***To***: Civil Society Section – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

***From***: Thomas H Butcher, Representative of the Essl Foundation in New York, USA

***Re***: ***Consultation – Rights of persons with disabilities – work and employment***

Date: July 30, 2012

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Dear Madam/Sir

Following the conversation I had with Ms Lydia Grigoreva on the morning of Monday, June 18, 2012, I should like both to provide your office with information, covering the rights of persons with disabilities – work and employment, that the Zero Project (an initiative of the [Essl Foundation](http://www.esslsozialpreis.at/en/essl-foundation/) of Klosterneuberg, Austria) has collected over the past couple of years, and to describe briefly the project’s initiative this year that focuses specifically on just this theme.

***The Zero Project – For A World Without Barriers***

The Zero Project, officially launched in 2011, is the Essl Foundation’s project that advocates, with a new and innovative approach, the rights of persons with disabilities internationally, and aims, ultimately, “for a world without barriers”. The Zero Project creates platforms for sharing and developing models that clearly improve the daily lives, and legal rights, of persons with disabilities. With its global outreach, the Zero Project monitors the national implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities around the world. In addition, with a yearly thematic focus, the project identifies and highlights both good practices and, in collaboration with the World Future Council, good policies which actively protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities. The Zero Project maintains a social media platform (www.zeroproject.org), and, each year, publishes the Zero Project Report and presents its findings at the Zero Project Conference in Vienna, Austria. The theme of the initiative this year is: ***The Right to Work: Good Policies and Practices for Persons with Disabilities***.

The Zero Project Report

*International survey of the implementation of the Convention*

The core section of the Zero Project Report (originally published in 2010 as the *Essl Social Index Pilot Study 2010 – Situation of Persons with Disabilities*) each year is the international comparison of a number of different indicators (2010: 40, 2011: 21 and 2012: 23) all of which are closely associated with individual articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the “Convention”).

In 2010, the report covered 15 different countries and the nine Austrian federal provinces. In 2011, the number of countries had increased to some 35 different countries, two US states (California and New York) and, once again, the nine Austrian federal provinces. In 2012, it is hoped that this figure for the number of countries will, again, be increased still further.

*Good Practice examples*

In both the 2010 and 2011 reports, the project published descriptions of a number of examples of Good Practice, relating to disabilities, that were considered exemplary. Whilst the 2010 report included just seven examples (chosen by members of the Zero Project team themselves), in 2011, the report contained some 27 examples of Good Practice from 15 countries that were nominated, selected and reviewed by an international network of disability experts. This year (although the report has yet to be published and the following figures are certainly not final), calling upon its extensive network of, now, over 200 disability experts from around the world, the project has already collected over 100 nominations of Good Practice, *all relating specifically to the topic of disabilities and employment*, from around the globe.

*Good Policy examples*

In 2011, for the first time, the project also collected, from members of its network of experts, their nominations of those Good Policies that either promoted or protected the rights of persons with disabilities. Following extensive research work undertaken by the World Future Council, eight of these examples from seven countries were published in the report. This year, the project’s network of experts has been asked to nominate examples of Good Policy relating specifically to disabilities and employment. The response has been extremely encouraging. And, once again, the World Future Council will be actively involved in selecting the appropriate Good Policies.

*International survey of disabilities and employment (2012)*

This year, as part of its employment-focused initiative, the project, closely basing its work on Article 27 of the Convention, developed a questionnaire of 10 questions that, with the help of Disabled Peoples’ International (DPI), it distributed worldwide. Currently, the project has received responses to these questions from over 80 different countries from around the globe.

The Zero Project Conferences

At the end of January this year, over 230 stakeholders (including parliamentarians, representatives of NGOs and foundations, academics and disability rights activists) from more than 30 different countries attended the Zero Project’s first ever conference in Vienna, Austria. Entitled ***Good Policies for Disabled People***, participants discussed international policy examples that have successfully overcome social, legal, economic, political and environmental conditions that act as barriers for disabled people. The conference specifically sought to strengthen political commitment for protecting and guaranteeing disabled people’s human rights. (It is the humble opinion of the project that the conference was quite successful in its aims.)

In February 2013, the project, as mentioned above, will hold its second conference in Vienna and focus *specifically* on disabilities and employment. Next year’s conference will, however, be an expansion on this year’s, not only stretching over two days, but also addressing *both* Good Practices and Good Policies.

***OHCHR – Invitation to Contribute Information***

The project believes that, historically, some of the information, specifically referring to employment, it has collected of the past couple of years may be of interest to the Civil Society Section in relation to its current consultation on the rights of persons with disabilities – work and employment.

The project has, therefore, extracted from both this, and last, year’s Zero Project report all the information, relating to indicators and Good Practices, that it thinks the OHCHR may find relevant in the context of “work and employment”. (This is attached as Annex 1.)

In Annex 2, for its reference, the OHCHR will find a copy of the employment questionnaire that was distributed globally over the last couple of months, and to which the project has already received over 80 replies from around the world.

A copy of the *International Study on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Zero Project Report 2012* is also attached as a separate document.  (Unfortunately, a copy of the *Essl Social Index Pilot Study 2010 – Situation of Persons with Disabilities* is too large to attach, as it gets rejected by your mailserver!)

Should the OHCHR have any questions on anything, it should feel free to contact either me, here in New York, or my colleague, and Programme Manager at the Essl Foundation, Dr Michael Fembek in Austria (Michael\_Fembek@baumax.com).

Finally, it may interest the OHCHR, also, to note that, in conjunction with the Austrian Foreign Ministry, the Essl Foundation/Zero Project will be organizing a side-event at the Human Rights Council in March 2013.

In the meantime, I remain

Yours faithfully



**Thomas H Butcher**

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**ANNEX I Contents**

***Essl Social Index Pilot Study 2010 – Situation of Persons with Disabilities***

Question/Indicator Nr. 34 (Article 27 – Work and Employment) – *Right to Assistance in the Workplac*e (Report Page 86)

Question/Indicator Nr. 35 (Article 27 – Work and Employment) – *State Employment of Persons with Disabilities* (Report Page 88)

Question/Indicator Nr. 36 (Article 27 – Work and Employment) – *Number of Employees with Disabilities* (Report Page 90)

Question/Indicator Nr. 37 (Article 27 – Work and Employment) – *Opportunities to Finish Vocational Education* (Report Page 92)

Question/Indicator Nr. 42 (Article 31 – Statistics and Data Collection) – *Statistics on Education and* Employment (Report Page 102)

Good Practice Example – *Jobs for Autistic* Persons (Report Page 132)

***International Study on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Zero Project Report 2012***

Question/Indicator Nr. 14 (Article 27 – Work and Employment) – *Accommodations in the* Workplace (Report Page 58)

Question/Indicator Nr. 15 (Article 27 – Work and Employment) – *State Employment of Persons with Disabilities* (Report Page 60)

Question/Indicator Nr. 19 (Article 31 – Statistics and Data Collection) – *Number of Employees with Disabilities* (Report Page 68)

Good Practice Examples

* *Inclusive Job Platform*
* *Jobs for Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities*
* *Equal Employment Opportunities*
* *Blind Women Detect Breast Cancer*
* *Dialogue Social Enterprise*
* *Supporting Persons Finding Employment*

(Report Pages 120-131)

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***Description of “Traffic Light” methodology from Zero Project Report 2012***