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## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media



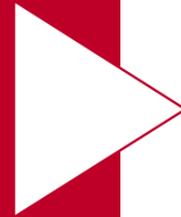
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# Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media



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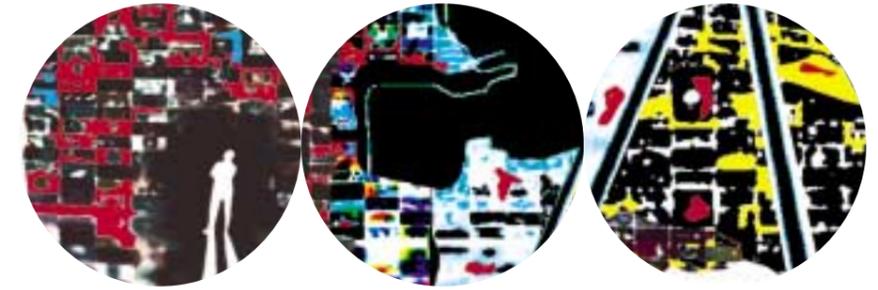
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## Introduction

### Why this project?

There is a general perception that people with disabilities, who constitute a 10% of the population, are clearly underrepresented in mainstream media.

While there are some disability specific programs or advertising campaigns, very rarely people with disabilities appear in mainstream programs or in mainstream advertising spots.

Moreover, when people with disabilities appear in media, they are portrayed in a stigmatising and stereotyped way, appearing either as superheroes or as objects of pity and compassion.

Very rarely people with disabilities appear in a way which shows that they constitute, as any other group in society, a very diverse population group.

Very few people with disabilities work in the media industry which is clearly the best way to mainstream disability in the media.

### How to change this?

The current project seeks to establish cooperation, mainly at national level, between mainstream media and disability organisations which should initiate a process of change of the current unsatisfactory situation.

The project has developed new and disseminated already existing resources to be put at the disposal of the mainstream media industry (producers, broadcasters, publicity and communication agencies and others) and disability organisations to show how things can be done in a more respectful but also more attractive way.



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

The project was supported by a number of experts from media, advertising and disability NGOs with profound knowledge in this rather new field of expertise.

Action plans have been developed by the project partners in 9 different countries (Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, UK) which were based on a cooperative approach.

### Who supported the project and who coordinated it?

This project was funded by the Disability Unit of the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities through a call for proposals launched in 2005.

The project started in early 2006 and finished at the end of 2007.

The project has been coordinated by Fundación ONCE (Spain) in partnership with 12 other organisations (see list of project partners) from 9 different countries.

### Actions at European level

A project steering group was established which included all project partners and supporting experts. This steering group held a total of 5 meetings throughout the project lifetime.

Two training sessions were organised by the supporting experts in order to provide the national partners with a clear argumentation and examples of good practice to be used when approaching the mainstream media industry.

Contacts were established with the European media networks (EBU, ACT and EACA) and with the European Disability Forum. While open to explore future co-operation, it was clear that this is not a priority issue at this stage for their national members, something which should start to change thanks to the work done by this project at national level.



## Concrete Outcomes



### Guide on media & disability

This guide was produced by the Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network (BCIDN) based in London, United Kingdom. It is taken from the collective experience of the Network and its members who have been working together to try and improve matters for disabled people in broadcasting, film and advertising for the past decade.

The scope of the guide is intended for all broadcasters and producers, including those who work in mainstream programme areas, from news to light entertainment and from drama to documentary. It is not just for programme makers working on specialist disability output. Although the term "programme" makers is used, much of the guide is also relevant to people working on other audio-visual content such as feature films, advertising commercials, non-broadcast videos, pop promos, and interactive multimedia products. Some of the guide is also relevant to commissioning editors, human resource managers, technical staff and staff working directly with listeners and viewers.

### Training tool

On the basis of the training provided at the two training sessions organised in 2006, a online training tool has been delivered and is available on the project website.

This training is targeting disability NGOs and is based on the need for disability NGOs to be aware of the objectives to be achieved and of the argumentation to be used when dealing with the mainstream audiovisual industry.

The tool covers the following areas:



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

- The history of attitudes to disabled people
- The stereotypes of disability common in the moving image
- Media Guidance on avoiding stereotypes
- How to and how not to portray disabled people on television

The tool has been produced by Disability Equality in Education (DEE).

**There are a number of tools which have been produced at national level and which can be found on the project website.**



## National Action Plans



**The information provided in this section is just a summary of the main actions undertaken in each of the 9 countries.**

**To find the more detailed country reports, please visit the project website.**

### **Hungary. National partner: MEOSZ**

A working group was established at the beginning of the project including mainstream TV and radio as well as disability NGOs and disability specific media.

A monitoring of media portrayal in written press has been undertaken and was presented in the national seminar.

Lobbying activity was done to influence new legislation on electronic media services, which led to useful contacts with the media monitoring bodies.

A national training seminar was organised for disability NGOs on 20<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

A national seminar on media and disability was organised on 20 November 2007. The main conclusions of this seminar were:

Quality of disability portrayal in the media depends on the approach of the society and media experts towards disabled persons. It is very important that media representatives (from the high management to the employees) connect disability issue with human dignity and human rights. If this approach has been accepted by them their disability related programs would improve.



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

Disability equality training for media representatives is essential and very urgent in the future. Disability organisations will take the lead in related future initiatives. Media representatives welcomed the initiative.

The good contacts established with the public TV and with one of the mainstream radios, which has disabled employees, will continue and the initial contacts with the Hungarian Advertising Agency and representatives of commercial TVs will be further pursued.

### Germany. National partner: abm

The **Düsseldorf Seminar** for disability NGOs held in October 2006 offered a deep insight into the workings of editorial departments (regional/local news and TV drama) of TV broadcasters, their needs and their way of thinking.

It was remarkable that strategies of an improved participation in the production process itself was not on the agenda of disability NGOs.

This was contrasted by the need for good stories and images from the side of the TV editors/producers present. They also made clear that media are not closed institutions but are open to the concerns of their audience.

The **Berlin Seminar** held in June 2007 was probably the first event where delegates from seven of ten public broadcasters plus guests from Swedish TV and a TV production company met in order to hear about and discuss the subject of people with disabilities in the media.

It proved a successful strategy to give the participants rather a feeling of an exchange of ideas and information than of giving a lecture. The seminar offered a lot of space for discussion and reflection. Speeches from various experts gave a multifaceted introduction into the subject.

But a couple of film clips which showed examples of best practice were probably the best arguments for the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream TV.

This was a strong reminder that public TV is expected to cover all aspects of society – a fact that most TV makers are or should be aware of – and all of them want to make exciting programmes that people like to watch. Maybe sometimes the exclusion of people with disabilities is not so much a lack of

good will but rather a lack of knowledge and imagination... These clips brought to the participants' minds that television should deal with creativity and passion. This can be a more important point for TV makers than any legislation.

The involvement and cooperation with the Federal Commissioner for the Concerns of People with disabilities in this was a big success. This cooperation with a governmental office and the opportunity to use her offices for our seminar surely helped to raise attention for the project and seems to open up further cooperation in this field in the future.

The comment made by Ewan Marshall from the BBC is worth to be remembered and shows the complexity of the task ahead: "However much you talk about things, how much you give somebody disability awareness, if they don't have an incentive to do it, they won't do it. And particularly something like disability which is treated like a problem. (...) And in a very big organisation, however much you kind of set up structures and schemes, there is a lot of ways bypassing them..."

### Italy. National partner: CND

A national working group was established which has been in charge of all the different actions.

The first area of work was internal, as it was realised that the approach used by many disability NGOs when communicating and contacting media was not the right one. A significant action in

*Panel at the Italian seminar.*





## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

this respect has been the establishment of the empowerment agency, which focuses on the mainstreaming of disability in media. Moreover, a seminar was organised on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2007 in Rome on this issue.

An important initiative has been the establishment of the observatory on media and disability, a joint initiative between CND and the IULM, the University of Languages and Communication of Milan.

Another important area of work was to influence what finally has become the new contract service between the RAI and the Ministry of Communication. Thanks to the lobbying work of the CND, the final text includes the following reference:

"RAI, in reiterating its commitment to production and programming in strict respect of the antidiscrimination principle written in the UN Convention on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in the Amsterdam Treaty and in the resolutions of the Madrid European Forum of persons with disabilities, dedicate a particular attention in the cultural promotion for the inclusion of person with disabilities, and overcoming handicap, removing any discrimination in the presence of disabled people in entertainment programs, information, fiction and productions".

CND also managed to ensure that a representative from the Italian disability NGOs became one of the 12 members of the new RAI Permanent Commission on social programming.

The national seminar for media was organised in Turin on October 23 2007.

Another relevant initiative was the LEDHA SPOT FESTIVAL which focused on disability advertisement.

The Observatory on media and disability, the empowerment agency and the presence in the RAI Permanent Commission on social programming are all actions and results which will ensure a continuous focus by CND on this important area of work.

*Interview with Swedish  
Culture Minister at  
national seminar.*



### **Sweden. National partner: HSO**

The main action was the national seminar that attracted about 140 persons. Most of them from Public Service companies. Eight parallel workshops with different hosts made it possible for people to mix, meet and be active in finding new ways to improve media portrayal. The day ended with the Swedish minister of media and culture, the three CEOs for public service broadcasting and the chairman of the Swedish Disability Federation discussing media and disability.

This co-operation has led to written cooperation agreements with two out of three public service broadcasting companies, with action points for 2008.

Other actions which have benefitted from the European project, but have been financed separately have been:

- Digital storytelling. People with disabilities learn about media by producing short personal stories. The films are distributed through the project "Room for storytelling" at UR, the Swedish Educational Broadcasting company website.



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

- Media training for disability organisations.
- Disability in advertising: A group of students at the most important school for advertising in Sweden have worked with a project on portrayal of persons with disabilities in advertising from January to end of May 2007. The assignment was to raise awareness among commissioners and producers in the advertising industry. The proposed campaign was presented at an exposition for the advertising industry in May 2007. It gained a prize for second best of student campaigns.
- A leaflet has been produced for the advertising industry with translation of the EACA guidelines.
- Monitoring tool for broadcasters. A tool has been developed to monitor portrayal used by the broadcasters themselves on a regular basis. A pilot study has been done and a report from the University of Lund was ready in December 2007. Swedish television will decide about further development in 2008.

In terms of future actions:

- The written agreements with the public television are followed up continuously and new agreements will be promoted.
- A national seminar will be held in October 2008, promoted by one of the public service broadcasters.
- A seminar is planned with public sector communication officers to try to make them think about portrayal of people with disabilities when commissioning campaigns.

### **UK. National partner: RNIB**

A number of meetings was held with different stakeholders in the media industry, including the media unions and the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising.

Make it Happen...in the Media

The aim of this event was to promote careers in the media to young disabled students and graduates. Workshops were held on careers in television, film, advertising and journalism.

As a result of this event, 3 beneficiaries have started regularly contributing to BBC Ouch!, the most popular disability website in the UK. A further beneficiary has taken up a job with the magazine Disability Now.

Media training for disability NGOs

The aim of this event was to provide employment specialists from disability NGOs with the training to more effectively deal with the media.

### **Poland. National partner: Integracja**

A Programme Council was established bringing together representatives from TV, radio, journalists and disability organisations.

On September 2006 a training on media for disability NGOs was organised.

In March 2007, a conference targeting mainly mainstream media and advertising industry was held, which was well received by all participants.

Other actions undertaken include:

- Training for students in the Faculty of Journalism.
- Competition "open eyes" which is a competition targeting journalists and addresses an audience of 3000 participants.
- Co-operation with the Association of Advertising Agencies resulted in a TV programme on the image of disabled people.
- The competition "Man without barriers" which had a great media impact and the great gala of integration which included a section on the best publication concerning disabled people.



## Slovenia. National partner: NSIOS

The start of the project coincided with the establishment of the Programme Committee for Programmes for the Disabled people within RTV Slovenia.

Two documents were produced by this Programme Committee, one on guidelines on inclusion and an action plan for the inclusion of disability issues.

Moreover, the new Programming Standards of RTV Slovenia include a specific wording on disabled people following a proposal made by NSIOS. It says: "to stimulate creativity of disabled people and other disadvantaged groups, with the measure to include disability issues in a proportional quantity in comparison to 10% of disabled people in Slovene society.

The National seminar on media and disability was held in December 2007 targeting disability NGOs and mainstream media.

Another action undertaken with the support of NSIOS has been the establishment of the Disability Homepage at the web page of RTV Slovenia.

Plans for the future include:

- Training seminars with the University of Ljubljana for journalism students and with the Education Board of RTV Slovenia in order to include disability in the training of journalists, editors and programme producers.
- Submission of a project to the European Social Fund which will, among others, focus on the provision of employment for persons with disabilities in the media sector.



*Participants at Slovenian seminar.*

## Spain. National partner: Fundación ONCE

The main outcome was the establishment in March 2007 of a Support Committee for People with Disabilities in the Audiovisual Sector, comprising all relevant stakeholders (TV, producers, advertising agencies, advertisers, journalists and disability organisations. When establishing this Committee which includes 18 different organisations, a Manifesto was also signed, which included



*Opening session of Spanish seminar with Secretary of State of Communication.*



*Roundtable session at Spanish seminar.*





## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

- Respectful treatment of people with disabilities based on their personal dignity and avoiding the use of stereotypes
- Promote the proportional participation of people with disabilities in the media according to their representativeness in society
- Promote their labour integration in the media companies
- Promote the accessibility of the audiovisual contents

In October 2007 an event was organised by Fundación ONCE and the Spanish Federation of Journalism Associations (FAPE) Most of speakers and participants were representatives of the industry. Main messages were:

- the relevance of people with disabilities as consumers,
- the media should see disabled people and their organisations as an ally to improve reality
- the employment of people with disabilities in the Media.

In February 2006 a meeting was organised with all relevant national disability organisations in order to discuss and agree a common stand on the portrayal of people with disabilities. DEE expert Richard Rieser was the main speaker at this event and his presentation on the history of images of disability and the examples (short films, advertising spots and extracts from movies) generated a very lively discussion.

Direct contacts with advertising agencies and advertisers proved effective.

Agreements have been signed or negotiated with different key stakeholders, including the cinema academy and the TV academy.

Future actions include:

- media monitoring to be done by one of Spain's leading universities.
- to undertake a specific initiative to promote the employment of people with disabilities in the media sector, which includes agreements with mainstream media training bodies.



## "Hidden Audience-50 Million Reasons to Think outside the Box"

On December 7<sup>th</sup> 2007, the end of project conference was held in Brussels, bringing together a hundred participants from 25 countries, representing both mainstream media and disability organisations.

### Opening session

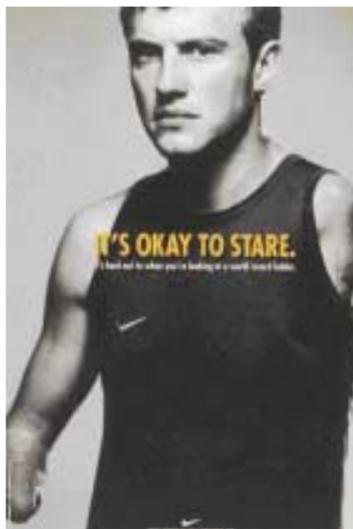
The opening session included two distinguished guests: Wallis Goelen, the Head of the Disability Unit of the DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal opportunities of the European Commission and Yannis Vardakastanis, the President of the European Disability Forum.

The main elements of the intervention by Mrs Goelen were:

- Society's perception of disabled people is often coloured by prejudice, fear, low expectations and distrust in their abilities. The most severe barrier preventing disabled people from participating fully in society is the attitude of society itself.
- Attitudinal change can be influenced and accelerated, in particular, through increasing the visibility and realistic portrayal of disability in the media.
- Disabled people need to appear in advertisements, on screen, on radio, and in print to reinforce a paradigm shift in the perception of disability and of disabled people: real attitudinal change by all members of society can then become a reality.
- Without detriment to their freedom of expression, the media and advertising industries as opinion formers and means of shaping values, are invited to contribute to overcoming stereotypes of disability and of disabled people in the public perception and to presenting a fair portrayal of people with disabilities.
- This project is very relevant for the Disability Action Plan with regards to the issue of access to rights and the mainstreaming of disability related issues.



# Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media



*Nike campaign. The text in small letters says: "It's hard not to when you're looking at a world record holder".*

- The TV without Frontier Directive has just been revised and contains references to persons with disabilities, both in terms of accessibility, but also in terms of protection against discrimination.
- There is an article in the UN Convention on audiovisual matters and the Member States that will ratify this Convention have the obligation to implement them.
- One conclusion is that TV programmes addressing disability in an adequate manner can help to give a positive image of persons with disabilities and raise awareness about their rights.
- Care should be taken not to give discriminatory treatment to persons with disabilities in the TV programmes but also in the Companies itself.
- These industries need to reflect persons with disabilities internally, employ them by providing equal treatment. That will help also to incorporate the right treatment to their images in their programmes and advertisements.

References to persons with disabilities in the revised EU directive on Television without Frontiers:

Art 3. C-

Member States shall encourage media service providers under their jurisdiction to ensure that their services are gradually made accessible to people with a visual or hearing disability.

Article 3e

1. Member States shall ensure that audiovisual commercial communications provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction comply with the following requirements:

(c) audiovisual commercial communications shall not:

(i) prejudice respect for human dignity;

(ii) include or promote any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, **disability**, age or sexual orientation;

*Opening session with European Commission and EDF.*



The main elements of the presentation made by the EDF President were:

- We all know the impact that media can have on us and on our perception of the world. Developing a close cooperation with the media has been a major priority for the EDF since 2003, a cooperation which started in 2003, during the European Congress on Media and Disability that was held in Athens.
- It was in fact by organising hand in hand with the media this successful congress in Athens, that we, disabled people and media professionals, started to learn from each other: to see more clearly which were our mutual expectations; to show to each other what we had to offer.
- We all agree: disabled people are underrepresented or badly portrayed on screen and air. They are often ignored as an audience and as media professionals. Disability is rarely at the core of high level audience programmes. Many media professionals believe that disability does not 'sell' and when they decide to speak about disability, it is often under a charitable or stereotyped approach.
- One could argue that it is our right to be represented in the media, to work in the broadcasting sector, to access television



*Nike campaign. The text in small letters says: "He missed gold by a hundredth of a second".*



and radio. One could demand this right to be respected, as it is expressed in the UN Convention, and as a fundamental principle of equality and non-discrimination.

- We can also defend the business case: there are 50 million people disabled people in the EU, which constitutes a huge potential audience, currently overlooked by the broadcasting sector. It is a missed opportunity.
- But I am firmly convinced that besides the rights-based and the economic arguments, there is a societal one that cannot any longer be ignored: disabled people are more and more included in our societies; by fighting for their rights to access education, to work, to live independently, to have a family, they become part of a social network that is stronger and wider each day. Disabled people become active citizens, potential voters, economic agents, consumers. The underestimated audience of 50 million people can in fact be multiplied by 4 or 5: the parents of disabled people, their friends, their colleagues. Interest towards disability-related issues increases every day, in all sectors of society.

- EDF believes in the role of the media to reflect this social change, and in its will to contribute to it. We also think that it is our task, the task of all disabled people, to show and to give the necessary arguments to the media, so they can see what it's in there for them.

- We believe in the role of the European Union to encourage this mutual understanding and to sustain this cooperation. Not only regarding access of disabled people to the media, or the employment of disabled people in all media. But also by providing data and encouraging the exchange of information among media professionals on disability issues; by promoting disability issues in

**Elspeth Morrison,**  
BCIDN Associate

**"The approach by media to disabled people is a medical one, to produce pity and compassion. Moreover, the roles of disabled people are usually interpreted by non disabled people"**

media content and film production; by enriching university programmes, media studies and training with disability awareness topics.

- Media has the power and opportunity of establishing the "missing connection" between disabled and non disabled people. It is not a responsibility that we are imposing on media but a challenge that media professionals, and professionals on disability should and can face together.

### Keynote speakers

The first keynote speaker was Geoff Adams-Spink, BBC disability and age correspondent.

His presentation focused on three areas of improvement within BBC: portrayal, employment and access services.

He informed about BBC accessibility commitments which include subtitling, signing and audio-description, going beyond statutory requirements.

On portrayal, the goal is to represent disabled viewers in a way that normalises their daily lives. Contributors are not defined by their disability and they are included in mainstream programmes, like life-style programmes.

BBC has established on-screen targets for disabled contributors across genres and have established a database for diverse contributors which is open to independent producers. Finally, BBC has established, in co-operation with Channel 4, a talent fund for disabled actors.

**Richard Rieser,**  
Director of DEE (UK)

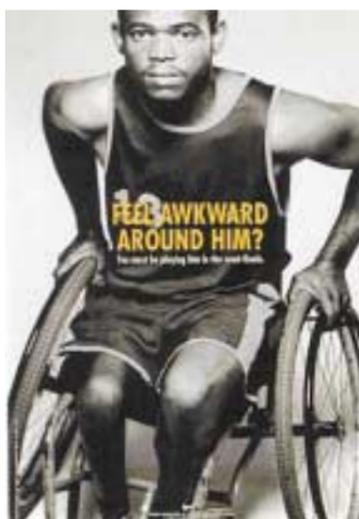
**"Since the 90s, some disability NGOs have been working to produce more visibility of disabled people in the media and society in general and to raise awareness on a vision of persons with disabilities which is not negative."**

**Mia Ahlgren,**  
project coordinator  
in HSO (Sweden)

**"I think that there are 3 key words to achieve a higher level of visibility in the media: employment, commitment and normalisation. Disabled people themselves have a vital role in producing this change."**



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media



*Nike campaign. The text in small letters says: "You must be playing him in the semi-finals".*

He provided several examples of recent programmes and serials which included disabled people. He informed that in drama, BBC has established a 1% target for guest characters in series to be disabled and 2% for disabled extras.

The latest staff survey done by the company shows that 4,4% of staff have disabilities, which proves a massive increase in participation.

One of the main reasons for this has been a scheme which provides 6 month placements exclusively for disabled people. Last year more than 50% of these people went to permanent jobs. Disability equality training programme is another main element in their strategy.

His final thought well deserves special attention: "You won't cover disability- from a factual or a dramatic perspective – until disabled people are properly represented in front of and behind the camera."

He was followed by Elspeth Morrison, BCIDN Associate who presented a large variety of examples from TV programs, cinema and advertising to show the different approaches that can be used when referring to persons with disabilities.

### Assumpta Serna, Board member of the European Cinema Academy:

**"The audiovisual sector is a very powerful tool to develop new ways of looking at issues, to change mindsets. We need disabled actors to prove their talent and produce a change in the way of thinking of media professionals."**

### Parallel workshops

Participants were split in 4 groups and were asked to focus on a number of questions related to 2 interconnected issues: employment of disabled people in the media and disability portrayal by media.

The current employment of disabled people in the media industry could be described as follows:

- There is little employment of disabled people in media.
- Media industry does no better than other employers.
- Disabled people don't have great expectations of finding a job in the media industry.

This should change because:

- Workforce composition should reflect the diversity of society
- There is a clear business case for employing disabled people in the media.

To produce a change, the following actions seem important:

- To set up work experience schemes and training schemes for disabled people in the media industry.
- To undertake outreach actions by media to disabled people encouraging them to think of the media industry as a professional option.
- To collect and disseminate successful cases of disabled people working in the media industry.
- To foresee accessibility related costs in the general budget of media.
- To include disabled people in the different training schemes organised by media training providers.

The portrayal of disabled people in the media industry was seen as:

- Media are generally not doing well
- It reflects the general approach by society, but obviously media has a great potential for provoking change

### Geoff Adams-Spink, BBC disability and age correspondent:

**"To increase the presence of disabled people in the media, we need to give disabled people the opportunity to produce their own programs, as producers, technicians, actors, journalists, etc.."**



*The social work of savings banks*



**Ross Biggam,**  
General Manager of the Association  
of Commercial Television, the EU  
network of private TVs

**"I think this has been a very good initiative. The way forward is to ensure a normalized approach to disabled people by media."**

- There is almost no monitoring on this issue
  - Media are afraid of doing it wrong
  - Media have wrong assumptions of disabled people
- To change this situation:
- Awareness raising of media professionals
  - Increase the employment of disabled people in the media industry
  - Increase co-operation between media and disability organisations.

### Panel discussion and closing session

A panel discussion followed, moderated by Peter Radtke (abm) and which included Jenny Stevens (UK Employers' Forum), Ross Biggam (Association of Commercial Television, ACT), Richard Rieser (Disability Education in Equality) and Mia Ahlgren (Swedish Disability Federation, HSO). Many of the conclusions of this panel discussion can be found in the section on Conclusions and Recommendations.

*Closing session with Assumpta Serna and Geoff Adams-Spink.*



*Panel discussion.*



Main speaker in the closing session was Assumpta Serna, one of Spain's most international actresses and Board member of the European Cinema Academy. Some of the main messages in her very inspiring speech were:

The value and weakness of European Cinema is the diversity of cultures. The value and weakness of disabled people is the diversity of opinions and diversity of disabilities. Just like Europe, the same issues, perhaps the same solution.

Disabled actors studying in official and good, private cinema and TV schools will have the possibility of networking with their fellow actors. In the early years of training the students capacity for learning and understanding is more open. All the students are more likely to listen to each other's points of view.

After training in a team environment integration becomes natural. All of these students, future creators will write lots of good scripts. We will have directors and actors motivated throughout Europe and the world ready to talk about disability with passion and understanding.

**Jenny Stevens,**  
Media and Disability Consultant  
of the UK Employers' Forum on  
Disability

**"Media don't do more on this because of fear of the unknown. However, all experiences we have had prove that this is possible and that people expect a change to happen."**



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

Results will come from public European TV. This will inspire other TV networks. The trend will be towards quality programming, showing different points of view, listening to minorities and asking the opinion of the audience...

Sometimes one is unable to see things that are clear as a bell to others. We all have an infirmity, a clock that doesn't work at times, something that we feel we must overcome. This equality with disabled people is, I think, one of the messages we should pass on to the younger generations. We are not that different after all... We are all original, unique... If we can look and listen without judgement we can see faces, bodies, thoughts and attitudes as infinite worlds of wonder...

Stereotypes come only from ignorance and fear.

Throughout history movements for women's liberation and gay rights have gone through multiple phases before any acceptance by society. And the fight continues. Forums like today make me realize how we are in the middle of a process and witnessing a very large movement in each of our respective countries. We have to keep in touch with each other and keep talking and listening and know that we still have a lot to learn and change to give to others a bit of happiness... Let's just do it.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

While some mainstream media seem open to improve their record on disability performance, more action and pressure from disability organisations is required in order to keep the agenda moving, and to engage those not yet involved or interested.

Some disability organisations still do not have a vision of media portrayal which goes beyond broadcasting a specialist disability programme. Moreover, they do not have enough knowledge or expertise about how media actually work in order to engage in informed dialogue with media professionals.

Progress will not be made on portrayal until disabled people have the chance to work inside media organisations. This means work placement and training opportunities but most of all it means the opportunity for full time employment.

Making progress in this area takes time. Startling results cannot be achieved in 1-2 years.

Progress needs to be based on a constructive approach based on mutual respect between media and disability organisations. At present few media organisations appear to be in contact with disabled people or with disability organisations.

The work to be done by disability NGOs to influence the way media portray people with disabilities has to be seen different from the usual communication work.

### Recommendations for disability organisations

Disability organisations willing to take a lead on this issue require training to be able to be effective in their work. They need to be aware of the different types of arguments to be used (commercial, ethical, democratic), what drives negative images and attitudes and how to counter these in portrayal and of examples of good practice.



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

Specific advocacy needs to be developed for the different sectors: public and private TV, production companies, advertisers and advertising agencies.

Disability organisations need to be aware that this is a long term initiative which requires a dedicated team with media and disability know-how. Adequate and sustainable resources need to be allocated to this.

Find small concrete win-win actions that lead to results that can be evaluated over time, instead of trying to establish from the start over-ambitious and unrealistic plans.

A strategic approach is required to establish good relations with senior media personnel as well as with disability champions working in the industry will help improve the chance of progress being made.

It is important for disability NGOs to co-operate with research organisations including universities and student studies, to influence future media professionals.

Identify disabled people willing to make a professional career in the media sector. Identify media organisations and professionals who may be willing to give disabled people a chance. The public sector is likely to be more readily persuaded than the private sector.

It is important to assemble facts about disability before talking about portrayal and employment. This includes definition of disability and statistics about its incidence. The credibility of third party studies (universities) must not be underestimated.

Start using blogs and other free available tools to allow people with disabilities acquire skills and create content.

### **What can mainstream media do?**

Appoint disability focal points within their organisations to promote the employment and portrayal of people with disabilities, as well as accessibility related issues.

Appoint a disability affairs correspondent whose job it is to make links with disabled people and

disability organisations and to represent their views and news on the media agenda, especially news and current affairs.

Establish work experience and placement schemes for disabled people within their companies.

Establish mid term targets for the employment of people with disabilities, as well as for the portrayal of people with disabilities. Survey the existing workforce and output to establish a baseline.

Promote the establishment of a media network or working group on the inclusion of people with disabilities, in order to exchange knowledge and expertise. Disabled staff members should be represented if there are any. If there are enough to form a critical mass then a disabled employee group can be helpful.

Undertake disability awareness training for all relevant staff members especially those involved in recruiting/employing staff, and those deciding on content and contributors in programmes.

Where no disabled people are employed in production or editing of programmes and the programme has disability content engaging suitably experienced disabled people as consultants to advise on the content.

### **How can public authorities help in this process?**

It is very important that public authorities at EU and national level show clearly their interest in this issue.

A publicly financed fund for work and training placements for people with disabilities in the media sector would help motivate some media organisations to create such opportunities.

Following the example of the UK, public authorities when committing to public advertising campaigns should include in their briefings for advertising agencies a strong recommendation on the inclusion of people with disabilities. This should apply to EC advertising, including recruitment advertising.



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

EU support for the exchange of good practices and resources between mainstream media and disability organisations would be of huge relevance especially for countries where this is a new issue. This could be done within the EU MEDIA initiative and could be led by the European Disability Forum and should have the support of the different European media networks.

The European Commission could create a website, similar to the UK website Images of Disability, where European mainstream media and disability organisations could obtain relevant information on this issue.



## Annex: List of Project Partners and Supporting Experts

### **arbeitsgemeinschaft behinderung und medien e.v. (Association for Disability and Media)**

The abm is a non-profit organisation. At the moment it consists of 15 member organisations, mainly selfhelp groups and disability organisations. These members cover a whole range of various disabilities.

For more than 20 years, the abm has been a pioneer in producing films on the everyday reality of people with disabilities and reflecting their image in the audiovisual media.

Further permanent or frequent activities for a better representation of people with disabilities in the media include the educational project OBJEKTIV and the biennial International Short Film Festival *Wie wir leben! / The Way We Live!*

 [www.abm-medien.de/](http://www.abm-medien.de/)

### **BCIDN**

The BCIDN was formed by the UK's leading broadcasters, film and television producers, and audio-visual industry organisations to increase the inclusion of disabled people in their work. Although competing for audiences, these organisations jointly funded the Network to make it easier for them to share and deliver best practice across the industry, and to engage with disabled people as fellow broadcasters, programme-makers, potential employees, viewers and stakeholders.

The Broadcasters' and Creative Industries' Disability Network is a specialist network of the



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

Employers' Forum on Disability. The Forum is an employers' organisation whose members understand the business rationale for becoming disability confident. They recognize that disability affects their employees, potential employees, their customers, and the markets and communities in which they operate.

 [www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/bcidn/](http://www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/bcidn/)

### CND

The Consiglio Nazionale sulla Disabilità (CND) is the unitary and independent Italian body representing persons with disabilities and their families in European actions and policies

 [www.cnditalia.it/](http://www.cnditalia.it/)

### Disability Equality in Education (DEE)

DEE is a UK based Disabled Peoples Organisation which provides training, consultancy and resources to promote understanding of disability as a social oppression working throughout the education system and the media.

DEE provides its services across Europe and beyond. DEE was instrumental in setting up the 1 in 8 Group in 1994 which set out to change employment and training of disabled people in the mainstream media. This led to the Raspberry Ripple Awards for 'Good' and 'Bad' portrayal of disabled people.

 [www.diseed.org.uk/](http://www.diseed.org.uk/)

### EACA (European Association of Communication Agencies)

EACA brings together the advertising, media and sales promotions agencies across Europe, enabling international experience and issues to be shared and dealt with on a pan-European basis. It

provides an important link between agencies, advertisers and the advertising media in Europe and around the world and participates closely in the setting of standards in many aspects of the business across Europe.

 [www.eaca.be](http://www.eaca.be)

### Fundación ONCE

Fundación ONCE is Spain's largest cross-disability organisation. It was established in 1988 and has employment and accessibility as its two key objectives. Fundación ONCE is an associate member of the European Disability Forum (EDF) Fundación ONCE is the project leader.

 [www.fundaciononce.es](http://www.fundaciononce.es)

### HSO

HSO, the Swedish Disability Federation is the united voice of the Swedish disability movement before government, the parliament and national authorities. The federation was founded 1942 and consists today of 43 national disability organisations with about 500 000 individual members. The Swedish Disability Federation is a member of the European Disability Forum (EDF), an umbrella organisation representing about 50 million people with disabilities in Europe.

 [www.hso.se](http://www.hso.se)

### MEOSZ

MEOSZ is the national federation of disabled persons' associations in Hungary founded by grassroots associations of people with disabilities.

 [www.meosz.hu/](http://www.meosz.hu/)



## NSIOS

National Council of Disabled People's Organisations of Slovenia (NSIOS) is the representative voice of Slovenian disabled people due to the fact that it unites 15 existing Slovenian representative disabled people's organisations. This means that more than 98% of all organised disabled people are members of NSIOS. Members of NSIOS operate within a nation wide network of 230 disability societies on local/municipal level.

NSIOS includes all major impairment groups and is the advocate for human rights for disabled people in the civil dialogue with public and private stakeholders.

 [www.nsios.si/](http://www.nsios.si/)

## RNIB

RNIB is the UK's largest disability organisation offering information, support and advice to people with sight problems. Founded in 1868, RNIB has a strong tradition and commitment to improving the life chances of blind and partially sighted people.

 [www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

## Servimedia

Servimedia was established by Fundación ONCE in 1989 with the aim to promote social information, including about people with disabilities, in the mainstream media. Currently, Servimedia has 100 staff members, 40% of which are people with disabilities. It is considered as the third press agency in Spain.

 [www.servimedia.es](http://www.servimedia.es)

## Stowaryszenie Przewiacioli Integracji (Friends of Integration Association)

Integracja is a Polish non-governmental, non-profit organization. It provides education and information for people with disabilities. The association leads Information Centre of the People with Disabilities, publishes a bi-monthly magazine, books and leaflets, produces TV programme, and organizes social campaigns, conferences, exhibitions and concerts.

 [www.integracja.org](http://www.integracja.org)

## TV-Glad

TV-Glad broadcasts its programmes on various local TV-channels in Denmark. TV-Glad produces and broadcasts 30 minutes daily television. The programmes are broadcasted at day- and night-time and can be seen by approximately 1/3 of the Danish population

Since September 2003, TV-Glad has been broadcasting to large parts of Latin America via satellite from Madrid - 30 minutes every fortnight - on the educational channel ATEL.

 [www.tv-glad.dk](http://www.tv-glad.dk)



# Interesting Links



## Links

<http://www.employers-forum.co.uk/www/guests/bdn/index.htm>



Broadcasting and Creative Industries Disability Network – a part of Employers Forum – will produce an online resource for employers- The web site contains inspiring material.

<http://www.eaca.be/speechespresentations/detail.asp?sap=3>



The European Association of Communications Agencies EACA has links to the European network on Media and Disability. They are preparing guidelines for portrayal of people with disabilities in advertising based on a speech by president Dominic Lyle.

<http://www.imagesofdisability.gov.uk/>



See also Images of Disability about advertising produced by the Dept of Work and pension.

<http://www.bfi.org.uk/education/teaching/disability/>



This education tool produced by the British Film Institute includes many suggested activities and lots of examples from the film industry.



## Increasing and Improving Portrayal of People with Disabilities in the Media

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/tv/ifi/guidance/eo-toolkit/>



Office of Communication OfCom, Equal opportunities – a toolkit for broadcasters.

<http://www.ofcom.org.uk/research/tv/reports/portrayal/portrayal.pdf>



OfCom yearly content analysis The representation and portrayal of people with disabilities on analogue terrestrial television - Content analysis research report. Link to latest from 2005.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/info/policies/diversity.shtml>



BBC and Disability – a policy.

<http://www.channel4.com/corporate/4producers/resources/disability.html>



Channel 4 disability directory.

<http://www.edf-feph.org>



The website of the European Disability Forum keeps you up to date with main developments in EU disability policies.