



EUROPEAN NETWORK ON INDEPENDENT LIVING

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PRESS RELEASE

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The Swedish Presidency of the EU is hosting the third Equality Summit to be held on 16–17 November. This is an annual event for ministers, chairs of national equality bodies, chairs of NGOs at EU level, EU social partners and representatives of international organizations. The purpose is to share knowledge and experience to develop stronger and more effective ways of working against all forms of discrimination, and to promote equal rights and opportunities for all in the EU.

ENIL – European Network on Independent Living has expectations from this meeting! Discrimination against people with disability is common and against the United Nations Convention on Rights for Persons with Disabilities.

One recent example is that of an employee of a European Institution who had to start a petition as his son was expelled from the European School, the school for the children of officials and servants of the European Institutions. This child has autism and was originally given assistance, which was later evoked. He was then denied schooling altogether.

ENIL joined EDF - European Disability Forum in supporting this petition against discrimination of MEPs, officials and servants of the European Parliament and European Institutions. Their children should be treated equally even if they have learning disabilities or autism. The petition was brought to the attention of the President of the European Parliament Mr. Buzek to lobby for equal treatment and education for children.

The petition was started in September 2009 and was signed by more the 500 people on Facebook. Article 1 of the Statute of the European schools states: "the role of the European Schools is to provide for the joint education of the children of the staff of the European Communities." That Article makes no distinction between disabled and non-disabled children, but the exclusion decision of the Secretary-General of the European School made such a distinction.

This recent situation flagrantly violates the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and violates the UN Convention on the Rights of Children. And this is only one example of many. Discrimination and the abuse of rights in education and employment, as well as denials of the right to free movement and the right to independent living (as expressed in Article 19 of the UN Convention) are all daily experiences for disabled people. ENIL hopes that the Equality Summit will consider the situation of disabled people by promoting the adoption of the European Draft Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment, a horizontal directive against discrimination, and by promoting the signing and ratification of the UN convention to be implemented in EU legislation and policy.

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