi-annually, where an Employment for All Award is awarded.<sup>64</sup> The campaign to select organisations and nominees is an example of raising awareness on the right of people with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others. There are two categories from which nominees are selected. The first category is for businesses/employers who promote better employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. The second category comprises social services and support providers who exhibit exceptional qualities in their practices in the employment field for persons with disabilities. The 10 best practices are furthermore selected and published.

The next conference and awarding process in 2017 will be in co-operation with the European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE).<sup>65</sup>

## European Disability Forum (EDF)

EDF describes three top campaigns which are linked to raising awareness on the rights and situation of persons with a disability:<sup>66</sup>

- ▶ Freedom of movement; a freedom campaign toolkit can be downloaded.

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63. Opening Door’s for Europe’s Children, available at: [www.openingdoors.eu/](http://www.openingdoors.eu/).

64. EASPD, available at: [www.easpd.eu/en/content/employment-all-award-2015](http://www.easpd.eu/en/content/employment-all-award-2015).

65. EASPD, available at: [www.easpd.eu/en/content/easpd-and-euse-employment-all-award-2017](http://www.easpd.eu/en/content/easpd-and-euse-employment-all-award-2017).

66. European Disability Forum, available at: [www.edf-feph.org/top-campaigns](http://www.edf-feph.org/top-campaigns).

- ▶ The economic crisis; EDF created a monitoring tool: the EDF observatory on the impact of the economic crisis on the rights of persons with disabilities.
- ▶ The EU elections held in 2014.

## European Network on Independent Living (ENIL)

ENIL runs various campaigns on a regular basis; the latest one, in 2016, has been about access to EU funds to realise the rights of persons with disabilities.<sup>67</sup>

The aim of the EU Funds for Our Rights campaign is to encourage the European Commission and the member states to improve the monitoring and complaints system, in order to ensure that structural funds are used to support the rights of persons with disabilities, rather than restrict them.

## European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Publication on “The right to political participation for persons with disabilities” (2014).<sup>68</sup>

## Equinet – European Network of Equality Bodies in Europe

Two campaigns deal with discrimination against persons with disabilities in particular:<sup>69</sup>

- Malta: Here We Are;
- Belgium: “The train with a disability runs 24 hours late”.

## European projects, financed via EU funds

European projects on disability generally raise awareness on specific topics, as dissemination is part of every project such as inclusive education, the right to (paid) employment for persons with disabilities, the right to live independently or the right to access to justice.

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67. European Network on Independent Living, available at: <http://enil.eu/campaigns/eu-funds-for-our-rights/>.

68. Fundamental Rights Agency, available at: [http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications?title=disability&year%5Bmin%5D%5Byear%5D=&year%5Bmax%5D%5Byear%5D=&related\\_content=&language=All&countries\\_eu=All&publisher=81](http://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications?title=disability&year%5Bmin%5D%5Byear%5D=&year%5Bmax%5D%5Byear%5D=&related_content=&language=All&countries_eu=All&publisher=81).

69. Equinet, available at: [www.equineteurope.org/-Media-library-130-](http://www.equineteurope.org/-Media-library-130-).

For instance, the Erasmus+ database will give you access to descriptions, results and contact information of all projects funded under the Erasmus+ programme and its predecessor programmes in the field of education, training, youth and sports.<sup>70</sup>

## Handicap International

“Making it Work” – good practices for disability-inclusive development.

“This methodology is based on identifying effective or innovative actions that have achieved positive changes [whether from grass-roots level initiatives or regional-level activities] and analyzing how they could be sustained or replicated. At the heart of this process, people with disabilities validate what works and use the evidence-based good practices to strengthen their advocacy to influence social change.

A multi-stakeholder approach helps to build alliances and collaboration around disability inclusion issues. Making it Work puts an emphasis on “learning by doing,” empowering groups to work collectively to document and promote change. Handicap International started the Making It Work Initiative in 2014, bringing together local and global experts on disability and gender.

‘Raising awareness on disability and gender-based violence: What does it take to leave no one behind?’ Within the framework of the international campaign “16 days of activism on gender-based violence” and in celebration of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Handicap International, in collaboration with UN Women [organised] a working session [on 1st December 2016] on how UN agencies, States and Non-governmental organisations can take actions to stop gender-based violence and become more disability-inclusive.”<sup>71</sup>

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70. Erasmus+, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/>.

71. Making it Work, available at: [www.makingitwork-crpd.org/about-miw/](http://www.makingitwork-crpd.org/about-miw/); [www.handicap-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/DOC16\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.handicap-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/DOC16_ENG.pdf); [www.makingitwork-crpd.org/news/raising-awareness-disability-and-gbv](http://www.makingitwork-crpd.org/news/raising-awareness-disability-and-gbv).

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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.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE