

DOC-BOARD-19-11-05-A

## EU Council and Council Presidencies

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### Document for information and discussion

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#### Purpose of this item

In the framework of planning, the purpose of this item is to update the Board on the upcoming EU Presidencies and discuss EDF's approach.

#### Questions to the Board

- How can the EDF secretariat cooperate with National Councils better on the issue of the Council and its presidencies?

#### Introduction

As discussed at the Executive Committee meeting in Lyon in September, EDF decided to strengthen its approach to influencing the agenda of EU presidencies and ensuring we cooperate with Presidency to advance all areas of our work. Over the past year, we have increased our activities vis-à-vis the Council and improved our follow-up on the Presidencies with EDF members.

#### EDF's work on influencing the Council

At the EDF AGA in Dublin in 2016 we agreed on some principles on our overall approach to the Presidencies and the Council:

1. In cooperation with its National Councils, EDF will contact early enough the Member States holding the future Presidencies. The objectives would be:
  - a. to ensure that disability is mainstreamed in the Presidency future priorities
  - b. the Presidency organises disability-specific events on important themes

- c. the Presidency supports financially the organisation in its country of EDF Board meeting/conference, to be co-hosted and co-organised with our national members
2. EDF will send its priorities on disability to the Trio before the start of the term of the Trio (and will send if needed an update to take into account unforeseen developments on the EU agenda).
3. EDF will invite representatives from the Trio to a Board meeting in order to discuss the Trio's work programme as well as other issues of importance for persons with disabilities on the EU agenda, ahead of the start of the Trio of Presidencies.

EDF has followed these principles with varying degrees of success. The impact has depended a lot on the activities that take place on national level to influence the Presidency agenda, which then has been amplified by EDF's work in Brussels. A close cooperation between the secretariat and the national members has been proven to be vital.

### Current Presidency: Finland

EDF has approached the Finnish Presidency and sent them our [Disability Priorities](#) for current policy issues. We have also asked for a high-level meeting of Yannis with the Finnish Ambassador to present our priorities in person, which was unfortunately rejected; however a meeting with the Prime Minister is planned for November 8<sup>th</sup>.

On policy level we have met with different staff members to discuss, amongst others, the Rail Passengers' Rights Regulation, Structural Funds, and the Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive. We are following up on those meetings to improve our advocacy efforts in the Working Party meetings. Our engagement has led to a first success: an invitation at an internal workshop of the Finnish Presidency on the revision of the Air Passengers' Rights Regulation.

On the Rail Passengers' Rights Regulation we have also met with the Permanent Representations of Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden. We have sent

several [communications on our priorities](#) for the Regulation and we sent Open Letter, signed by over 200 organisations and individuals, aimed at the Council to ensure that pre-notification time for assistance at railway stations will be lowered from the current 48-hour period.

## Upcoming Presidencies

Country	Timing	Planning update
Croatia	January-June 2020	The AGA will be held in Croatia and meetings with the Ministry have been scheduled. Catherine has visited Croatia for meetings in October for planning.
Germany	July -December 2020	DBR has been approached but will not be hosting the EDF Board. DBR's member "Lebenshilfe" (also member of Inclusion Europe) has agreed to partner with EDF. The Ministry of Social Affairs has been approached for funding.
Portugal	January-June 2021	EDF executive will take place in Portugal next June to prepare the presidency with the disability sector, including our members.
Slovenia	July-December 2021	
France	January-June 2022	
Czech Republic	July- December 2022	
Sweden	January-June 2023	

The EDF secretariat has met with EDF members to discuss upcoming presidencies (Croatia, Germany, and Portugal) to find out how we can better target our work for example by adapting the conference topics to the priorities of the Presidencies.

From our experience it has become clear that there are opportunities for EDF members to play a much stronger role on national level because the representatives in Brussels receive their orders from the Ministries. Therefore, the EDF secretariat will engage more closely with the members and organize one-on-one meetings to plan the presidencies together.