Legal framework of universal design on international, European and national level

Theme:

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its Optional Protocol were adopted on 13 December 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters. By February 2015 the Convention has already been signed by 159, and ratifed by 153 countries or regional organisations in the world. One of the eight guiding principles that underlies the CRPD is accessibility, and a specific article, Article 9 provides for this very important theme. The definition of universal design is stipulated in Article 2 of the CRPD and is listed in the general obligations in Article 4 (f).

The Committee on Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) in its General Comment No. 2 addresses accessibility and advocates for the use of "universal design," which makes society equally accessible to all persons. It ensures that all products, facilities, and services meet consistent accessibility standards.

In December, 2010 the CRPD was ratified by the European Union as well, meaning that undertakings contained in the CRPD are binding for the EU as well.

The "European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe", was adopted on 15 November 2010. It is the European Commission's main policy document aiming to "empower people with disabilities so that they can enjoy their full rights, and benefit fully from participating in society and in the European economy, notably through the Single market." The Strategy sets out accessibility as one of eight main areas for action required to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) at EU level.

According to the CRPD, States should review their legal framework and implement appropriate accessibility legislation in consultation with persons with disabilities and other relevant stakeholders.

The Special Thematic Session's aim is to identify

- how countries rewieved their national framework to implement regulations of the CRPD with regard to universal design as one of the most effective tools to create an accessible environment
- good examples of biding national legislations for ensuring universal design
- how countries use their public procurement legislation to ensure that public money is spent exclusively for the benefit of each citizen, including persons with disabilities (examples both on national, regional and local governmental levels are welcome)

- good examples of disseminating knowledge on universal design among stakeholders
- best practices of involvement of persons with disabilities in the design process
- best practices of using public (or European Union) budget on universally designed environment, goods and services
- best practices on networking in the field of universal design
- business case of universal design

We would highly appreciate to have more concrete examples than future plans.

Orgainsers:

Erzsébet Földesi,

President, Universal Design Information and Research Center in Budapest, Hungary (www.etikk.hu)

Board member, European Disability Forum, Brussels, Belgium (http://www.edf-feph.org)

President, National Council of Persons with Disabilities (FESZT), Hungary