

Contact: Naomi Mabita
naomi.mabita@edf-feph.org

For immediate release

Inaccessible courthouses: a nightmare for lawyers with disabilities

[International seminar focuses on barriers preventing people with disabilities from part-taking in the European Union justice system.](#)

Brussels, May 29th 2019 – The third seminar ‘Barriers of Access to Justice of Persons with Disabilities in the EU Context’ was hosted at the European Economic and Social Committee Jacques Delors building, said to be the first accessible EU building in the world. However, throughout the seminar a speaker could not reach the button for the microphone and was forced to ask for assistance at each of their interventions. This set the tone for discussions on the gaps between accessibility in theory and how it is applied, or more often than not, ignored. The example of the Paris Courthouse was brought up – [a building inaugurated last year and yet lacking basic access needs such as accessible doors, assistive technologies, and indicators of where one is in the building.](#)

There were discussions on topics ranging from [facilitating training for legal practitioners across the continent](#) (necessary as disability is not fully integrated into law school curricula) to empowering supported decision making. Thereof particular note is the [I-DECIDE project funded by Erasmus+](#) through which organizations including EASPD are developing practical guidance for supporters to be able to help persons with disabilities make supported decisions in the areas of personal finance, healthcare, and consumer rights, in full accordance with the wishes and preferences of the supported individual. Other areas which need work are the gap between the medical approach (which goes against the [CRPD](#)) by which some legal practitioners are bound and the Human Rights approach which persons with disabilities and advocates are pushing for.

Just4All launched in November last year and seeks to improve the accessibility of judicial systems across the European Union, it is lead by Fundación ONCE in partnership with the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) who were hosts on this occasion, the European Disability Forum (EDF), Fundación ONCE, Thomson Reuters Aranzadi, and the Instituto de los Derechos Humanos Bartolome de las Casas of Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (IDHBC UC3M). Speakers were invited from the European Academy of Law (ERA), the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, the International Union of Notaries, UNIA – the Interfederal Center for Equal Opportunities, and the European Network on Independent Living (ENIL).

The outputs of this 30-month project will include an online glossary of the EU justice system, and a report on practices which make justice accessible, such as translating documents into accessible formats such as Easy Read, and training judges and other legal professionals on how to work with people with disabilities.

You can follow the progress of the project through the website Just4All.eu.

Notes to editor



The [European Disability Forum](http://EuropeanDisabilityForum.eu) is an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe. It is run by persons with disabilities and their families. EDF is a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe.