

Open letter to Frank Van Massenhove, CEO of one of the most inaccessible administrations in the world (inaccessible for people with disabilities)

Hello Frank,

As you know and as the press has often relayed on the front page ([RTBF](#), [RTL](#), La Libre Belgique, [De Standaard](#), [Gazet van Antwerpen](#) ...), a disabled person who calls 0800 987 99 (contact centre for disabled people) has a 96% chance of not receiving an answer (*). These people suffer from it, many of the civil servants of our administration suffer from their suffering.



As you know, a person with a disability who goes to our Federal Public Service's internal complaints department has a 99 % chance of not receiving an answer (**). These people suffer, I have nightmares about not being able to help them, I am not the only one. What about you?

As you know, a person with a disability who addresses our SPF-FOD (Ministry) has a 100% chance of not being treated according to the basic rules of respect and the legal rules (***). It's immoral, illegal and unparalleled in all the administrations I've come across in my 28-year career.

As a reminder and to give an order of magnitude of the suffering, more than 100,000 disabled people are currently waiting for a decision (for an allowance, a parking card,...).

You said in the press that when something went wrong people should say so, and that people were happy. I'm obeying you, but frankly, I think people will only be happy when the public servants we are guarantee a service to all. By all of them, I mean "even" people with disabilities.

In this letter, I'm addressing you informally because it's the custom you brought into our administration. I hope you will reply to this open letter even though you haven't replied once to the 9 emails I have sent you in the last year and a half (these 9 pages of text are available). The situation has been disastrous since April 2016 (it was far from perfect before). You wrote recently in your book "Managers zijn niet nodig" that everyone can come and talk to you no matter what happens. Didn't you forget to mention that you don't answer your employees when the questions relate to helping people with disabilities? You also wrote that almost every journalist in Belgium has your mobile phone number. Would you be willing to provide this number to people with disabilities?

You and I work in a company that you like to define as unique. And you're right, our inaccessibility is unique. As a result of this, the stress of the agents caring for disabled people is also unique (and iniquitous). A survey shows that 36% of civil servants feel panicky about work. You once said that everything is measured in our company and this allows us to see changes. You're also right, it helps us to know that the situation is getting worse. While "only" 31% of the agents had significant stress in 2015, it became 49,7% by 2017!

Frank, let's be serious now. I assume that beyond your assertions in favour of transparency, openness, the fact that your employees have to say what is wrong, freedom,... you're not going to

like this letter. Once again, in all seriousness, I nevertheless suggest that you find the strength and courage to go beyond that. I suggest that you use your remarkable media energy not so much to promote yourself and the Ministry, but to solve the gigantic problems faced by people with disabilities by strongly encouraging hiring of agents and by organising work with less disastrous consequences than those of today.

I am at your disposal and, above all, at the disposal of people with disabilities to make progress in this area.

Didier Coeurnelle

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Hashtag : #RespectForDisabledPeople

Lettre [en français](#) - Brief [in het Nederlands](#)

(*) In one month, more than 200,000 telephone calls, less than 10,000 replies (FPS statistics). Over the past year and a half, I have personally had thousands of people on the phone and by e-mail (and cannot help them because I don't have access to the files of disabled people).

(**) In one year, more than 400 complaints transmitted, 4 replies

(***) Legal deadlines for reply, obligation to mention the person handling a file and his or her telephone number, rules on accessibility, obligations to inform...

