

# **THE ELSA NEWSLETTER**

## **November/December 2003**

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### **Welcome**

Welcome to the latest ELSA electronic newsletter edited within the framework of the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003!

The newsletter has been funded by the European Commission as part of the European Year. Many other projects have been realised by ELSA in the course of the Year, and as 2003 draws to a close we may already say that this year was extremely successful when it comes to raising awareness of stuttering. Most of these projects and occasions have been reported in previous issues of this newsletter, a few more follow below.

2003 was a special opportunity to change the future for disabled people. Of course, our common work will go on after this year. For Stuttering Associations, 2004 holds another challenge: The International Year of the Child Who Stutters. No doubt ELSA will do its utmost to help making the International Year as successful as the European Year was.

Thank you very much for your interest.

### **Closing Ceremony the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003**

The closing conference of the European Year for People with Disability took place during 5-7<sup>th</sup> December in Rome. Within Italian politics it was deemed one of the most important initiative organised by the Italian Presidency. The Conference gave a summary of the experiences and good practices carried out in the Member States within 2003 in order to fix new targets for disability in future. A mention was made of ELSA's contribution to the European Year.

About 500 delegates came from the different European countries. The participants included the

Ministers working on Disability themes, the representatives of NGO's at European level, social partners, delegates of the European Parliament, academics, reporters, European and International agency delegates, legal experts and people who organised the European Year.

The conference reviewed the future and current practices underway in the Member States and in those who will be part of the European Union. It also dealt with three main themes:

- knowledge and seeking disability rights;
- family support of people with disability;
- accessibility to everywhere for everybody.

At the closing session on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December, Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou presented the results of the European Year as well as follow-up actions and initiatives for the next coming years.

## **European Parliament of Disabled People**

On 10 and 11 November 2003, 300 delegates and observers representing the disability movement from 28 European countries held a unique event in the Chamber of the European Parliament in Brussels, marking the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the UN standard rules on the rights of disabled people, as well as European Year of People with Disabilities 2003.

ELSA Board member Anita Blom attended this meeting on behalf of the European League of Stuttering Associations.

With the support of the European Parliament and the attendance of many MEP's, the European Parliament of Disabled People (EPDP) represented a historic opportunity, hosted by the EU institution closest to civil society, for Europeans with disabilities to present their political demands and speak up for their rights.

Following a two-day debate and a fruitful exchange of views, the delegates adopted a resolution on the follow-up to European Year 2003 and a manifesto for the forthcoming European Parliament elections, including the following key demands:

- the need to adopt new horizontal legislation that will protect disabled people from discrimination, in all fields of life, a request that already has the support of the European Parliament;
- the new EU Constitution to ensure that all legislative measures on non-discrimination against disabled people are adopted by qualified majority voting instead of the current unanimity system;
- to make next year's EP elections more accessible for people with disabilities and disabled candidates.

Anita Blom, ELSA Board Member, gave a presentation at the meeting – see [www.elsa.info](http://www.elsa.info) dated 11 November 2003

The Resolution and Manifesto as well as more information about this event are available on the European Parliament of Disabled People website:

[http://www.edf-feph.org/EPDP2003/about\\_en.htm](http://www.edf-feph.org/EPDP2003/about_en.htm)

## **ELSA Conference on Disability and Stuttering Awareness**

Stuttering Associations from over 21 countries met during the weekend of 17-19 October 2003 for a Conference on Stuttering and Disability Awareness, organised by ELSA and the Strasbourg-based Association Vaincre Le Bégaiement.

The conference was the first of its kind, within the framework of the European Year of People with Disabilities and scheduled to coincide with International Stuttering Awareness Day.

One of ELSA's main objectives has always been to lobby at European and International level, together with cross disability alliances to combat discrimination, reduce social exclusion and advocate equal opportunities for people who stutter. It was these themes that were addressed and discussed at the conference with key players within the International stuttering community, with a view to encouraging and empowering each National Stuttering Association to take this information available to them and action it within their own countries.

The weekend comprised of various workshops, talks and presentations from around the globe. The diversity of the workshops gave an opportunity for everyone to get involved. This was also the first time that so many national stuttering associations could learn and ask questions about disability policy and how it relates to people who stutter. ELSA has produced a brochure: "International and European Disability Policy Relating to Stuttering - What you Need to Know and Why", and took the opportunity to distribute it widely during this conference (see next article).

It is without doubt that the seminar was a great success, with a great deal of positive and encouraging feedback from those grateful to have attended. Both the AVB and ELSA are pleased to have hosted this very worthwhile event.

## **ELSA Brochure on International and European Disability Policy Launched**

How can disability organisations in general, stuttering associations in particular, and people who stutter claim their rights to equal treatment and non-discrimination.? ELSA has put together a brochure containing all currently existing policy – not only related to stuttering but to disability in general. The European Directive on Equal Treatment, for instance, is a tool disability organisations and National Councils can use for the benefit of people with disabilities. In fact, the Directive is the strongest piece of legislation we have at the moment. However, there are more such tools: conventions, declarations, treaties which all can be used for certain purposes when campaigning for the rights of disabled people, including people who stutter, in Europe.

The brochure was launched at the ELSA conference on disability and stuttering awareness at Strasbourg. It has also been introduced at the EDF seminar on policies and measures against discrimination of disabled people in Europe at Genova in October 2003 and it will be sent to all European disability organisations and National Councils. The brochure will also be featured at the closing ceremony of the EYPD in Rome 6 & 7 December 2003.

The brochure was produced as part of ELSA's project in the framework of the European Year of Disabled People 2003.

## **Media and Disability Website launched**

The main goal of the Disability and Media website is to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the mass media today, including television, fiction, news, and advertisements.

This website was established following the well-attended European Congress on Media and Disability, which took place on 14-16 June 2003 in Athens, Greece. The Congress, organised within the framework of the Greek Presidency of the European Union over the first half of 2003, the European Year of People with Disabilities 2003, was co-organised by the Minister of Health and Welfare of the Hellenic Republic, the European Commission and in partnership with the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People and the European Disability Forum.

Edwin J. Farr Chair of ELSA was invited to this meeting to give a presentation on stuttering and to show the Erik Lamens film “ To speak” To view his presentation go to:

<http://www.media-disability.org/index.htm>

then choose programme and scroll down to time 1900-2000, Edwin J. Farr and choose either pdf or text file. The presentation is also on the ELSA website.

The Media and Disability website is an additional a tool for the exchange of information and best practices between mainstream media professionals, advertising experts, disability specific media and disabled people. It is also an interactive instrument to improve co-operation and effective participation of professionals with disabilities to the production of the different images, shows, articles, news items and advertisements.

On this website you will also find the Athens Declaration on Media and Disability adopted by the participants of the Athens Conference.

Feel free to pay a visit to this new website: <http://www.media-disability.org>

## **European Commission publishes a comparative analysis of the definition of disability in Europe**

This comprehensive study which analyses and assesses the policy implications of alternative definitions of disability on policies for people with disabilities is highly relevant for all those interested in the future of collective action in favour of people with disabilities.

It clearly shows that the definition of what constitutes disability affects in particular the way that people with disabilities are regarded and treated by administrations and other organisations.

The definitions and the criteria for determining disability that are laid down in national legislation and other administrative instances differ widely throughout the current 15 Member States. This can constitute a major obstacle to the mutual recognition of national decisions on disability issues, and in particular of eligibility for access to specific services and facilities.

It was against this background, that the Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs commissioned this impressive study, produced by Brunel University. On the one

hand, the study provides detailed country-by-country and benefit-by-benefit information about national policies which impact on people with disabilities or have a disability dimension.

The study also indicates some of the limits of the 'social model' of disability. This 'social model' treats disability in a more inclusive fashion than the former 'medical model' and moreover incorporates greater recognition of the 'rights' of people with disabilities. None the less, this 'social' model lacks a certain relevance to-day, given modern developments in disability policies, notably the increasing tendency towards mainstreaming, and a growing awareness of the benefits to be obtained by a more individualised approach.

This analysis is available (in English only) on the DG Employment and Social Affairs website of the European Commission:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/index/7002\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/index/7002_en.html)

(beware it is over 200 pages long!)

## **News in Brief**

### **The 2004 World Congress for People Who Stutter – Perth, Australia**

The 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress held by the Speak Easy Association of Western Australia, in conjunction with the Australian Speak Easy Association and the International Stuttering Association will be the main stuttering event at international level in 2004.

The period for early bird registrations ended at 30 November but of course it is still possible to register. Further details can be found at the following links:

[www.2004worldcongress.speakeasy.org.au](http://www.2004worldcongress.speakeasy.org.au).

<http://www.2004worldcongress.speakeasy.org.au/abstracts.html>

### **ELSA Youth Meeting 2003 – Report form the UK delegates**

On the ELSA website dated 29 October 2003 there is a good article on the Youth meeting written by the UK delegates go to [www.elsa.info](http://www.elsa.info)

### **A Stuttering Association in Slovenia**

According to recent information a stuttering association was established in Slovenia. ELSA will soon make contact to the new organisation and invite them to become member of the European League.

## **EYPD Campaign reaches around Russia and back again!**

The All-Russian Society of the Disabled organised a march of people with disabilities across Russia, following the example of the European march "Get on Board". The march across Russia (called "Boomerang") concluded by the end of the summer and the Russian organisation gave back the baton that was handed over to them in July (a "boomerang") at an informal meeting in Brussels on the 17th of October.

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