# European Year of People with Disabilities 2003

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PURPOSE: report on the implementation, results and overall assessment of the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003

CONTENT: This report is submitted by the European Commission in accordance with Article 13 of Council Decision 2001/903/EC.

Defining priorities for the EYPD campaign and its implementation at EU level was an involved process. It required a great deal of coordination between the EU and national levels and a number of key partners had to be involved, in particular the European Disability Forum - the non-governmental umbrella organisation representing people with disabilities at European level. As an integral part of the Commission's approach to the Year and as a fundamental principle in the area of disability, disabled people and their representatives had to be involved in all the key aspects of designing and implementing the EYPD campaign.

As much of the impetus to establish a European Year of People with Disabilities had come from disabled people themselves, and after lobbying by the European Disability Forum, the Commission intensified its relations with the European Disability Forum in 2002 and consulted this organisation and others extensively during its preparations and throughout 2003. This ensured that the views of people with disabilities were taken on board and that their own representatives were able to develop the main messages to be passed on. The Commission also wanted to use the EYPD campaign to promote its approach to disability and underline the policy issues it was considering at EU level. The flexibility of the approach adopted for the EYPD and the ownership created by the decentralised approach ensured that there was room in the campaign for all organisations to put forward their views, even if these did not necessarily coincide.

As a framework for the implementation and development of the EYPD, the Commission, in cooperation with its partner organisations (particularly the European Disability Forum) launched a specific promotional and information campaign. The principal aim of this campaign was to give a clear identity to the EYPD, both visually and in terms of a message which would reinforce the EU nature of the initiative, but which would also reinforce actions taken at national, regional and local level. The campaign was managed by PR consultants Ogilvy.

The core concept of the campaign was to catalyse a year-long march of people with disabilities across Europe. This was based on the idea that, since disabled rights are a human rights issue, those who are disabled should be put at the forefront for the campaign for change. By avoiding a traditional promotional campaign implemented from outside, the Commission sought to create ownership by disabled people of the concept of the EYPD by ensuring that they were directly involved in promoting the campaign and by encouraging their mobilisation and participation. The slogan "Get on board!" was developed for the campaign to emphasise the participative nature of the EYPD, and this was supported by a campaign bus travelling from country to country during 2003. The bus underlined the European nature of campaign, linking all the national campaigns and messages, and underlining the point that disability is an issue which concerns the whole of the EU, despite the specific inherent differences between participating countries. During 2003, the campaign bus was present at 211 events in 181 cities or towns in 16 countries and covered a distance of 45 000km.

The logo chosen for the campaign was distinctive and clearly identifiable. It was made easily available on a number of internet sites and in the current 20 Community languages, plus those of the acceding states

and of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey .Under the campaign rules all organisations and individuals wishing to be involved with the EYPD campaign were encouraged to use the logo.

In order to support the whole EYPD campaign, and to provide a resource for organisations and individuals wishing to participate in the EYPD, an EU-wide website was set up. This website was fully interactive and easy to access, and all key aspects and functions were available in all Community languages. In contrast to previous European Year campaigns, the website allowed pages to be created by third parties who wished to publicise their actions or events, upload documents and create contacts. This allowed those who might not normally have the necessary facilities to be present on the internet for the duration of the EYPD. In addition to basic information on the EYPD, the website also contained links to the official EYPD sites in the participating countries and a diary and photo section, updated daily with news of the EYPD march and bus.

The Commission also launched two calls for proposals at EU level. The first concerned information campaigns at EU level to support the main EYPD campaign, and was aimed at specific populations within the overall target group of the campaign. Another key action undertaken by the Commission at EU level to support the EYPD was the Corporate Participation Programme. This programme sought to bring large companies on board the EYPD campaign by allowing them to participate in a unique venture and encouraging them to create awareness and support for the EYPD and undertake specific actions.

Although responsibility for overseeing the EYPD campaign and actions at EU level lay with the Commission's Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs, it was possible to mobilise all of the services whose work had some connection with disability issues and to ensure that the EYPD was included as a particular priority for action in 2003. This was the result in particular of the commitment of various Commissioners and Directorates-General to the aims of the EYPD and a desire to support the mainstreaming of disability issues in general.

In order to reinforce the key messages and demonstrate the commitment of the EU, many major European events and conferences also adopted the EYPD campaign as a key component, either by focusing exclusively on disability issues or by including certain disability issues within a wider programme.

A number of the EU institutions also made specific contributions to the EYPD through actions (such as newly accessible websites or accessibility reviews of their buildings) or through specific events. These included the European Parliament of Disabled People hosted by the European Parliamentand organised with the support of the European Disability Forum and the Commission. Other European organisations also made their own contributions to the EYPD through specific actions and events. The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE), supported by DG EAC, organised a hearing of young people with special educational needs in the European Parliament. Young people from 22 countries had the opportunity to express their feelings, ideas and wishes concerning their education and their future.

To coordinate many of these different activities, and in particular to coordinate actions at EU level with the specific EYPD activities and campaigns at national level, the Commission established an advisory committee in January 2002. This committee continued to work until the end of 2004, coordinating the preparation of measures and financial assistance for the EYPD, overseeing the EYPD promotional and information campaign and developing the key messages in relation to disability issues. It was made up of representatives of the participating countries, observers from the then candidate countries, representatives of the European Disability Forum and other partners concerned, such as the European Association of Service Providers for People with Disabilities. The social partners were invited to participate in this committee, but did not take up the invitation.

The committee took key decisions relating to the allocation of global grants to the participating countries to support the co-funding of EYPD projects and actions, approved key elements of the campaign such as

the choice of logo (which, for the first time in an EU campaign, was chosen through a poll on the internet) and the promotional items, and adopted a series of common criteria for the selection of projects to be co-funded to ensure that the key EYPD objectives set out in the Council Decision were taken into account. This approach also sought to ensure fair treatment between those applying for co-funding in different participating countries. The committee members also performed a liaison function between the implementation of the EYPD at EU level and implementation at national level, in particular by coordinating with the work of the national coordinating bodies. The committee was also able to cooperate closely with the two EU presidencies (Italy and Greece) during 2003 and thus ensure a clear political profile for the EYPD campaign within the actions of the Presidencies. The committee played a key role in ensuring the success of the EYPD, working principally through consensus on all key decisions and benefiting from the experience and commitment of all those who participated in its work. This required extensive input and involvement from all members throughout the preparation, execution and follow-up activities for the EYPD.