



European
Commission

EUROPEAN DAY OF **PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

ACCESS CITY AWARD 2022

2 - 3 DECEMBER 2021



CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

#EDPD2021
#EUDisabilityRights
#UnionOfEquality
#EUAccessCity

Social Europe



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CONFERENCE INTRODUCTION



The annual conference on the occasion of the **European Day of Persons with Disabilities** takes place on **2 and 3 December**. The online conference is hosted by the **European Commission** in partnership with the **European Disability Forum**.

Across Europe, persons with disabilities still face considerable barriers in their daily life:

- 4 times more persons with disabilities report unmet healthcare needs than those without disabilities
- Only 64% of persons with disabilities have an internet connection at home, compared to 88% of persons without disabilities
- Over 1 in 5 young people with disabilities leave school early, compared to 1 in 10 of those without disabilities

As pointed out in the EU's new [ten-year strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities](#), we need to scale up action to remove obstacles and allow full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society.

This year's conference will bring together politicians, high-level experts and disability advocates to discuss current challenges, specifically in **access to healthcare** and in **digital transformation**. We will also hear about solutions and initiatives to remove barriers and create equal opportunities.

The 2021 conference will include a focus on the experiences and needs of **children with disabilities**. We will outline the EU-level initiatives in place to realise their rights, and reduce poverty and social exclusion, of all children in the EU.

By the end of the conference, you will have many ideas on how we can work together towards a Union of Equality.

Access City Award 2022 Ceremony

Join the online Access City Award 2022 Ceremony on 3 December in the afternoon to discover the winners of the **12th Access City Award**. This prestigious EU award rewards cities that are making continuous efforts to become more accessible for persons with disabilities and older people.

This year's **shortlisted cities** are, in alphabetical order:

- **Barcelona** (Spain)
- **Helsinki** (Finland)
- **Leuven** (Belgium)
- **Luxembourg City** (Luxembourg)
- **Palma** (Spain)
- **Porto** (Portugal)

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY 1 02 DECEMBER 2021

10.00-10.30

Opening session

Moderator: Emmanuelle Grange, Head of the Disability and Inclusion Unit, DG EMPL, European Commission

Opening speeches by:

[Helena Dalli](#), *Commissioner for Equality, European Commission*

[Yannis Vardakastanis](#), *President, European Disability Forum*

[Cveto Uršič](#), *State Secretary, Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities*

10.30-12.00

Webinar 1: health in the EU for persons with disabilities

Moderator: Maya Doneva, Secretary-General of the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities

The right to health, universal coverage and insurances

[Rodolfo Cattani](#), *Executive Committee, European Disability Forum*

European health policies and disability: the example of the EU Cancer Action

[Stefan Schreck](#), *Adviser for stakeholder relations, DG SANTE, European Commission*

WHO Guidance on Disability Inclusive Health

[Satish Mishra](#), *Technical Manager, Disability and Rehabilitation, WHO Europe*

The future of mental health in Europe

[Kristijan Grđan](#), *Vice President, Mental Health Europe*

12.00-14.00

Break

14.00 -15.30

Webinar 2: persons with disabilities and the digital transition

Moderator: Inmaculada Placencia Porrero, Senior Expert in Disability and Inclusion, DG EMPL, European Commission

Digitalisation and Digital Transformation in Europe: Implications for Persons with Disabilities - Reflections on EU and National Strategies and Plans

[Lisa Waddington](#), *Professor of European Disability Law, Maastricht University*

Culture and recreation: making audio-visual media services accessible

[Humberto Insolera](#), *Executive Committee, European Disability Forum*

The impact of AI powered unfairness on labour markets worldwide

[Susan Scott-Parker](#), *Chief Executive, Business Disability International*

eGovernment National perspective

[Jakob Rosin](#), *President, Estonian Blind Union*

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY 2 03 DECEMBER 2021

10.30 –12.00

Webinar 3: Children with disabilities

Moderator: Pat Clarke, Vice President, European Disability Forum

UN video: Well-being and development as a girl, boy or adolescent with disabilities

[Maria Soledad Cisternas](#), *Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility, United Nations*

Panel discussion with

[Katarina Ivanković Knežević](#), *Director for Social Rights and Inclusion, DG EMPL, European Commission*

[Elizabeth Gosme](#), *Director, COFACE Families Europe*

[Zuzana Konradova](#), *Thematic Coordinator, Eurochild*

[Nora Shabani](#), *Education Specialist, UNICEF's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia in Geneva*

[Dominique Paquot](#), *Director, Ecole Singelijn*

12.00-12.30

Closing session

Moderator: Emmanuelle Grange, Head of the Disability and Inclusion Unit, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion, European Commission

Closing speeches by:

[Joost Korte](#), *Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, DG EMPL, European Commission*

[Speaker tbc](#), *Incoming French EU Council Presidency*

[Ana Peláez](#), *Vice President, European Disability Forum*

[Pietro Barbieri](#), *President, EESC Thematic study group on disability rights*

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

14.00-15.15

Access City Award 2022 ceremony

Moderator: *Tamsin Rose*

Helena Dalli, Commissioner for Equality, European Commission

Adina Vălean, Commissioner for Transport, European Commission

Joost Korte, Director General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, DG EMPL, European Commission

Katarina Ivanković Knežević, Director for Social Rights and Inclusion, DG EMPL, European Commission

Yannis Vardakastanis, President, European Disability Forum

Jesús Hernández Galán, EU Jury Chair, Access City Award 2022

Ann-Marie Nilsson, Mayor, Jönköping (Sweden)



**ACCESS CITY
AWARD 2022**

OPENING SPEECHES



Helena Dalli

Helena Dalli is the first EU Commissioner for Equality since December 2019. Her role is to deliver on the Union of Equality chapter within the Political Guidelines of President von der Leyen, by strengthening Europe's commitment to equality and inclusion in all of its senses. Prior to taking her role as Commissioner, Dalli held various political roles in Malta including Member of Parliament (1996 to 2019), Minister for European Affairs and Equality (2017 to 2019), and Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (2013-2017). She was also opposition Shadow Minister for public administration, equality, public broadcasting and national investments (1998-2013) and Junior Minister for Women's Rights in the Office of Prime Minister (1996-1998). Dalli holds a PhD in Political Sociology from the University of Nottingham, and lectured in Economic and Political Sociology, Public Policy, and Sociology of Law at the University of Malta.



Yannis Vardakastanis

Political scientist, Yannis Vardakastanis is President of the European Disability Forum (EDF), the umbrella organisation of the European disability movement, since 1999. Representing EDF at the International Disability Alliance (IDA) since 2007, he assumed Vice-Chair of IDA from 2010-2012, and Chair from 2012 to 2014. Following 2014, he has worked as the IDA Treasurer. Vardakastanis is also currently President of the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People (NCDP) and represents them at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). He is also a member of Greece's Economic and Social Council (OKE), Greece's National Commission for Human Rights (EEDA) as well as being a previous member of the Board of the European Blind Union (EBU) from 1996 to 2011.



Cveto Uršič

Cveto Uršič is State Secretary of the Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. He holds a university degree in law and a master's degree in sociology. From 2018 to 2020, he was Secretary-General of the Slovenian Caritas. Before that he worked at the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities for 13 years both as the Director-General of the Directorate for the Disabled (2005-2010 and in 2013) and as the Secretary of the same directorate. For 17 years he was also the director of one of the flagship programmes of the University Rehabilitation Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (Soča). From 2008 to 2010, he was an elected member of the first twelve-member UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. He was also a member of a variety of committees of the Council of Europe and the European Union. Furthermore, he was head and member of various working groups that drew up key regulations in the field of disability protection. In his specialist and research work over the past 30 years, he has been primarily active in the fields of enforcement of human rights for persons with disabilities and organisation of the social security system. He is also active in professional associations as well as disability and humanitarian organisations both in Slovenia and abroad. In the New Slovenia political party, he was head of the labour, family and social affairs expert committee for several years, as well as member of the strategic council.

moderated by



Emmanuelle Grange

Emmanuelle Grange is Head of the Disability and Inclusion Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion since November 2015. She joined the European Commission in 1995. From 2005 to 2009, she was in charge of the unit responsible for internal policy for equal opportunities and non-discrimination within the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security. She was later appointed manager for the strategy and management of human resources at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Emmanuelle studied Political Science in Strasbourg and holds an MA in European Political and Administrative Studies from the College of Europe.



SPEAKERS' BIOGRAPHIES

WEBINAR 1 - 02 DECEMBER



Rodolfo Cattani

Rodolfo Cattani studied Philosophy of Science at the University of Bologna. He worked as a school teacher for 13 years and for almost 20 years he was Managing Director of the Italian National Library for the Blind. He is the President of the European Blind Union, an organisation that he has been part of since its establishment in 1984. From 1984 to 1996, Mr. Cattani occupied various positions within the World Blind Union. He has been a member of the Board of the European Disability Forum (EDF) since 1997, a member of the EDF Executive Committee since 2005, served as the EDF Secretary General from 2009 to 2017, and has represented the EDF on many EU consultative bodies.



Stefan Schreck

Between 1997 and 2008, Stefan has been working in the public health directorate of the European Commission in Luxemburg, in particular in the areas of communicable diseases, health threats, and substances of human origin. In 2008, he became head of the health unit in the executive agency for health and consumers (EAHC), with responsibility for implementing the EU health programme. In January 2011, he was appointed head of the health information unit of DG SANCO, with responsibility for health information policy, and providing the secretariat for the non-food scientific committees of the European Commission. From February 2016 to November 2020, he was head of the DG SANTE unit 'health programme and chronic diseases', dealing with policies for all non-communicable diseases, planning and drafting annual work programmes of the EU health programme, and contributing to the implementation of the health cluster of the Horizon Europe. Since December 2020, Stefan is adviser for stakeholder relations in the Public Health Directorate of DG SANTE.



Satish Mishra

Over the last two and half decades, Satish has been working to improve public health in different countries of the world – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and Thailand. His work focuses on strengthening health system and service delivery for people with disabilities, elderly, non-communicable diseases and different health conditions. Satish is the author of several publications on disability, rehabilitation and assistive technology topics. Currently, Satish works as Regional Technical Officer for the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe and supports 53 countries in the region to strengthen policy, system, work force and service delivery on disability, rehabilitation, palliative care and long-term care.



Kristijan Grđan

Kristijan Grđan is a human rights activist with more than fifteen years of experience in mental health. He has experience in advocacy, academic work, field work and providing direct support to persons with disabilities and victims of crimes. He has been active in Mental Health Europe for several years as Board member and Chair of MHE Human Rights Committee and am actively involved in all the MHE policies concerning protection of human rights of persons with mental health problems and psychosocial disabilities. Kristijan is a strong advocate of the full implementation of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Europe. As of 2015 Kristijan is a member of the Committee on Protection of Persons with Mental Health Problems within Croatian Ministry of Justice. In that role he is regularly involved in deciding on individual complaints, approving biomedical research in psychiatry and providing recommendations on systematic changes in mental health care. In 2021, he joined the WHO Technical Advisory Group on impacts of COVID-19 on mental health in the European region.

moderated by



Maya Doneva

Maya Doneva is the Secretary General of EASPD - The European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities. Maya's professional biography consists of many puzzle pieces - being a trainer, international consultant, and lecturer on the topics of community-centered social provision, social innovation, youth empowerment and active citizenship. Maya is the founder of one of the first social enterprises in Bulgaria - The Social Teahouse Network- supporting young people who grew up in social state care institutions with long term mentorship and their first employment experience. Between 2017 and early 2021 Maya was the executive director of one of the biggest social service organizations in the Balkans- Karin dom, where she was leading the team of professionals directly working with children and developing pilot initiatives on family mediated intervention and early childhood intervention. Since the beginning of Autumn'21 Maya has the responsibility to lead the European association and the membership of social service provision in more than 47 countries.



WEBINAR 2 - 02 DECEMBER



Lisa Waddington

Lisa Waddington is Professor of European Disability Law at Maastricht University (NL). The Professorship was established by the Faculty of Law at Maastricht University in collaboration with the European Disability Forum. Professor Waddington's principal research interests are European and comparative disability law, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and European and comparative equality law in general. Professor Waddington coordinated the involvement of Maastricht University in the FP7 EuRADE project (European Research Agendas expanding Disability Equality) and the Marie Curie Initial Training Network DREAM (Disability Rights Expanding Accessible Markets, 2011-2015). She is currently coordinating Maastricht University's participation in the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training network DARE (Disability Advocacy Research in Europe, 2019-2022). She is a senior expert for a number of Networks and organisations, including the European Network of Legal Experts in the Non-discrimination Field and the European Disability Expertise network (EDE). Professor Waddington has been a visiting professor at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, the University of Melbourne and Leeds University.



Humberto Insolera

Dr Humberto Insolera studied at the universities of Padova, Bristol, Geneva and Washington D.C. He became Board Member of the European Union of the Deaf (EUD) in 2009, and was the EUD Vice-President from 2013 until 2017. He was a Member of the Expert Group on Human Rights for the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). He also participated in the UN CRPD Ad Hoc Committee meetings in New York and was involved in the implementation and monitoring processes of the UN CRPD both in Italy and at a European level via the EUD. In May 2017 he was elected to the EDF Board of Directors and the EDF Executive Committee. He is Chairman of the EDF's ICT email expert group, member of the EDF Human Rights and Non-Discrimination Committee, and substitute for the EDF Youth Committee.



Susan Scott-Parker

Susan Scott-Parker is an internationally recognised thought leader who has made a career from challenging outdated assumptions regarding both disability as it affects business and the potential of responsible business to adapt respectfully for human reality. In 2003 Susan invented and launched the concept and language of 'Disability Confidence' – knowing that if we can change the way we talk about the world, we make it easier to change the world. Her work is distinctive in its aim to deliver practical, tangible mutual benefit for business, people with disabilities, the global economy, and wider society. Susan is now leading the 'Disability Ethical AI' campaign alongside organisations including IBM and Oxford Brooke's University's Institute for Ethical AI to address the 'disability-oblivious' nature of AI powered recruitment. Susan is Strategic Advisor to the ILO's Global Business Disability Network and has long-standing strategic alliances with organisations and initiatives including: the Australian Network on Disability, the Austrian/German MyAbility business disability network; The Valuable 500, The #PurpleLightUp movement and The Zero Project.



Jakob Rosin

Jakob is the chairman of Estonian Blind Union and board member for Estonian Chamber of Disabled People. He also works as a technology journalist. He is an accessibility expert, providing feedback and suggestions to several public and also private sector bodies in Estonia.

moderated by



Inmaculada Placencia Porrero

Inmaculada Placencia Porrero is a Senior Expert in Disability and Inclusion at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the European Commission. Her unit is responsible for the coordination of the European policies for persons with disabilities. Inmaculada Placencia Porrero holds a degree in Physics and Computer Science and worked in research and development before joining the European Commission in 1991. She has worked on research programmes addressing accessibility and was Deputy Head of Unit for various disability-related units in the Commission. Her work in the “e-inclusion” unit of the Directorate-General for Information Society and Media addresses accessibility policy. While at the Directorate-general for Justice she contributed to disability-related anti-discrimination legislation. She was responsible for the Task Force for the preparation of the European Accessibility Act and remains responsible since its adoption in 2015.



WEBINAR 3 - 03 DECEMBER



Katarina Ivanković Knežević

Katarina Ivanković Knežević is Director for Social Rights and Inclusion in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. She is responsible for the modernisation of social protection systems and wider social policies fostering social and labour market inclusion, through the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and other relevant EU social policies. Before joining the Commission, she was a State Secretary at Croatia's Ministry of Labour and Pension System, responsible for the management and implementation of the European Social Fund and other EU instruments aiming at human resources development. Her professional interests over the past 20 years have been human rights and gender equality, social policy and employment with a focus on labour market policies.



María Soledad Cisternas

María Soledad Cisternas Reyes, Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary General on Disability and Accessibility, since 2017. Graduated in Law and Master in Political Science. Lawyer, Professor of Law and Researcher. She was President of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2013 - 2016. Elena Caffarena Award on International Women's Day, Chile, 2009. National Human Rights Award, Chile, 2014.



Elizabeth Gosme

Elizabeth Gosme is mother of two rebel girls (6 and 10 years) and Director of COFACE Families Europe www.coface-eu.org, a network of 50+ organisations across 23 countries promoting the well-being, health and security of families and their members in a changing society. Elizabeth directs the Brussels-based COFACE team and network, which advocates for legislation and policy enabling families (all types without discrimination) and their members to benefit from sufficient financial resources, available quality services and adequate time arrangements in order to live and enjoy their family life in dignity. This involves a variety of actions in the fields of work-life balance, gender equality, inclusive education, disability rights, consumer protection, financial inclusion, safer internet and more. The COFACE Disability platform for the rights of persons with disabilities and their families drives the work of COFACE advocating for family carers and independent living for all, based on the S.H.I.F.T. whole-society and whole-family approach to ensure meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities and their families.



Zuzana Konradova

Zuzana has worked for Eurochild as a Thematic Coordinator in the field of Children in Alternative Care since 2017. Eurochild is the largest civil society network promoting children's rights in Europe. It counts 200 members in 35 European countries, representing over 2000 children's rights organizations. The network covers a range of themes including early childhood development, family and parenting support, child welfare and protection reform and investing in children. Zuzana coordinated the Opening Doors for Europe's Children Campaign (2013-2019) in its final phase. Her expertise includes European politics and funding, deinstitutionalisation processes and child protection reforms, and civil society participation. She is co-chairing the European Expert Group on Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care in 2021.



Nora Shabani

Nora Shabani has been the Disability Focal Point at UNICEF Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia since 2015. In this role, she leads and coordinates disability inclusion at regional level and supports cross-sectoral programmes in 22 UNICEF country offices. De-institutionalization is a key UNICEF priority in the region, and Nora works closely with the regional child protection team and stakeholders, including parents and organisations of persons with disabilities, to address the specific barriers that children with disabilities face, and identify and implement policy and actions to overcome their institutionalisation, systemic discrimination and exclusion. Before joining the Regional Office, Nora worked as the Education Specialist and the Disability Focal Point in UNICEF North Macedonia for 17 years. Nora holds a MA in Inclusive Special Education from University Roehampton, London, UK.



Dominique Paquot

Dominique Paquot, who is a teacher by training, has worked in schools with active pedagogy for 20 years. Passionate about alternative education, he's now Director at the Singelijn School since 10 years, one of the first fundamentally inclusive schools of Brussels in which he has installed an active pedagogy. Welcoming children with specific requirements, whatever their needs are, is one of his daily combats, in his school as well as in society in general. He's also president of the Pedagogia asbl and provides trainings in active pedagogy in general, in supporting change and in inclusive schools.

moderated by



Pat Clarke

Pat Clarke is the Vice President of the European Disability Forum having retired as Chief Executive of Down Syndrome Ireland and Past- President of Down Syndrome International. His son, David, has Down syndrome. Pat is a past Chair of the Disability Federation of Ireland and has served on the boards of the Children Rights Alliance Ireland and on the governing body of the International Disability Alliance. He was a member of the Council of Europe Committee which investigated the involvement of persons with disabilities in political and public life. His involvement with the Disability Federation of Ireland, European Disability Forum and the International Disability Alliance gives him a pan disability perspective on all the issues. He has been a long-time advocate for the full inclusion of people with Down syndrome in particular and all people with disabilities in general in society at every level.

CLOSING SPEECHES



Joost Korte

Joost Korte was appointed Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in March 2018. He was previously Deputy Director-General of the European Commission's Trade Department and Deputy Director-General of the Agriculture and Rural Development Department as well as the Enlargement Department. He also spent several years in the Commission's Secretariat General as Director for the relations with the Council of Ministers, and gained extensive experience working in the offices of Sir Leon Brittan, Chris Patten and Danuta Hübner. These professional experiences within the European institutions allowed him to develop a profound understanding of EU decision-making. A lawyer by training, Joost Korte joined the Commission in 1991, following eight years of academic work on European law at the universities of Utrecht and Edinburgh.



French Presidency (TBC)



Ana Peláez Narváez

Ana Peláez Narváez is High Commissioner for Solidarity and International Cooperation of the ONCE Social Group and Vice President of the ONCE Foundation for Latin America (FOAL). At the CERMI she is Gender and Equality Commissioner and Executive Vice President of the CERMI Women's Foundation. At the European Disability Forum she is Vice President and President of the Women's Committee. At United Nations, from 2009 to 2016, she was a member of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, of which she was its Vice President. Since 2019 she is a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. In February 2021, she has been appointed as one of the CEDAW Committee Vice-Chair for the period 2021-2022.



Pietro Barbieri

I was studying architecture at the university when I had an accident that makes me experience disability even today. Already involved in politics since high school, the new condition imposed on me a different point of view, discovering the Italian backwardness in many fields. I understood how this produces marginalization and sometimes goes hand in hand with violence and stigma. I have experienced discrimination. However, I appreciated the richness of people's civic commitment and participation, which have always been the foundations of my life. I was a manager of the Paraplegics Association of Rome and Lazio and later the Federation of Italian para and quadriplegic associations. I also contributed to the foundation of the Italian Federation for the Overcoming of Handicap, the umbrella organization of associations of people with disabilities and their families, of which I was the president for 18 years, leaving that office to take on the commitment as spokesperson for the Forum of the Third Sector, the platform of all Italian solidarity non-profit organizations. From this last experience derives my presence in the European Economic Social Committee (EESC), the EU body representing the entire civil society, employers, trade unions gathered in the Diversity Europe Group of which I am vice president.



moderated by

Emmanuelle Grange

Emmanuelle Grange is Head of the Disability and Inclusion Unit at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion since November 2015. She joined the European Commission in 1995. From 2005 to 2009, she was in charge of the unit responsible for internal policy for equal opportunities and non-discrimination within the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security. She was later appointed manager for the strategy and management of human resources at the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Emmanuelle studied Political Science in Strasbourg and holds an MA in European Political and Administrative Studies from the College of Europe.

ACCES CITY AWARD 2022



Helena Dalli

Helena Dalli is the first EU Commissioner for Equality since December 2019. Her role is to deliver on the Union of Equality chapter within the Political Guidelines of President von der Leyen, by strengthening Europe's commitment to equality and inclusion in all of its senses. Prior to taking her role as Commissioner, Dalli held various political roles in Malta including Member of Parliament (1996 to 2019), Minister for European Affairs and Equality (2017 to 2019), and Minister for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and Civil Liberties (2013-2017). She was also opposition Shadow Minister for public administration, equality, public broadcasting and national investments (1998-2013) and Junior Minister for Women's Rights in the Office of Prime Minister (1996-1998). Dalli holds a PhD in Political Sociology from the University of Nottingham, and lectured in Economic and Political Sociology, Public Policy, and Sociology of Law at the University of Malta.



Adina Vălean

Adina Valean is the European Commissioner for Transport. Before taking office on December 1st 2019, she was a Member of the European Parliament for 12 years. As an MEP she served as the Chairwoman of ITRE Committee (July-December 2019), Chairwoman of ENVI Committee (2017-2019) and as Vice-President of the European Parliament (2014-2017). She was also a Member of the Romanian Parliament between 2004-2007. Adina Valean holds a Master degree in European Integration Studies and Security and a bachelor degree in Mathematics.



Joost Korte

Joost Korte was appointed Director-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in March 2018. He was previously Deputy Director-General of the European Commission's Trade Department and Deputy Director-General of the Agriculture and Rural Development Department as well as the Enlargement Department. He also spent several years in the Commission's Secretariat General as Director for the relations with the Council of Ministers, and gained extensive experience working in the offices of Sir Leon Brittan, Chris Patten and Danuta Hübner. These professional experiences within the European institutions allowed him to develop a profound understanding of EU decision-making. A lawyer by training, Joost Korte joined the Commission in 1991, following eight years of academic work on European law at the universities of Utrecht and Edinburgh.



Katarina Ivanković Knežević

Katarina Ivanković Knežević is Director for Social Rights and Inclusion in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. She is responsible for the modernisation of social protection systems and wider social policies fostering social and labour market inclusion, through the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and other relevant EU social policies. Before joining the Commission, she was a State Secretary at Croatia's Ministry of Labour and Pension System, responsible for the management and implementation of the European Social Fund and other EU instruments aiming at human resources development. Her professional interests over the past 20 years have been human rights and gender equality, social policy and employment with a focus on labour market policies.



Yannis Vardakastanis

Political scientist, Yannis Vardakastanis is President of the European Disability Forum (EDF), the umbrella organisation of the European disability movement, since 1999. Representing EDF at the International Disability Alliance (IDA) since 2007, he assumed Vice-Chair of IDA from 2010-2012, and Chair from 2012 to 2014. Following 2014, he has worked as the IDA Treasurer. Vardakastanis is also currently President of the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People (NCDP) and represents them at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). He is also a member of Greece's Economic and Social Council (OKE), Greece's National Commission for Human Rights (EEDA) as well as being a previous member of the Board of the European Blind Union (EBU) from 1996 to 2011.



Jesús Hernández Galán

Jesús Hernández Galán is a Doctor in Engineering with cum laude honours, with more than 30 years' experience working in the field of accessibility. From 1990 to 2000, he was as an accessibility consultant specializing in protected natural areas. In 2000, he was appointed General Director and CEO of the accessibility consultancy company, Via Libre. He became in 2003 the Director of Universal Accessibility and Innovation at Fundación ONCE, a position he holds to this day. He has also been a jury member of the following awards: the Access City Awards since its first edition, the Queen Letizia Awards, the Fundación Universia Innovation Awards and OTIS Accessibility Awards.



Ann-Marie Nilsson

Ann-Marie Nilsson (C) has been a municipal councillor since 2005, first with responsibility for social welfare issues for a few years and then for many years within the area of urban development where the municipality has made great progress regarding accessibility issues. In addition, she has been chairman of the Municipal Council for Disability Issues for several years. In the council politicians and the disability rights federation meet to discuss issues around accessibility. Since 2015, she is chairman of the municipal board (mayor / chair of the executive committee).

moderated by



Tamsin Rose

Tamsin Rose is the senior fellow for health at the Friends of Europe and Africa Europe Foundation. She is a facilitator, speaker and trainer with an interest in sparking new ideas to address big societal challenges. With three decades of experience in communications, and advocacy and network building, her clients range from small non-profits to international institutions and everything in between. She has led a European platform of public health NGOs, managed an EU programme to twin cities in west and eastern Europe, was a radio journalist and now connects citizens' experiences with the Brussels policy bubble.

EASY-TO-READ DESCRIPTION

European Day of Persons with Disabilities 2021 and Access City Award 2022



This is the program of the **European Day of Persons with Disabilities** 2021 conference.

This program includes the **Access City Award** 2022.

The days of the conference are Thursday 2 December and Friday 3 December 2021.

The conference takes place online.

The words marked in **bold** are explained at the end of this program.

About the conference

The European Day of Persons with Disabilities is a conference organised by the **European Commission** and the **European Disability Forum**.

The conference is sometimes called EDPD for short.

The EDPD takes place every year at the beginning of December to mark the European Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Persons with disabilities in Europe have to deal with a lot of problems.

The EDPD conference looks at some of the problems this year:

- A lot of people with disabilities don't get good health care.
- A lot of people with disabilities don't have access to the internet at home.
- A lot of young people with disabilities do not get good education.



The European Commission wrote a document to help improve the lives of people with disabilities.

This document is called 'Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities'.

Access City Award is given by the European Commission to cities that make good efforts to be more accessible for people with disabilities, and for older people.

The cities that can win the award this year are:

- Barcelona (Spain)
- Helsinki (Finland)
- Leuven (Belgium)
- Luxembourg City (Luxembourg)
- Palma (Spain)
- Porto (Portugal)

Program of the conference



Day 1: 2 December 2021

For the names of speakers in every session, see page 6 of the program.

All times are Brussels time.

Opening session is from 10:00 to 10:30.

The speakers are:

- Helena Dalli, Commissioner for Equality, European Commission
- Yannis Vardakastanis, President, European Disability Forum
- Cveto Uršič, Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

Session 1 is from 10:30 to 12:00.

This session is about health and access to health care for persons with disabilities.

There are speakers from:

- European Disability Forum,
- European Commission,
- World Health Organisation,
- Mental Health Europe.

Session 2 is from 14:00 to 15:30.

This session is about digital transition and people with disabilities.

Digital transition means many things in our lives are done on the internet.

For example, when meetings or school classes are held online;

or when jobs are done on the internet;

or when things you need from the city council are done online.



There are speakers from:

- Maastricht University in the Netherlands;
- European Disability Forum;
- Business Disability International, organisation promoting accessibility for people with disabilities in business;
- Estonian Blind Union.

Day 2: 3 December 2021

For the names of speakers in every session, see page 12 of the program.

Session 3 is from 10:30 to 12:00.

This session is about children with disabilities.

There are speakers from:

- United Nations;
- European Commission;
- Coface Families Europe, association of family organisations;
- Eurochild, association of child-rights organisations;
- UNICEF, United Nations' organisation for education;
- Ecole Singelijn, a school in Belgium.

Closing session is from 12:00 to 12:30.

There are speakers from:

- European Commission;
- French presidency of EU Council;
- European Disability Forum;
- European Economic and Social Committee.



Access City Award 2022 session is from 14:00 to 15:15.

The cities which win the award this year will be announced on this session.

The speakers are:

- Helena Dalli, Commissioner for Equality, European Commission
- Adina Vălean, Commissioner for Transport, European Commission
- Joost Korte, Director General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission
- Katarina Ivanković Knežević, Director for Social Rights and Inclusion, European Commission
- Yannis Vardakastanis, President, European Disability Forum
- Jesús Hernández Galán, chair of the group that decides who receives the Access City Award 2022
- Ann-Marie Nilsson, Mayor of Jönköping, a city in Sweden

Explanations of some words:

Access City Award:

Access City Award is given by the European Commission to cities that make good efforts to be more accessible for people with disabilities, and for older people.

Commissioner at the European Commission:

A Commissioner is a person who is responsible for a field of work at the **European Commission** and manages a lot of people.



Directorate-General on Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion

This is a department inside the European Commission that works on improving employment in the European Union.

They also work to improve the rights of people with disabilities in the European Union.

European Commission

The European Commission suggests laws for the **European Parliament** and the Council of the European Union to discuss.

It also makes sure that the laws that have been decided upon are being followed by the member states.

European Disability Forum:

The European Disability Forum is an organisation of people with disabilities in Europe.

In short it is called the EDF.

EDF works to protect the rights of people with disabilities in Europe.

European Economic and Social Committee

The European Economic and Social Committee is an organisation in the European Union.

The European Economic and Social Committee is called the 'EESC' for short.

The EESC brings together the employers, employees, and civil society organisations in the EU.



European Parliament

The European Parliament is a place where important decisions of the **European Union** are made.

For example, the European Parliament decides on laws, or on how EU money will be spent.

Members of the European Parliament are elected by EU citizens.

European Union

The European Union is a group of 27 countries.

The European Union is often called the EU for short.

These countries have joined together to be stronger, and to improve the quality of life of EU citizens.

The EU makes laws on many important things.

Some examples are:

- Laws to protect the environment.
- Laws to improve accessibility for people with disabilities.

European Union Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



The strategy describes what problem people with disabilities face in the European Union.

The strategy says what the European Union will do to improve the lives of people with disabilities.

The strategy is done by the European Commission.

The strategy is done from 2021 to 2030.

United Nations

The United Nations is an international organisation.

The United Nations is called the UN for short.

It works for peace and security everywhere in the world.

There are more difficult word explanations [available online](#) in German, English, French, Spanish.

The easy-to-read version of the program was created by Inclusion Europe. Inclusion Europe represents 20 million people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Europe.

The European Easy-to-Read Logo belongs to Inclusion Europe.

More information at www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read