



European Disability Card

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Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the invitation:

- A person with a disability is like any other citizen: a full citizen. It's a fact! Like any other citizen, he or she must be able to move freely by public transport, enjoy a concert, register with a sports club, visit museums etc. Fact!
- The UNCRPD confirms this. With the ratification, the State Parties have committed themselves to integrate it into the policies for people with disabilities.
- The free movement of all European citizens is one of the pillars of the European project.
- And yet, despite these texts, despite these commitments, the person with a disability does not 'de



facto' have access to the goods and services that are available to him or her. The environment as it is traditionally designed, still too often excludes people who are 'different', so their fundamental rights are sometimes totally denied.

- Even in the best case, when the necessary adaptations, support or assistance are available, the disabled person must be able to prove his or her disability in order to be able to use this support. This is particularly true with many 'invisible' disabilities, which severely restrict the independence of the person concerned.
- Freedom of movement and social integration is therefore an illusion for citizens with disabilities. Not to mention what happens when a person with a disability travels to another country.
- As a result, thousands of disabled people, and their families, never go to the theatre, to a concert or a football match. It is only because of his or her disability that the person in question loses the right to develop freely and to participate in social life. For



anyone who wants to be able to live like others, this is obviously unacceptable.

- On the basis of these findings, the general assembly of the Belgian Disability Forum in January 2009 commissioned its secretariat to prepare a note on a card to promote the mobility of European citizens.

- After years of negotiation, European Commissioner for Social Affairs, Mrs. Marianne Thyssen, decided in 2015 to launch a pilot project for the concrete introduction of the card.

Belgium, together with 7 other countries, responded to the call and formally committed itself to strengthen the inclusion and active participation of people with disabilities in the society. The EDC became a reality in Belgium in 2017.

- Mr. Joachim Lommelen presented the framework of the EDC in Belgium, and I will add nothing more to this point. We users of the EDCs, are asking for just one thing: that more and more providers are recognizing the card and that its development and validity is being generalized throughout the European Union. We also



hope that this specific tool will help to change the way people with disabilities are considered every day.

- I would also like to draw your attention to two very important aspects in my view: the issue of accessibility in terms of economic prospects and the need for gradual harmonization of accessibility at European level.

1. The card is also a sesame for economic providers: the exclusion of disabled people represents a cost and a shortcoming for society. Inclusion is a factor in economic progress: the modern disabled person is a citizen who wants to participate, given the opportunity.

2. I would also like to stress that accessibility must be part of a permanent process: the field of operators are not being asked to make their entire infrastructure accessible to all audiences in no time, though we need clear and harmonized rules. At the moment, the patchwork of acronyms and pictograms in Europe and at international level is a real obstacle to clarity and the ability to move



independently. For people with disabilities but also for the elderly, tourists etc....,

We hope that European standardization work is progressing also in this field.

Thank you for your attention.

