

Funding a national disability information centre

Luxembourg (Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration, and for the Greater Region) - FUNDING AGREEMENT FOR A NATIONAL DISABILITY INFORMATION AND MEETING CENTER BETWEEN INFO-HANDICAP AND THE GOVERNMENT

Because policies targeting people with disabilities are often not coordinated, people have difficulty finding their way through the bureaucracy. A national disability information centre is a classic win-win solution: It assists people with their administrative procedures and helps policy makers to shape inclusive policies.

IN BRIEF

Info-Handicap is a national disability information and meeting centre, founded in 1993 by 16 disability organizations. While the idea for such a centre came from the Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration, and for the Greater Region, which also financially supports it, Info-Handicap is under the full control of its disability member organizations. The centre assists people with disabilities to find their way through complex administrative procedures and competences. Additionally, Info-Handicap has become a driver of inclusive policies as well as the main contact on any disability-related questions.

FACTS & FIGURES

- Initial Year 1993
- Info-Handicap now has 55 member organizations in Luxembourg.
- In 2013, 2,271 persons asked for advice and 597 used the centre's legal information service.
- Info-Handicap has developed guidance books and has influenced laws and practices in Luxembourg and beyond.
- Since 2005 the centre has held the accessibility competition "A municipality for everybody."

INNOVATION

A driver for inclusive policies

One of the major challenges in the implementation of inclusive policies is to organize the dialogue between decision makers and civil society. Info-Handicap's unique position allows it to receive and dispatch input from and to all levels, and thereby to function as a hub that facilitates such a dialogue smoothly and on a permanent basis.

Identification of challenges and solutions

This leads firstly to improved identification and understanding of the existing challenges and, secondly, to increased opportunities for developing adequate solutions.

Concrete help

Info-Handicap offers information and guidance for persons with disabilities, for members of their family and social circle, as well as for others who are interested. This includes a legal information service and, in cases of discrimination, a meeting with a lawyer.

CONTEXT

In 1989 the Government of Luxembourg decided that policies targeting people with disabilities should be coordinated. The Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration, and for the Greater Region was entrusted with the implementation of this idea, and it developed the project of a national disability information centre financially supported by the government, but managed under the control of national disability organizations. In April 1993, 16 disability organizations, which together formed the National Disability Council, founded Info-Handicap and signed a funding agreement with the government. Since then, Info-Handicap has constantly sought to carry out its mandate, including initiatives that have an impact beyond Luxembourg's borders. Recently, Info-Handicap assisted in elaborating a strategy for setting up a national disability action plan, and functions as a resource centre in this area.

"Info-Handicap plays an important role in empowering persons with disabilities as well as in involving civil society in decision-making. I highly recommend other countries to follow a similar path."

—Mrs. Corinne Cahen, Minister of Family Affairs, Integration, and for the Greater Region

KEY FEATURES

Info-Handicap offers information and guidance for persons with disabilities, for members of their family and social environment, as well as for others who are interested in the field of disability. Staff assists persons with disabilities to fill in forms or write letters, and to address the correct contact points in the most direct way. In addition, they organize legal assistance and, in cases of discrimination, there is the possibility to meet with a lawyer free of charge. They undertake activities for supporting independent living, offer training, organize awareness-raising events, and promote accessibility. Importantly, they encourage their members to insist on the right to inclusion and not to

accept exclusive mechanisms. The work of Info-Handicap is continually monitored by the Ministry and member organizations.

OUTCOME, IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS

- Info-Handicap's experience has led to its reputation reaching all of Europe.
- Info-Handicap regularly represents the European Disability Forum at official events and has been the partner or coordinator of projects funded by the European Commission.
- Since 1999, Info-Handicap has also coordinated the European Concept for Accessibility Network.

TRANSFERABILITY, SCALABILITY AND COST-EFFICIENCY

The idea of a national disability information centre is perfectly transferable to other countries, regions, or even to local levels. Info-Handicap's yearly costs are around €600,000, including the salaries of 6.7 staff members – three with disabilities.

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SOURCES

Info-Handicap, *Statute*: <http://bit.ly/1m5MCIG>

Info-Handicap, *List of Members*: <http://bit.ly/1q3tbLT>

Info-Handicap, *Guide du Handicap*: <http://bit.ly/1oUFS1N>

Info-Handicap, *Activity Report*: <http://bit.ly/1s45Efs>

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