# Funding a national disability information centre

Luxembourg (Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration, and for the Greater Region) - FUNDING AGREEMENT FOR A NATIONAL DISABILITY INFORMATION AND MEETING CENTER BETWEEN INFO-HANDICAP AND THE GOVERNMENT

Because policies targeting people with disabilities are often not coordinated, people have difficulty finding their way through the bureaucracy. A national disability information centre is a classic win-win solution: It assists people with their administrative procedures and helps policy makers to shape inclusive policies.

## In Brief

Info-Handicap is a national disability information and meeting centre, founded in 1993 by 16 disability organizations. While the idea for such a centre came from the Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration, and for the Greater Region, which also financially supports it, Info-Handicap is under the full control of its disability member organizations. The centre assists people with disabilities to find their way through complex administrative procedures and competences. Additionally, Info-Handicap has become a driver of inclusive policies as well as the main contact on any disability-related questions.

## Facts & Figures

* Initial Year 1993
* Info-Handicap now has 55 member organizations in Luxembourg.
* In 2013, 2,271 persons asked for advice and 597 used the centre’s legal information service.
* Info-Handicap has developed guidance books and has influenced laws and practices in Luxembourg and beyond.
* Since 2005 the centre has held the accessibility competition “A municipality for everybody.”

## Innovation

A driver for inclusive policies

One of the major challenges in the implementation of inclusive policies is to organize the dialogue between decision makers and civil society. Info-Handicap's unique position allows it to receive and dispatch input from and to all levels, and thereby to function as a hub that facilitates such a dialogue smoothly and on a permanent basis.

Identification of challenges and solutions

This leads firstly to improved identification and understanding of the existing challenges and, secondly, to increased opportunities for developing adequate solutions.

Concrete help

Info-Handicap offers information and guidance for persons with disabilities, for members of their family and social circle, as well as for others who are interested. This includes a legal information service and, in cases of discrimination, a meeting with a lawyer.

## Context

In 1989 the Government of Luxembourg decided that policies targeting people with disabilities should be coordinated. The Ministry of Family Affairs, Integration, and for the Greater Region was entrusted with the implementation of this idea, and it developed the project of a national disability information centre financially supported by the government, but managed under the control of national disability organizations. In April 1993, 16 disability organizations, which together formed the National Disability Council, founded Info-Handicap and signed a funding agreement with the government. Since then, Info-Handicap has constantly sought to carry out its mandate, including initiatives that have an impact beyond Luxembourg’s borders. Recently, Info-Handicap assisted in elaborating a strategy for setting up a national disability action plan, and functions as a resource centre in this area.

*“Info-Handicap plays an important role in empowering persons with disabilities as well as in involving civil society in decision-making. I highly recommend other countries to follow a similar path.”*

—Mrs. Corinne Cahen, Minister of Family Affairs, Integration, and for the Greater Region

## Key Features

Info-Handicap offers information and guidance for persons with disabilities, for members of their family and social environment, as well as for others who are interested in the field of disability. Staff assists persons with disabilities to fill in forms or write letters, and to address the correct contact points in the most direct way. In addition, they organize legal assistance and, in cases of discrimination, there is the possibility to meet with a lawyer free of charge. They undertake activities for supporting independent living, offer training, organize awareness-raising events, and promote accessibility. Importantly, they encourage their members to insist on the right to inclusion and not to accept exclusive mechanisms. The work of Info-Handicap is continually monitored by the Ministry and member organizations.

## Outcome, Impact and Effectiveness

* Info-Handicap's experience has led to its reputation reaching all of Europe.
* Info-Handicap regularly represents the European Disability Forum at official events and has been the partner or coordinator of projects funded by the European Commission.
* Since 1999, Info-Handicap has also coordinated the European Concept for Accessibility Network.

## Transferability, Scalability and Cost-Efficiency

The idea of a national disability information centre is perfectly transferable to other countries, regions, or even to local levels. Info-Handicap’s yearly costs are around €600,000, including the salaries of 6.7 staff members – three with disabilities.

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## Nominated by

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**Reserved elected seats for persons with disabilities**

Uganda (Parliament, local governments) - CONSTITUTION, PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS STATUTE & LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ACT

Around the world persons with disabilities are underrepresented in public life, but this is not the case in Uganda. The country legislated that elected political bodies at all levels must reserve a minimum number of seats for representatives of persons with disabilities.

## In Brief

Uganda’s Constitution of 1995 rules that the State shall ensure fair representation of marginalized groups – including persons with disabilities – on all government bodies. As a result, legislators have passed several acts to increase the representation of persons with disabilities in the public sphere. Parliament has reserved five seats for Members who represent persons with disabilities; and every village, parish, sub-county, and district council has to include at least one man and one woman with a disability. Uganda’s 47,000 representatives with disabilities are easily the largest group of politicians with disabilities in the world.

## Facts & Figures

* Initial Years: 1995, 1996, 1997
* At each term since 1995 at least five parliamentarians with disabilities from four regions (Central, East, West, North) and one national woman with disability representative have been elected.
* In 2011 a total of 12 parliamentarians with disabilities were elected.
* Uganda has some 47,000 representatives with disabilities – or some 0.5 percent of the registered electorate – at the local and district level.

## Innovation

Direct Representation

Only a few countries provide for direct representation of persons with disabilities at all levels of government.

Use of Electoral College

The Electoral College, which ensures a minimum political representation of persons with disabilities in Parliament and local authorities, stretches from the village to the national level and is composed only of persons with disabilities. In addition, there is an emphasis on the principle of gender balance.

## Context

For a long time persons with disabilities remained excluded from political decision-making bodies in Uganda, which in turn reinforced their exclusion through the absence of policies favouring them. In 1987 the newly formed National Union of Disabled Persons (NUDIPU) started to challenge the inconsistencies in policy-making. NUDIPU was the key driver for the inclusion of the Hon. Eliphaz Mazima as a representative with disabilities in the Constitution’s drafting committee. Hon. Mazima achieved the inclusion of disability in the Constitution of 1995. Since then many laws have operationalized the constitutional provisions, including the Parliamentary Elections Statute of 1996 and the Local Governments Act of 1997, both of which ensure the representation of persons with disabilities in all political elected bodies. Through this representation mechanism, as well as the National Council for Disability, disabled peoples organizations are directly involved in the development and monitoring of policies.

“Uganda's special system of directly elected representatives with disabilities is the reason why parliamentarians with disabilities are now also elected via the mainstream electoral system.”

—Hon. Ndeezi Alex, Member of Parliament for Persons with Disabilities – Central Region

## Key Features

Uganda's Constitution requires that Parliament shall consist of a number of representatives of persons with disabilities, and the State shall ensure fair representation of marginalized groups on all bodies. As a result, Uganda has enacted the Parliamentary Elections Statute of 1996 that provides for five seats in Parliament for representatives of persons with disabilities, elected by a national Electoral College. This College is composed of district representatives, four from each district. In this way persons with disabilities elect their representatives through an electoral college composed only of persons with disabilities. Uganda has also enacted the Local Governments Act of 1997, which provides for the allocation of a certain number of seats for people with disabilities in elected political bodies at all levels – from village, to parish, to sub-county, to district council.

## Outcome, Impact and Effectiveness

* In 1998 the State Minister for the Elderly and Disability Affairs was created.
* Since 2008 parliamentarians with disabilities have also been elected through the mainstream electoral process.
* Members of Parliament with disabilities have been successful in ensuring that their concerns were addressed in several major laws, including the Children's Statute of 1996.

## Transferability, Scalability and Cost-Efficiency

A number of delegations from other countries, including Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, and Swaziland, have visited Uganda to learn about its reserved seats for persons with disabilities**.** Kenya adopted a similar provision in 2011, but there the party chooses the representatives with disabilities.

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