



european network of service providers in employment and rehabilitation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ENSPER Welcomes Agreement on the Draft UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(United Nations, 30 August 2006)

The constituent organisations of ENSPER – the *European Platform for Rehabilitation; Workability Europe* and *Rehabilitation International Work & Employment Commission* congratulate all governments and civil society organisations involved in the negotiations of the United Nations Draft Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was finalised on 25 August 2006 after an intense two-week session.

This Convention is the result of five years of negotiations at the United Nations, with unprecedented participation of numerous persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, including many ENSPER members and colleagues.

Reactions

Michael Fox, President of RI, called this a “most historic moment” at a Seminar on Implementation of the UN Convention, held just one day after the treaty was finalised. The Seminar was organised by RI and the US International Council on Disabilities (USICD). During opening remarks, Mr Fox noted “This Treaty, which represents the first human rights treaty of the 21st century, is a milestone for persons with disabilities, governments and advocates who have been committed to this process. RI and its global membership will continue to work together with colleagues to ensure that this treaty is implemented and has a significant impact on the quality of life of the more than 650 million persons with disabilities worldwide.”

The Convention specifically prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in all areas of life, including access to information, public facilities, services and rehabilitation, together with the right to education, health and employment.

The two most important articles in the Convention from ENSPER’s perspective are Article 26 on *Habilitation & Rehabilitation* and Article 27 on *Work & Employment*.

Referring specifically to Article 26, Jan Spooren, General Secretary of EPR, stated “In adopting Article 26, states parties, committed themselves, inter alia, to promote the development of initial and continuing training for professionals and staff working in habilitation and rehabilitation services – this is a point which we consider especially important given the fact that offering specialised training programmes for professionals in our sector has been a key focus of EPR’s work via our European Rehabilitation Academy.”



With reference to Article 27, on the other hand, Hans Vrind, President of Workability Europe, stated, “For us, as an organisation championing disabled peoples’ rights to work worldwide it is extremely pleasing to see a strong Article in the Convention which safeguards and promotes the realisation of the right to work for disabled people. Now, that we have a Convention we want to see implementation of the principles and rights set out in it on the ground. And we, as representatives of civil society also have a responsibility to make this happens.”

Next steps

The text will now be discussed by a Drafting Committee, to review the technical accuracy of the treaty, before submitting the Draft Convention for formal approval by the Ad Hoc Committee, which serves as the forum for negotiations. The Convention is scheduled to come before the 61st session of the General Assembly for final adoption later this year. The treaty will then be open for signing and ratification by all UN member countries, with 20 ratifications needed for the Treaty to enter into force.

For more information

For more information on the UN Convention including the Draft Text of the Convention adopted on 25 August 2006 visit <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/> or contact Martin Ohridski on the below listed contact details.

About ENSPER

ENSPER (European Network of Service Providers in Employment and Rehabilitation) is an independent, overall structure, grouping together three separate organisations – the *European Platform for Rehabilitation*; *Workability Europe* and *Rehabilitation International Work & Employment Commission*.

ENSPER’s purpose is to give providers of work, employment and all kinds of rehabilitation services a single voice so they can have greater influence in the international decision-making process. The scope of ENSPER covers all actions and initiatives in the public affairs arena relating to people with disabilities and others who are experiencing disadvantage. ENSPER aims at proactive and effective policy-influencing at the European level by representing the interests of its member networks to the institutions, advisory bodies and agencies of the European Union, the Council of Europe, the European Disability Forum, national governments, world organisations as well as other relevant governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Contact

European Network of Service Providers in Employment and Rehabilitation (ENSPER)
Rue de Spa 15, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium
Tel +32 2 235 66 64; Fax: +32 2 736 86 22
Email: martin.ohridski@epr.be
Website: www.ensper.org

