



# **An Inclusive European Society**

## **The European Disability Forum Response to the Consultation on the EU 2020 Strategy**

**December 2009**

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### **An Inclusive European Society The European Disability Forum Response to the Consultation on the EU 2020 Strategy.**

The document is available in English, and on large-print upon demand from the EDF Secretariat, and on the EDF Website at: [www.edf-feph.org](http://www.edf-feph.org)

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## 1. The Inclusive Approach – A European Disability Pact

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As the representative organisation of 65 million Europeans with disabilities, the European Disability Forum would like to give our views on the future vision for economic and social progress in the EU. As persons with disabilities, we can and demand to play a full role as citizens in all spheres of life, including the labour market and the economy in general in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities recently concluded by the European Community/the European Union. For this reason, we propose a number of measures below which are developed to make a European contribution to the inclusion of persons with disabilities possible.

However, first and foremost, we take the occasion to highlight our proposal for a **European Pact on the Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. The proposal is attached to this response. Ultimately to be adopted by the European Council, The Pact is meant to create a framework for European policies aimed at promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and to give impetus to the coordination of disability policies among EU Member States and the EU institutions, in particular the European Commission.

The Pact is furthermore meant to give a clear long term direction to disability policy at European level. **The instruments to achieve this are enhanced coordination between the European and the national level, mainstreaming of disability in European policies and European institutions, close involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities, clear commitments from European policy-makers, the definition of progress indicators and systematic follow-up on these.**

The proposal builds on existing policy instruments on international, European and national level and reflects that persons with disabilities expect systematic improvements of their living conditions and respect for their equal rights in policy making on all levels.

The European Disability Pact is meant as a policy tool which makes it possible to look towards the future based on the principles of the Convention and the achieved results within European disability policy so far, as well as to contribute to the review of the Lisbon strategy.

Hence, the European Disability Pact follows the same general approach as the European Commission sketch of the EU 2020 Strategy. However, the significant difference is a clear demand to ensure that all relevant strands of a post-Lisbon

framework are developed with the aim of including all groups in society. The economy has to work for the needs of people - but not only that, the inclusion of marginalised groups in all spheres of the economy is a prerequisite for successful inclusion. Disability policies should not only be “repairing” the damages made by economic and social factors, they should ensure that persons with disabilities are part of and active in the development right from the beginning.

The European Disability Pact is an instrument which can be used to ensure that this happens. **Its priorities should be integrated in the EU 2020 Strategy, and a final European Disability Pact should likewise take account of the vision set out by EU 2020.**

A precondition for the process to work and benefit real people living real lives is proper involvement and consultation of the persons concerned. EDF is, therefore, worried that the preparation of the EU 2020 Strategy seems to be rushed through thus not allowing for meaningful reflection and involvement of civil society, or other stakeholders for that matter. We strongly urge the European Commission to prolong the preparation process with the aim of developing a strategy which will make a difference for Europeans with and without disabilities. The process, as it stands now, can only contribute to the sense of distance which many Europeans feel towards the EU.

EDF is, therefore, also more than ready to be involved in all future discussions and is, of course, available to clarify and elaborate on the European Disability Pact as well as the comments and proposals given below.

## 2. Inclusive education

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Constant improvement of levels of education in the EU is indeed a necessity. This means a focus on quality and specialisation, but it also involves a significant improvement of access to education, including all groups of persons with disabilities. Access to education is a precondition for full citizenship, and in relation to the EU 2020 Strategy, for playing a full role on the labour market and in the economy as such.

As part of the efforts to expand the labour force in the medium and long run, significantly increased inclusiveness of education systems should be pursued. The starting point must be that primary and secondary schools are open to all learners and that support, as well as adequate environmental adaptation are put in place to underpin this.

EDF has noticed with satisfaction that the European Commission gives priority to increased openness to non-typical learners in higher education. We have the

expectation that this term includes persons with disabilities, including persons with disabilities in need of upgrading of skills later in life.

More possibilities for vocational training for more categories of persons with disabilities need to be provided - also with the aim of creating a more direct way for persons with disabilities to enter the labour market thus breaking down the barrier consisting in lack of experience due to prejudice unfortunately still widely present among some employers.

Enhancing the qualification of education and health professional and creating new jobs (case managers, job coaches) will facilitate the transition from school system to work or persons with disabilities in need of high level of support.

It will be essential to have clear targets and indicators on inclusiveness of education and training in the future open method of coordination and elsewhere, e.g. in strategies on active labour market inclusion. Hence, **inclusive education should be among the priorities of the future open method of coordination on education and training. Member States need to commit to well-defined targets in this area as well.**

### 3. Research for Inclusion

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It will be important to reap the potential of research for persons with disabilities and European industries alike. This is even more important in light of the aging of the European and parts of the global population. **Research and innovation can make a valuable contribution to the quality of life and independence of persons with disabilities of all ages.** This can be in the form of technologies and systems which are useable for all groups in society, including persons with disabilities. **Developing solutions which are designed for all in a cost-efficient way requires research.** This research will lay the foundation for access for all groups in society to the Internet, self-service in the public sector, transport systems, public places etc.

Further research is needed to ensure interoperability between mainstream technologies and assistive technology used by some persons with disabilities. Europe is lacking behind e.g. the United States in the assistive technology sector partly due to the lack of joint and coordinated research efforts. The EU needs to increase its focus on research priorities which can have a potential benefit for marginalised groups. This also means innovation which involves users with disabilities. There is an unlocked potential for applied research in this sector which could make a contribution to European competitiveness.

**Investment in inclusive design and tools for independence, therefore, needs to**

**be a clear priority for future coordinated European efforts in the field of technological research and innovation. Moreover, the upgrading of skills among engineers and other developers based on research in design for all is highly needed.** This could e.g. be done through a European master's programme on design for all.

## 4. Inclusive Employment

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As also indicated above, labour market inclusion is an essential instrument for the full integration of persons with disabilities in society. Action is highly needed - persons with disabilities considered as a group are still more than twice as likely as other Europeans to be unemployed. And this figure is not taking persons excluded from the labour market altogether into consideration.

So it is absolutely right to focus on employment. However, there is a severe lack of understanding of what it takes to ensure increased labour market participation of persons with disabilities. It is a clear and detrimental mistake to think that persons with disabilities can be pushed into jobs just by using economic incentives. The process is very complex and takes a fundamental change of a number of societal structures.

We need to strike the right balance between adequate social protection and the possibilities to move towards more labour market inclusion. A whole array of measures must be used in parallel.

For persons with disabilities to be able to take up a job, Essential services need to be accessible. It is a question of ensuring that persons with disabilities can develop skills and use the support offered to all citizens in the form of education, information, advice, etc. However, in some cases more tailor-made solutions are necessary, e.g. in the form of education and vocational training plans which are tailored on individual strengths and needs, assistive technology or personal assistance. The services are the foundation for qualifying for a job, i.e. training and education, for applying for a job, i.e. accessible information and advice, and for carrying out a job on a daily basis, i.e. adaptations of the work place, assistive technology, personal assistance etc.

Resources need to be available to break down physical and mental barriers to employment. Sometimes this can also be in the form of a subsidy for a certain period

which gives a person with a disability the fair chance to prove capabilities which employers might be sceptical about.

Positive action can be necessary in order to break away from the history of discrimination of persons with disabilities on the labour market. This needs to be used strategically with inclusion in mainstream employment as the ambition. Moreover, direct assistance to persons with disabilities to start up their own businesses can be a way of breaking with discrimination. This is also relevant in light of the focus on entrepreneurship in the consultation document from the European Commission.

Indicators which can measure the use of this variety of inclusion instruments need to be developed. And the complexity of the task needs to be reflected in relevant future employment guidelines.

Therefore, **the future European Employment Strategy needs to include as a clear priority with quantifiable targets the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the labour market.** It is, furthermore, obvious that it should be clearly linked to the future open method of coordination on social inclusion and social protection. For progress to happen, persons with disabilities need to be given instruments and support to move out of exclusion to a higher degree of employment according to skills and possibilities.

## 5. Social Inclusion

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The future open method on social inclusion and social protection needs to take the rights of persons with disabilities into account to a much larger extent. The specific right of persons with disabilities to receive habilitation or rehabilitation, both general and labour market-directed, is spelled out in Articles 26 and 27 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is a very relevant example of a specific right which persons with disabilities need to enjoy in order for us to be part of society. These rights need recognition - they are the basic foundation for a person to function in a modern-day European life.

Today, an important number of persons with disabilities are forced to live in closed and inadequate institutions, are subject to inhuman and degrading treatment and are

unable to exercise a fundamental right: the right to choose about their own lives. Full inclusion and participation of all disabled people in society requires policies supporting a transition from existing closed institutions to high quality community-based alternatives, which allow each individual to develop their potential and to be recognised for the human and social capital they represent, according to the Policy statement on Community Living of the European Commission in 2006. Disabled people's equal right to live in the community and to choose where and with whom to live should be guaranteed, as stated in the article 19 of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. **The development of Community based services and the reform of institutional care should be a priority in the new Open methods of coordination.**

Furthermore, there is an urgent need to define indicators which give us a picture of the barriers to social inclusion of persons with disabilities and the efforts to break them down. This presupposes innovative thinking. We cannot just rely on traditional statistical data and administrative records about the number of persons receiving benefits etc. It requires indicators dealing with the accessibility of services of general interest, the quality of social services and documentation of other kinds of openness to persons with disabilities, e.g. in local decision-making.

Hence, **new indicators need to be included in the future open method on social inclusion and social protection – indicators which can give a clear picture of the social situation faced by persons with disabilities, including poverty and income in general.** And these indicators should, of course, be **linked up to well-defined targets** relevant for persons with disabilities in the open method of coordination on social inclusion and social protection.

## 6. Inclusive Markets

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When the consultation is mentioning empowering Europeans in their role as consumers and actors on the market, this should also include persons with disabilities. It should be possible for persons with disabilities to buy consumer goods and services on equal terms with other Europeans. This is not the case today as many products and services do not take account of the fact that more than 10 percent of the consumers have a disability. This can only be remedied through clear

and binding legislation dealing with access for persons with disabilities to both goods and services.

However, there is also plenty to do in order to stimulate market actors to provide the highly needed solutions. This involves among other things breaking down barriers to the purchase of assistive technology across borders. Still, it is a market dominated by public entities and narrow national ideas about the needs of persons with disabilities.

**European labelling supported by standardisation processes** could be a way to increase the transparency of European markets for persons with disabilities. First and foremost mainstream markets, but also markets for assistive technology when relevant. A labelling system could be one component of a legislative framework.

## 7. Inclusion in the Information Society

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The modern-day European societies are heavily influenced by developments within information and communication technology (ICT). It is a clear example of a sector where it is essential to ensure that all persons in society can take part. This also includes persons with disabilities. For some groups of persons with disabilities, ICT can even be a means to inclusion. However, if it is not ensured that persons with disabilities can use ICT on equal terms with other citizens, we risk exclusion from the labour market and public life as such.

Access to the on line market for goods and services depend on access to ICT. Consequently, market operators need to take the opportunities for persons with disabilities into account. The same is the case for public services and developers of ICT solutions to be applied at the work place.

In the ICT sector, there is an enormous potential to use new developments for the benefit of all citizens. There is, however, also a risk of leaving certain groups in society behind. This will be detrimental for the persons in question, but also for society in general. It will mean that we let go of an opportunity to give more people a fair chance on the labour market and in economic life as such.

Thus, ICT is not only a driver of growth; it is a potential barrier or a potential lever

depending on the way it is used. Access needs to be backed up by legislation, and in turn the market can be used to deliver the best and most cost-efficient solutions.

**Better indicators of inclusion in the information society need to be developed.** And Member States need to live up to the countless commitments made in the name of e-accessibility.

Opening up the market for persons with disabilities, both mainstream and specialised sectors, requires European standardisation which can facilitate implementation of binding legislation. **A single market for all consumers should be a priority for the EU 2020 Strategy.** The added value for European industry is obvious: more potential consumers and the proof that products and services are ready for export to markets with strict accessibility requirements such as the ones in North America.

## 8. Inclusive Infrastructure and Services

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Investment in infrastructure such as information grids and transport corridors is set out as a priority in the consultation document. EDF would like to underline that **access for all groups in society need to be taken into account right from the beginning in such grand-scale investment projects.** It is a waste of resources to finance e.g. transport systems only to find out later that they are inaccessible or very difficult to use for a significant proportion of the population, including elderly people and persons with disabilities. This has so far been a problem observed in the implementation of the European Structural Funds despite clear provisions on accessibility for persons with disabilities in the general regulation on the Funds.

When investment plans are being developed, it is consequently paramount to take the needs of potential users into account and consult relevant representative organisations. It is a question of **ensuring that public resources are being used to the benefit of all citizens and to underpin other objectives in the EU 2020 Strategy, in particular with regards to social inclusion.**

Thus, **financial programmes, such as the European Structural Funds,** and investments in general in grids, physical infrastructure and platforms for service delivery **need to have a screening component which can ensure access for all**

users.

Also, EDF is proposing the establishment of a **programme for the European Capital of Accessibility** as a parallel to the well-known European Capital of Culture. This is a very concrete instrument to improve awareness and knowledge about access for persons with disabilities to infrastructure and public places.

## 9. Using the Inclusive Method in Policy Making

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Realising objectives related to inclusion requires an inclusive policy-making process. This is to be understood in two ways. First of all, it means involving the people concerned. **Persons with disabilities need to be involved in decisions with an impact on their lives, also when it comes to processes like the EU 2020 Strategy.** EDF, as the European umbrella organisation representing persons with disabilities themselves and their families is ready to take an active part in the definition of the needs of persons with disabilities and to shape policy responses in quality services, infrastructure, education, employment, the information society and research, by mobilising its member organisations within their respective countries and through the very diverse constituencies of persons with disabilities.

This requires sufficient time and transparency of the planning process. Likewise, a successful implementation of the open method of coordination on social inclusion and social protection needs to involve all concerned groups, including persons with disabilities. **EDF would even suggest defining indicators in the OMC on proper involvement of civil society.** Also, Member States need to commit to making resources available for meaningful participation of e.g. organisations of persons with disabilities who lack resources in general.

Furthermore, budgeting need to take place on the basis on priorities which can make a difference for persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups. And an impact assessment dealing with consequences and potential benefits for persons with disabilities needs to be carried out. These mainstreaming instruments should also be reflected in the future financial framework for the EU starting the process by including parallel elements in the upcoming financial review.

However, **inclusive policy-making also means mainstreaming of the needs of marginalised groups in all relevant policies.** Otherwise, progress made in one sector risks being annulled by steps backwards in other sectors. Persons with disabilities are people with the same variety of needs as all other citizens. And

inclusion in e.g. the information society and the labour market are preconditions for societal inclusion in the wider sense. Disability policy is consequently a matter of mainstreaming and seriously considering the impact of political strategies for more than 10 percent of the European population. We need to be part of the economy and social life, it does not suffice to pay out inadequate social pensions and let social services take care of the rest. Adequate pensions and quality social services are an essential part of the foundation for social inclusion, but they are not enough. **And the EU 2020 Strategy needs to recognise that and ensure the necessary coherence to work to the benefit of all EU-citizens.**

**Hence, The European Disability Forum is engaged together with its members on an active campaign for achieving a European Pact on Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities.** It is now time for the EU to focus on delivering change for some of its most disadvantaged citizens, the 65 million Europeans with disabilities.

## About the European Disability Forum

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**The European Disability Forum (EDF)** is the European umbrella organisation representing the interests of 65 million citizens with disabilities in Europe. EDF membership includes national umbrella organisations of disabled people from all EU/EEA countries, as well as European NGOs representing the different types of disabilities, organisations and individuals committed to disability issues. The mission of the European Disability Forum is to ensure disabled people full access to fundamental and human rights through their active involvement in policy development and implementation in Europe

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## ANNEX

# Proposal for a European Pact on Disability

October 2009

## 1. Background

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Following the European year of persons with disabilities, the European Commission published a communication in which it announced an action plan on persons with disabilities which would run from 2004 until 2010, on the basis of biennial planning circles. The action plan committed the European Commission only, contrary to what EDF had called for during the preparation and during the European Year of people with disabilities.

A new political context has emerged with the adoption of the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, as the ratification of this human rights treaty will imply more responsibilities for the European Communities in terms of measures targeting persons with disabilities and mainstreaming. At the same time, Member States are in the process of developing action plans at national level, and have committed to report on progress through annual ministerial meetings on disability.

There is a need for a coordinated action at EU level which will enable the establishment of common goals and regular review of progress. Furthermore, it is important that main political processes at European Union level do include measures on disability. These include the Lisbon strategy which is due to be reviewed in 2010, including strategies on employment, social protection, and education, but also growth and competitiveness. Other areas of coordinated action include e-inclusion policies and research.

It is also important to fit the coordination of future plans regarding disability from the European Commission into a wider framework which is clear and binding for the involved parties. Currently, the Action Plan includes actions which are developed independently of a common strategy together with proposed measures from the

disability department inside the European Commission. With the proposal for a Pact, EDF is also trying to promote the establishment of an upgraded strategy, which can create impetus for progress in the European Commission as such, developed in coordination with all European Commission services and with responsibilities for implementation.

## **2. Precedents for a European Pact**

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European Pacts exist in the area of Youth and Gender Equality.

A Youth Pact was adopted in 2005 by the European Council, tying in with the European strategies for employment and social inclusion and the "Education and Training 2010" work programme. The main aim was to improve the education, training, mobility, vocational integration and social inclusion of young Europeans while facilitating the reconciliation of family and working life. To that effect, guidelines and priorities were adopted at EU level for actions at national level. In addition, concrete actions at European level were developed. The Pact also included allocation of funding for Member States to develop actions in the priority areas through the European Social Fund and the European Investment Bank. As a result of the Pact, further EC programmes include actions targeted at youth have been established.

A Roadmap for Gender Equality was adopted in 2006 to run until 2010. The roadmap identifies six priority areas and sets objectives and key actions for each of these to make them easier to achieve. It was followed by an implementation report in 2008 and will be followed up with an evaluation in 2010, including proposals for improvements and further actions. The six priorities are: equal economic independence for women and men, reconciliation of private and professional life, equal representation in decision-making, eradication of all forms of gender-based violence, elimination of gender stereotypes, and promotion of gender equality in external and development policies. The key actions include: review of legislation, raising awareness, statistics and research, and other measures linked to development cooperation and ICT. This Roadmap also foresees budget attached to it. In particular, the creation of an Institute for gender equality with a budget of 50 million Euros with the task to monitor the implementation of the Roadmap and the possibility to use funding available through the structural funds, and the EC Programme Progress, the latter includes a strand on gender equality. Following this, a Gender Equality Pact was adopted at the European Council in March 2006, reinforcing gender mainstreaming, measures for work-life balance, and monitoring. It was also agreed to fully include the Pact in the reporting mechanisms for growth and employment, a part of the Lisbon agenda.

The point would not be to imitate these two examples in the field of disability policy, but simply to build on them, learn from the experiences and develop a framework which would be suitable for its purpose and a lever in the mainstreaming of disability in European policies.

### **3. A proposal for a European Pact on Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

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Disability is recognized as a cross cutting issue within EU policies, and the ratification of the UN Convention by the European Communities (and later by the European Union as a consequence of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty) puts disability in a different place within the EU framework. If the European Communities (the European Institutions and Member States) are serious in the implementation of the Convention, they need to put in place mechanisms which will fully allow them to implement the Convention through mainstreaming and monitoring, but also to develop European disability policy further.

The establishment of a Pact offers the possibility of recognition of the prominence of disability issues at EU level, and the definition of common objectives and indicators to measure progress. The Pact would also allow disability to be integrated in the reports linked to social protection, jobs and growth, as well as education strategies within the post-Lisbon agenda, but also in other areas of EU competence, as EU governments would endorse the Pact. The pact could also be addressed to social partners and industry.

### **4. The priorities of the new Pact**

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Four key underlying objectives should be part of the Pact:

- Review of EU legislation to make it consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities;
- Mainstreaming of disability in EU policies, including programmes for financial support such as the European Structural Funds and development cooperation assistance;
- Definition of common objectives based on the UN Convention principles, to be reviewed every four years which would commit Member States. They would have to present a biennial report;
- Close involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities at national and EU level.

The Pact should include the following priorities:

- **Equal access and opportunities in education**

The development of inclusive environments, taking into consideration specific educational needs and wishes. Focus on the right to early years education should be promoted for disabled and non-disabled children alike.

- **Equal treatment and access in employment**

Implementation of non discrimination legislation and development of positive actions within training, job placements, access to employment and job retention, adaptation of the work place targeting particularly groups of persons with disabilities furthest from the labour market, development of measures ensuring equal salary and rights for equal professional status and competences and measures targeted at tackling the benefit trap, while ensuring adequate income and services for persons with disabilities. Specific initiatives should be taken to encourage persons with disabilities to establish their own business as a means to ensure economic and social inclusion as well as personal independence in the broadest sense. Also, specific measures to promote training and employment among women and girls with disabilities, as well as mothers to children with disabilities, should be developed.

- **Minimum income and social protection**

Development of measures aimed at limiting and preventing the impact of the economic crisis, as well as a general high level of poverty level for persons with disabilities. This should also include investment in accessible infrastructure for benefits and the provision of tax relief. A clear definition on minimum income and a separation between income and disability allowance, the latter serving to cover the extra costs linked to disability, should be agreed. –The specific complications related to the interaction between aging and disability should be looked at as an underlying issue in this regard.

- **Freedom of movement**

Development of measures to ensure equal opportunities in social protection, social security systems and social services, including personal assistance and personal budgets, when moving to another EU country, whether the aim is studying, working or joining a family member, through the revision of current regulations.

## **- Independent Living**

Providing choice of social services of high quality with the aim of promoting independence and equal participation (e.g. the right to personal assistance and personal service budgets). In order to achieve independent living, services and support tailored to the needs of disabled persons and families must be made available in the local community.

### **- Access to goods and services, transport and built environment**

Legislative measures within the internal market rules should be changed to ensure that:

- all goods and services are to be designed and delivered so that they are fully accessible on the basis of the “design for all” principle
- An internal market for assistive technologies allowing choice and affordability can be developed
- Completing the Community framework on passengers rights with consistent rules on accessibility of transport, and transport infrastructure.
- The integration of standards defined at EU level in legislation and programmes at both EU and national level.
- Development of a European education programme on design for all
- Ensuring full access to all information in the private and public sector in accessible formats (electronic format, Braille, large print, sign language, audio description, subtitling, easy to read text), to information and communication tools and services, such as the internet and mobile phones,... at no extra costs, to e-commerce, to e-services, and to e-government including voting.
- Ensuring full access to the built environment

The European institutions should establish the European Capital of Universal Accessibility along the same lines as the European Capital of Culture. This should be done in order to stimulate a culture of accessibility and to recognise best practice and excellence.

Access to cultural venues and sports facilities should be prioritised alongside access to other parts of society, recognising that activities in these spheres are a significant part of the lives of disabled as well as non-disabled people.

A card which can allow persons with disabilities equal access to means of transport, cultural venues, sports facilities etc. across the European Union should be developed. The card should give access to bringing guides or other accompanying persons without additional costs, to rebate schemes available to comparable groups etc. in accordance with rules in a given Member State.

The following cross-cutting issues should be part of the Pact with specific measures:

- Women and girls with disabilities
- Youth with disabilities
- Aging and disability
- Persons with disabilities in high need of support, including mental health problems

## **5. Tools for implementation**

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The Pact should include:

- A decision for the establishment of indicators to be agreed with Eurostat (the EU statistical agency) based on work currently developed by this institution; These indicators should also be mainstreamed within the employment and social inclusion strategy.
- The establishment of a Committee on Disability, which should include representatives of member States responsible for disability policies at the highest level, representatives of the Social Partners, the Chair of the Committee on employment and social affairs of the European Parliament, and EDF representatives as the recognised partner for the European institutions in disability policy matters. Such a committee would be chaired in turn by representatives of member States for a two year period, while the Secretariat would be provided by the European Commission. The Committee would be responsible for issuing reports which should support the European Commission in implementing its policies. The Committee would also allow exchange of good practices and the development of a progress report on the situation of persons with disabilities in Europe;
- An “inter-DG group on Disability” within the European Commission composed of directors and/or heads of unit responsible for relevant issues within the different Directorate Generals and assisted by appropriate members of staff. It should be chaired by the director general for employment, social affairs and equal opportunities. This Group would be responsible for proposing, and reviewing implementation of the Pact.
- The discussion of a biennial progress report at the relevant Spring Council

- The organisation of an annual Meeting of Ministers on disability issues and a conference on an issue of priority

## **6. A budget**

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Consistent budget allocations in line with the principle of disability mainstreaming, using EU main funding instruments for both internal and external policies - among others: structural funds, research programmes, development aid and accession aid should be foreseen.

It is essential to ensure that EU funding is not used to build up further barriers to participation of persons with disabilities in society. And this can be achieved by systematically considering the impact on the lives of persons with disabilities of the investments carried out through funds allocated within EU financial instruments.

Moreover, resources need to be invested in breaking down existing barriers for persons with disabilities as an objective along other objectives in e.g. European cohesion policies, in particular the Structural Funds.

A dedicated budget to follow up on the objectives set in the Pact. This should include funding for both an assessment of European policies, but also funding for independent multi-disciplinary disability research which can contribute to a precise picture of the situation which persons with disabilities face in the European Union. In particular the establishment of a European disability policy observatory should be considered.

## **7. The timeframe**

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The Pact should run from 2011 to 2021 with a midterm review.

The current action plan on persons with disabilities comes to an end in 2010. The European Commission is currently preparing work on a new strategy, with the idea of adopting a proposal by the middle of 2010.

A Disability Pact should be endorsed by the European Council, possibly in the autumn of 2010 or the spring of 2011.

## 8. About this proposal

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This proposal has been prepared in close consultation with the EDF Membership. A first version was approved of by the EDF Annual General Assembly in May 2009. Following consultations of the EDF members, the document has been revised to reflect the priorities of Europeans with disabilities. The proposal was finally adopted by the EDF Board of Directors in October 2009.

For further information about this document and related questions, please contact the EDF Secretariat. The persons responsible for the campaign are Director, Carlotta Besozzi (Tel: +32/2/286.51.81, E-mail: [Carlotta.besozzi@edf-feph.org](mailto:Carlotta.besozzi@edf-feph.org)) and Policy Officer, Ask Andersen (Email: Tel: +32/2/502.12.27, E-mail: [ask.andersen@edf-feph.org](mailto:ask.andersen@edf-feph.org)).