



RESOLUTION ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES AT LOCAL LEVEL IN EUROPE

Adopted at EDF Board meeting on 13 March 2016 in Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Considering the importance of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and that it has been 10 years since its adoption by the UN General Assembly;

Considering that the EU and almost all EU Member States have ratified the UN CRPD, and that the three remaining EU Member States, the Netherlands, Finland and Ireland, are working on the process of ratification; Iceland is also in the process of ratification;

Recalling that there are 80 million persons with disabilities in the EU and that they rely on access to mainstream local services and access to support services which are often administered by local and regional authorities;

Acknowledging the effort that local and regional authorities have already undertaken to implement the UN CRPD and to ensure that their local communities are inclusive;

Remembering that Eleanor Roosevelt explained that universal human rights begin in "small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person; the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. (..) Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere";

Highlighting the fact that responsibility for implementation of the UN CRPD is often transferred to the local level but that resources are often not earmarked for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in communities, which creates inequalities between different municipalities and regions;

Recalling that, due to the economic crisis, financial resources of local and regional authorities have been drastically reduced, hindering their capacity to respond to people's needs and, in several European countries, even forcing people with disabilities to move back to the institutions and separated living places they wished restricted to the past;

Emphasising the fact that information disseminated regarding the implementation of the UN CRPD is not accessible in all formats needed by persons with disabilities, which creates inequalities in access to information and knowledge (easy to read and braille documents, sign language and subtitles in each audiovisual media, etc.);



Keeping in mind that the EU, having concluded the UN CRPD, has to implement the UN CRPD in cooperation with the Member States, since the responsibility of implementation of many EU policy areas is shared with the Member States;

Noting that the obligation of States (under article 4.3 of the UN CRPD) to involve persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in public decisions, policies and programmes that concern them, is also applicable to local and regional authorities;

Therefore, EDF Board during its meeting, took stock of how the UN CRPD has been implemented at regional and local level and how persons with disabilities have been included in this implementation process.

Based on the exchanges, EDF discussed the following priorities:

- Implementation of the UN CRPD must take place simultaneously at all levels, from the EU, to national, regional and local. Clear leadership, coordination between levels, common strategies, strong legislation and standardisation at central level is essential. Well resourced practical systematic implementation is fundamental at the local level.
- Strengthening the awareness and knowledge of human rights of persons with disabilities is crucial, not only for local and regional authorities, but also for local citizens whatever their abilities, enterprises and organisations.
- Participation of persons with disabilities, with their representative organisations is critical at all levels; this participation should be meaningful, sustainable and be underpinned by training and capacity building of Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs); attention should be paid to the support, funding and capacity building of local level DPOs, and ensuring the participation of people with disabilities from rural areas and people living in poverty, isolation or in institutions.
- DPOs are strongest with a diverse and wide membership. DPOs can play a key role in engaging persons with disabilities in policy and programme processes at all levels and in providing a communication link to and from policy makers and stakeholders in the implementation of the UN CRPD, including trade unions, employers, education professionals, etc. DPOs are even stronger if they are responsive to the signals of individual persons with disabilities and if they find common goals for different groups of persons with disabilities, both on the local, national and EU level.
- DPOs will also ensure that UN CRPD actions take into consideration the rights of ALL persons with disabilities, old and young, men and women, people denied their legal capacity, people with intellectual, psychosocial and multiple disabilities; all those who face the most severe and multiple discrimination.
- Local, national and EU authorities have the obligation to create conditions for DPOs to be part of a level playing field, including delivering community based services to



promote independent living of persons with disabilities and providing accessible information on local issues to persons with disabilities.

- The responsibility of national governments to protect, respect and promote human rights also means that they should carefully monitor the differences between localities and take regulatory or redistributive action if these differences hinder the effective participation of persons with disabilities.
- All EU investment funding should be used to promote UN CRPD implementation, including in the European pre-accession countries, the European neighbourhood and International Cooperation. UN CRPD implementation is not only words - it is a resourced, systematic approach leading to inclusive societies.
- At the EU level, mutual learning and the sharing of valuable practices and methods for the local implementation of the UN CRPD should be stimulated.

Awareness raising and information sharing is important but not enough; we need to tear down barriers which persons with disabilities face in all spheres of life. Systematic implementation of the UN CRPD involves analysing and repealing all laws which conflict with the UN CRPD, including those which allow for forced treatment, denial of legal capacity, etc. Constant vigilance is needed to prevent institutionalisation of people, especially in these times of austerity. The standstill principle and progressive realisation must be fully respected and cannot be set aside by cuts and austerity measures.

To create a consistent approach to the UN CRPD in Europe, EDF calls on the European Institutions to demonstrate leadership, adopt guidelines and provide support to the local and regional authorities on the implementation of the UN CRPD; and to involve persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the process.