

Programme

High-Level Conference on Independent Living

6 November – 7 November 2025



**Danish
Presidency**
Council of the
European Union

Programme

Theme

The main theme of the conference will be independent living and inclusion in society. In line with the UNCRPD article 19 and the EU's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, it is important that persons with disabilities, old and young, have an equal right to live independently and to be included in the community. The conference will focus on the combination of various environmental and individual factors that allow persons with disabilities to have control over their own lives. Importantly, the conference will build on the Commission Notice on *Guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community of persons with disabilities in the context of EU funding*, which outlines key approaches for implementing initiatives for independent living. This includes the insurance of the autonomy of persons with disabilities in regards to transport and accommodation, and through provisions such as various forms of personal assistance and accessible accommodation.

The conference will also have a session on accessibility with the double focus on housing and on built environment addressing accessibility in public spaces.

The conference will facilitate discussions on the provisions needed to allow independent living - e.g. assistive devices, reasonable accommodation and access to personal assistance, personal budgets or supported decision-making. The conference will discuss best practices and success factors, as well as political and economic challenges, and it will rely on personal testimonies of persons with disabilities highlighting the importance of independent living and being included in society.

Programme

**Day 1/November
6th**

9.00-10.00	Arrival and registration
10.00-10.10	Official opening by Danish minister for Social Affairs and Housing Sophie Hæstorp Andersen.
10.10-10.20	Video Speech by Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management Hadja Lahbib
10.20-10.30	Speech by member of the European Parliament Marianne Vind (Social Democrats)
10.30-10.40	Speech by the president of European Disability Forum (EDF) Yannis Vardakastanis
<i>Section 1 - Ensuring Independent Living through Individual Support in the Home and Inclusion in the Community</i>	
10.45-11.00	Speech by the director of European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) Sirpa Rautio on independent living in the UNCRPD.
11.00-11.15	Presentation by European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) on the importance of independent living and the support systems needed to facilitate independent living.
11.15-12.15	Panel on meeting necessary support needs in the home to promote independent living <i>Mr. Łukasz Krasoń, Secretary of State, Ministry for Family, Labour and Social Policy, Poland (video speech)</i> <i>Benjamin Voisin, Directorate General of Social Cohesion, Ministry of Health, families and Disabled People, France</i> <i>Kirsi Konola, President of European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD)</i> <i>Jamie Bolling, Co-chair of European Network on Independent Living (ENIL)</i>
12.15-12.45	Refreshment
12.45-13.30	Panel on inclusion in the community as a condition for independent living. <i>Domna-Maria Michailidou, Minister of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs, Greece</i> <i>Milan Šveřepa, Chief Executive of Inclusion Europe</i> <i>Alfonso Lara-Montero, Chief Executive Officer, European Social Network</i>
13.30-15.00	Lunch
<i>Section 2 – Accessible homes and public spaces for Persons Living with Disabilities</i>	
15.00-15.45	Panel on best practices of accessibility in housing as well as barriers in accessing affordable and adaptable homes. <i>Tobias Nyhuus, National Accessibility Expert, AccessibleEU</i> <i>Tatiana Marquez Uriarte, Member of the Cabinet of the EU Commissioner for Energy</i> <i>Bent Madsen, Board of Directors, Housing Europe</i> <i>Malin Ekman Aldén, Director-General of the Swedish Agency for Participation.</i>

15.45-16.15	Interview about lived experiences with disability with William Korte, Chairman of The Danish association of Youth With Disabilities (SUMH).
16.15-17:15	Presentation by researcher Camilla Ryhl, Bevica Fonden on universal design.
17.15-17.30	Closing
19.00-22.00	Official Dinner

Programme continues on the next page.

Day 2/ November 7th

8.00-9.00	Refreshment
9.00-9.15	Opening Speech by director Ana Carla Pereira, Equality and Non-discrimination, DG JUST.
9.15-9.30	Presentation by Massimiliano Mascherini, Eurofound, on the development of independent living.
9.30-10.00	Interview with postdoc Olivia Dahl, University of Copenhagen, on the good everyday life for persons living with disability.
<i>Separate sections</i>	
10.00-13.00	EDF Board Meeting
10.00-13.00	Section for Member States.
<i>Section 3 – Looking Forward on Independent Living</i>	
13.00-14.15	<p>Panel on input to the upcoming initiatives in the <i>Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030</i>.</p> <p><i>Sophie Hæstorp Andersen, Minister for Social Affairs and Housing, Denmark</i> <i>Christina Flourentzou, Director of the Department for Persons with Disabilities, Cyprus</i> <i>Ana Carla Pereira, Director for Equality and Non-discrimination, DG JUST</i> <i>Thorkild Olesen, Member of European Disability Forum EDF's executive committee</i></p>
14.15-14.30	Official closing by Danish minister for Social Affairs and Housing Sophie Hæstorp Andersen.
14.30-	Lunch

Day 2/ November 7th

EDF board meeting (by invitation only)

Board meeting for the European Disability Forum.

Section for Member States (government only)

A member state section with a presentation on ensuring fiscal sustainability in promoting independent living and roundtable discussions on dilemmas and experiences in ensuring fiscal and professional sustainability.

Other participants

Free section.

The sections will include a refreshment break from 11.00 till 11.30.

Description of sections

Day 1 (6th November)

The first day of the conference will focus on how to facilitate independent living in the home as well as the accessibility needed in homes and the community.

The day will include a high-level video speech from the Commission and an official welcome from the Danish minister for Social Affairs and Housing Sophie Hæstorp Andersen.

Section 1 - Ensuring Independent Living through Individual Support in the Home and Inclusion in the Community

Article 19 section b of the UNCRPD state that independent living for persons living with disabilities should be ensured through having access to a range of in-home, residential and other community support services. This includes both personal assistance and assistive technology.

This section will focus on the support needed to facilitate independent living for persons living with disabilities.

- *Section 1a: Meeting necessary support needs in the home*

The section focuses on how crucial support systems are for the individual person and that they are available and affordable for all.

This section will include a speech, a presentation and a panel focusing on how to meet the needs necessary to live independently.

- *Section 1b: Inclusion in the community*

The section focuses on how to ensure that persons living with disabilities are included in the community through different kinds of services.

This section will include a presentation and panel focusing on inclusion in the community and emphasising the need for integration with the local community outside the home.

Section 2 - Accessible homes and public spaces for Persons Living with Disabilities

A very important part of ensuring independent living is to ensure sufficient accessible and affordable homes for persons with disabilities.

This section will focus on how to ensure these all-important accessible homes as well as ensuring accessibility in public spaces.

The section will also include a speech on ensuring sufficient, affordable and adaptable housing as regards to disability mainstreaming in European affordable housing plan by a Commission representative and a panel focusing on best practices of accessibility in housing and experience in accessing affordable and adaptable housing.

Day 2 (7th November)

The second day of the conference will focus on how to look forward on independent living and the upcoming initiatives for the upcoming *Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030*.

The day will include a speech from director of Equality and Non-discrimination Ana Carla Pereira at DG JUST as well as an official closing by the Danish minister for Social Affairs and Housing Sophie Hæstorp Andersen.

Separate sections

From 10:00 till 13:00, the conference will host two separate sections: the EDF Broad Meeting and a section for government representatives from member states. Non-EDF and non-government participants will have a free section.

Section on fiscal sustainability

The EU and all of its members are party to the UNCRPD and have committed themselves to promote, protect and implement the UNCRPD and to strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities. In recent years, several member states have experienced significant increases in social sector expenditures and in the number of citizens receiving support. This has made it considerably more difficult to ensure the right help and support for everyone. Simultaneously, these are uncertain times, with resources being directed toward many different purposes. Therefore, there is a need to explore ways to ensure fiscal sustainability within the disability sector – whether by restructuring administrative processes or by rethinking how support is delivered – so that the rights and needs of persons with disabilities continue to be promoted and secured.

Member state participants in this sector are encouraged to consider the following questions:

- What are the main fiscal challenges within the disability sector?
- Are there examples of new approaches or solutions that have proven effective in managing costs while maintaining delivery and quality of support services?

Section 3 - Looking Forward on Independent Living

The current initiatives for the *Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030* have been or are currently being implemented. Therefore, there is a need to further the strategy in the form of new initiatives.

This section will include a panel focusing on inputs for the upcoming initiatives in the *Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030*.



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