



European Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 4-5, 2017 – Brussels, Charlemagne Building

"We are EU citizens"

As every year, the European Commission celebrates the Day of Persons with Disabilities together with the European Disability Forum. At this event, a wide range of politicians and high-level experts will be present in order to debate the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and, with the audience, explore the best possible solutions.

This year's conference will be an occasion to celebrate citizenship: how can persons with

disabilities be better informed of their rights? How can they make their voice heard? The event will also lead us to address the right to political participation and the possibility to make cities more inclusive for all. Finally, and more generally, how can persons with disabilities better live as fully-fledged citizens?

Two different panels will take place during the first day. The first will focus on the social aspect and will be an opportunity to receive an update on European initiatives for better inclusion of persons with disabilities. The Social Pillar, the Work Life Balance, health insurance, disability pensions and the Sustainable Development Goals will be among the subjects to be discussed.

The second panel will bring forth the question of political participation. The right to vote and to be elected will be discussed and we will also hear personal testimonies. The purpose of this panel will be to identify challenges faced by persons with disabilities regarding the rights to political participation, and to find solutions for a concrete equality concerning this fundamental citizen's right.

The second day will focus on how EU cities could become more accessible on a sustainable basis and what is needed in order to allow better inclusion for all at local level. In this context, there will be an interactive panel with cities from across Europe together with politicians from national and EU level.

Finally, the Access City Award, which rewards cities across Europe for their efforts and commitments to be accessible to all, will close the conference. Ms Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, will announce the winners of the 2018 Award.

December 4, 2017

- 08.30 – 9.30 Registration and welcome coffee
- 09.30 – 10.00** **Opening** – Introduction by **Ms Emmanuelle Grange** – Head of the Disabilities and Inclusion Unit – European Commission
- **Mr Michel Servoz**, European Commission - Director General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
 - **Mr Ioannis Vardakastanis**, President of the European Disability Forum
 - **Ms Helena Pall**, Counsellor for Social Affairs -Social policy, equal treatment and accessibility, gender equality, SPC – Estonian Presidency.
- 10.00 – 12.30** **Panel 1 – What does the EU do for its citizens with disabilities?**
Moderator: **Ms Madi Sharma**, European Economic and Social Committee
- Presentations/debate
- **Ms Anna Lawson**, Pr. Academic Network of European Disability
 - **Mr Rodolfo Cattani**, European Disability Forum Executive Committee
- 10.45 – 11.15 *Coffee break*
- **Mr Thorkild Olesen**, Disabled People Organisation Denmark
 - **Ms Ciara O'Brien**, COHOM Chair, European Union External Action Service
- 12.30 – 14.00 *Lunch break*
- 14.00 – 17.00** **Panel 2 – Political participation as a person with disabilities: dream or reality?**
Moderator: **Ms Maureen Piggot**, President of Inclusion Europe
- Presentations/personal testimonies/debate
- **Mr Albert Prevos**, European Disability Forum Executive Committee Member
 - **Ms Marie-Hélène Boulanger**, European Commission- DG JUST - Head of the Citizenship Unit
 - **Ms Rosa Estaras Ferragut**, Member of European Parliament- Vice Chair of PETI Committee
- 15.15 – 15.45 *Coffee break*
- **Ms Sanja Tarczay**, Ph.D. President of the European Deafblind Union
 - **Mr David Clarke**, Self-advocate (with Down syndrome) who took part in the "My Opinion, My Vote" campaign on the right to vote in Ireland
 - **Ms Madeleine Kayser**, Head of the Integration and specific needs department, City of Luxembourg (Winner of the Access City Award's "public facilities and services" special mention in 2015)
- 17.00 End of Day 1
- 19.00** **Dinner – Thon Hotel EU**

December 5, 2017

08.30 – 09.00	Registration and welcome coffee
09.00 – 10.30	Panel 3 - I have a dream that one day... my city takes disabilities into account Moderator: Ms Inmaculada PLACENCIA PORRERO - European Commission Senior Expert on Social Affairs, Disability and Inclusion unit. Presentations/personal testimonies/debate <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Nadia Hadad, Board member of the European Network on Independent Living• Mr Roberto Castiglioni, Chair of the Heathrow Access Advisory Group• Ms Lara Méndez López, Mayor of Lugo - Spain (Access City Award 2017, "smart city" special mention)
10.30 – 11.00	<i>Coffee break</i>
11.00 – 12.00	Access City Award 2018 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility• Ms Ana Pelaez, Vice-president of the European Disability Forum
12.00 – 12.30	Conclusions <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ms Nadejda Harizanova, State Expert - Integration of People with Disabilities Department, Bulgarian Presidency• Mr Pat Clarke, Vice-president of the European Disability Forum• Ms Helga Stevens, Member of the European Parliament• Ms Manuela Geleng, European Commission Acting Director for the Social Affairs Directorate (DG EMPL)
12.30 – 14.00	<i>Lunch</i>
14.00	End of Day 2

Access City Award 2018

Since 2010, the Access City Award rewards cities for their work to achieve more accessible environments in all areas of life, making cities more inclusive and accessible to all. Every edition shows good examples of projects, demonstrating the enthusiasm and commitment of cities across the EU in facilitating accessibility for disabled and older people. Up to now, over 270 cities have applied for the award. Projects presented by cities provide a wealth of ideas for making cities better places to live for all.

Awards will be handed out to four EU cities at a ceremony taking place during the conference on December 5. The winning cities will be awarded for their efforts to make it easier for the disabled and older people to gain access to public and private areas such as housing, children's play areas, work environments, public transport, and communication technologies.

The purpose of the Award

The Award is part of the EU's wider efforts to create a barrier-free Europe. Improved accessibility helps remove the too many barriers that people with disabilities still face in their daily life: using transport, accessing information, or living independently.

By 2020, we expect that 120 million Europeans will experience a degree of disability. As the EU population ages, this number will grow. It has consequently become increasingly important to create environments within which people can live independently and with dignity throughout their lives. The European prize for making cities more accessible to people with disabilities and older people recognises outstanding efforts by cities that have worked towards achieving this goal.

The competition also provides a golden opportunity for public authorities to look at the pluses and minuses of their city in terms of accessibility and take action to improve. The Access City Award illustrates a very wide range of initiatives and policies covered: from policies on accessible housing, to children's play areas, workplaces and public transport information; every aspect of city life needs to take account of the changing demographics.

In line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, accessibility is one of the pillars of the European Union's Disability Strategy 2010-2020 which aims at creating a barrier-free Europe for all.

