



Union for the Mediterranean
Union pour la Méditerranée
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UfM | CONFERENCE ON DISABILITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

20-21 OCTOBER 2021



GENERAL BACKGROUND

The situation of persons with disabilities in the Euro-Mediterranean region is far from being fully satisfactory. Many countries have improved their legislative environments, with advances affecting positively this social group throughout the last years. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go.

Low activity rates and, when active, high unemployment; high educational leave and lower educational level than persons without disabilities; forced institutionalisation; lack of accessibility to goods and public or private services; women with disabilities suffer from a double discrimination. To compound things further, the COVID-19 crisis has shown how persons with disabilities still suffer direct discriminatory situations worldwide and this served as an example that there are several measures yet to be taken. Hence, the COVID-19 implications have revealed that the most vulnerable groups are being hit the hardest. Bearing in mind SDGs 5 and 10, it is important to analyse the challenges faced due to the pandemic from a human perspective, and the inequalities it has exacerbated.

These are only a few realities that constitute the challenging environments that persons with disabilities must undertake; barriers upheld by the societies they live in which the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities can eradicate. Meanwhile, their representation within national governments and international organisations is another goal pending to be accomplished. Within this context, organisa-

tions representing persons with disabilities, international institutions and national governments work together to develop projects and to increase the effectiveness of national policies.

In order to ensure the full participation of people with disability on an equal basis with others in the EU and beyond, last 3 March the European Commission presented an ambitious Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.

In the strategy women and youth are targeted as the most vulnerable or under-represented groups among people with disability. The strategy has also identified the tourism sector as one of its main priorities: accessible tourism for persons with disabilities is key to support participation as well as socio-economic development.

Because the rights of persons with disabilities do not end at Europe's borders, the Commission will promote the rights of persons with disabilities globally. With this strategy, the EU aims at reinforcing its role as an advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. The EU will use instruments such as technical assistance and financial programmes, support via EU delegations, political dialogues and work in multilateral fora to support partner countries in their endeavours to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and provide guidance to implement the SDGs in a disability inclusive manner.



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THE CONFERENCE

The **I Conference on Disability and Social Inclusion in the Mediterranean** will, in the space of two days, present three blocks of interactive seminars – round tables, dialogues- followed by practical workshops. Civil society and institutional participants will be able to network, share good-practices and/or present project proposals on the themes discussed.

Objectives:

The Conference is a unique opportunity to place the needs of persons with disabilities on the first line of the agenda, at a stage when national governments and international organisations are launching their socio-economic recovery processes.

The UfM framework will serve to better highlight the Euro-Mediterranean region's contributions to the global agenda and interlink Mediterranean regional action with the global Sustainable Development Goals. In this line, the conference aims to contribute to the advancement of the SDGs, specifically to SDGs 5, 8, 10 and 17.

Through the key collaboration between ONCE and the UfM, this conference also aims to give impetus to human development, while raising awareness on the discrimination and challenges that people with disabilities face.

Themes:

The thematic areas of the conference and the ensuing workshops will focus on:

1. Social Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Mediterranean Countries:

1.1. Human Rights and Accessibility limitations and challenges in a post-COVID era;

1.2. Employment of persons with disabilities: Regional overview

2. Disability and Gender Equality: Intersectional approaches.

2.1. The gender perspective within the regional and national disability agendas and recovery programmes.

3. Persons with disabilities in the Tourism sector:

3.1. Accessible tourism and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Tourism socioeconomic sector: A solution for the crisis recovery in the Mediterranean.

Regarding panelists, the list will include, among others:

- Union for the Mediterranean;
- Heads of disability policies- National governments and European Institutions;
- Representatives from members of national organisations representing persons with disabilities;
- Heads of regional umbrella disability organisations- Europe (EDF), Arab Countries (AOPD), Africa (ADF);
- Heads of regional disability organisations;
- Other relevant international and national disability leaders and civil society.



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TENTATIVE AGENDA

1st DAY
(October,
20th)

9:00-9:40 hrs:	Opening Remarks
9:40- 10.00 hrs:	1st Thematic Block
10:00-10:45 hrs:	Coffee Break and Networking
10:45-11:15 hrs:	Round Table - <i>Human Rights and Accessibility: limitations and challenges in a post-COVID era</i>
11:15-12:30 hrs:	Workshops
12:30- 13:45 hrs:	LUNCH AT THE VENUE
13:45-14:45 hrs:	Round Table - <i>Employment of persons with disabilities: Regional overview</i>
14:45-15:45 hrs:	Workshops
15:45-16:00 hrs:	2nd Thematic Block
16:00-16:45 hrs:	Round Table - <i>The gender perspective within the region: national disability agendas and recovery programmes</i>
16:45-17:30 hrs:	Workshops
18:00 hrs:	Closure of the 1st day
20:30 hrs:	Gala dinner: Ilunion Hotel



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2nd DAY
(October,
21th)

09:00-09:15 hrs:

Welcome

9:15-9:30 hrs:

3rd Thematic Block

9:30-10:30 hrs:

Round Table - Accessible tourism and inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Touristic socioeconomic sector: A solution for the crisis recovery in the Mediterranean

10:30-11:30 hrs:

Workshops

11:30-12:00 hrs:

Coffee Break and Networking

12:00-13:00 hrs:

Presentation of the conclusions and recommendations of the Conference

13:00 hrs:

Conference Closure

Other remarks

- The event will be hybrid.
- Venue: Palacio de Pedralbes.
- Working Language: English, French, Spanish, Arabic, International Sign Language interpretation provided.



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ORGANISING PARTNERS

UNION FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN

The UfM Social and Civil Affairs Division

has long focused on human development, through youth and women empowerment, as a main contribution to addressing the root causes of the current challenges faced by the Euro-Mediterranean region. This focus lays at the heart of the UfM strategy, a strategy which has been progressively built and structured in close coordination with the UfM Member States and with the involvement of key regional stakeholders.

In this vein, the UfM Conference on Disability and Social Inclusion will serve as a platform for national and international actors and institutions to discuss and explore solutions on how to enhance and continue to fulfil the realisation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It aims to promote networking so as to develop synergies and identify potential projects and initiatives, to enhance regional cooperation and partnerships in this field.

The UfM has long worked to foster equality and inclusiveness, more specifically gender equality for women's and girls' empowerment, and has always underlined the need to address the challenges that still hinder the full participation of women in the public and private sectors.

In 2017, the UfM Member States adopted the Cairo Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the role of Women in Society, inspired also by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) with concrete and operational recommendations, actions

and measures. The Cairo Declaration places attention on key spheres of action, and four priority areas were ratified, namely: raising women's participation in public life and decision-making; improving women's economic participation; combating all forms of violence against women and girls; and eliminating gender stereotypes. Following this commitment, Member States endorsed a Ministerial mechanism, backed up with a total of 20 indicators, to monitor progress and identify challenges within the above-mentioned priority areas. These indicators will provide gender disaggregated data and will consider the specific needs of women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities, both cognitive and mental, and physical and sensory. This data aims to serve and inform better policy making and increase the effectiveness of local, national and regional initiatives, projects and legal action. It also recognizes the intersections between different inequalities and vulnerabilities, such as gender, youth and disability.

The UfM backed pilot project «Integration of youth and women with disabilities through employment in the traveling and tourism sector» presented in the Conference is a testimony of the UfM's action-oriented policy that tackles inclusiveness and job creativity in the tourism sector.

Hence, the UfM Conference on Disability and Social Inclusion is in line with the UfM policy framework, and will benefit from the momentum that human development has gained in the region to ensure the recognition and implementation of women, youth and people with disabilities' rights.



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ONCE SOCIAL GROUP

The ONCE Social Group is a Spanish public law corporation of social nature that has as principal objective the inclusion of persons with disabilities in political, economic and social life, according to United Nations International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). As a group of entities headed by ONCE, the ONCE Foundation and the group of social companies, ILUNION, the ONCE Social Group develops a wide range of services, activities and projects that favour the social and labour integration of people with disabilities, maintaining the balance between economic and social objectives. With over 70.000 employees, of which around 60 % have some form of disability, it is the greatest employer of persons with disabilities worldwide.

With this background, the ONCE Social Group is an active member of 43 international entities or organizations representing disability, social economy, socially responsible lotteries or related fields. Among those, it actively works with the most relevant international and regional organisations advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities, promoting the Social Economy sector, the socially responsible lotteries, and other related fields. The World Blind Union (WBU), the International Disability Alliance (IDA), the European Disability Forum (EDF) or the European Blind Union (EBU) are notable examples of this Civil Society, but it also works and advises international and multi-lateral organisations and institutions, such as the European Parliament and the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, World Bank, IDB or SEGIB.

Within this broad activity, the ONCE Social Group understands international cooperation with persons with disabilities, in particular blind or with visual disability, of other countries and world regions as one of its main goals. In this regard, the work of the ONCE Foundation for Solidarity with the Blind in Latin America (FOAL) has been, for more than 20 years, the leading representative of the organisation, notably through the development of capacity building, educational and labor inclusion programmes.

In addition to the known action developed in Latin America and Europe, the ONCE Social Group has also led or supported a wide range of projects and programmes in other regions, such as the neighbouring countries, in particular the Mediterranean region, in accordance with the objectives of its International Strategy aimed at boosting cooperation between Europe and Arab countries in the disability sector.

Some examples of this activity are the Musawa Projects, focused on capacity building in Arab countries - hand in hand with CERMI and AECID- the project "Support for the socio-economic integration of People with Disabilities" with FIIAPP, aimed at advising national governments in the process of updating their legal framework for people with disabilities; or the recent PPPD for the Integration of youth and women with disabilities through employment in the travel and tourism sector in Morocco.



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In the
framework of



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