

## **EDF presentation of the AAATE Workshop on Service Delivery Systems for Assistive Technology in Europe (Copenhagen, 21-22 May 2012)**

### **1. EDF, the unique and leading European organisation of persons with disabilities**

#### **1.1. About EDF**

- Created in 1996
- Cross-disability organisation
- 80 million persons with disabilities in Europe
- Organisation OF persons with disabilities
- “Nothing about persons with disabilities without persons with disabilities”
- Fight against discrimination and promote the Human Rights of persons with disabilities
- Advocacy organisation at European level

#### **1.2. EDF missions, values and vision**

- Mission → Guaranty Fundamental Rights through an active participation of persons with disabilities
- Values → Human rights + Equal opportunities + Non-discrimination + Positive and constructive approach
- Vision → A society that integrates persons with disabilities is a better society

#### **1.3. EDF Top Campaign on Freedom of Movement**

- Why? EU treaties guarantee fundamental rights: Free movement of persons, goods and services. However persons with disabilities cannot yet fully enjoy their Freedom of movement and have difficulties accessing mainstream goods and services, under the same conditions as any other EU citizen
- What does EDF want?
  - o A strong and binding European Accessibility Act covering access to mainstream goods and services for persons with disabilities, including interoperability/compatibility between mainstream technologies and AT
  - o A strong and binding legislation covering access to websites for persons with disabilities
  - o A European Mobility Card: it could facilitate travelling to another Member State for persons with disabilities. This card would allow them to access certain services under the same conditions as nationals with disabilities. It would have a harmonised design and be based on mutual recognition of existing cards.

## 2. Assistive technology (AT) and accessibility

- Remind of the social model of disability: the overall aim is to remove barriers in society to enable persons with disabilities to participate as equals. Then accessibility and AT are tools for removal of barriers
- Accessibility: ensuring that the environment is usable to all people, including those who may depend on assistive technology.
- Assistive (adaptive) technology: devices that enable persons with illness or disabilities to do things otherwise not possible and to make use of an accessible environment.
- Assistive technology is a special technology that creates a bridge between a technology and a person with disability.
- The two things complement each other:
  - o Disabled person on an island wants access to the main land. AT reaches out from the island, and accessibility reaches out from the main land.
  - o The two have to meet in order to make a bridge for the disabled person to cross.
  - o Even the best accessibility may be worth nothing for a person if s-he doesn't have the assistive technology necessary to access the system.
  - o Even the best assistive technology cannot access an inaccessible environment.
- Also leave space for interrogating these elements for a definition of what AT are. Where does, AT start and end: for instance, is a human interpreter included in AT or only if it is an Avatar signing?

So both accessibility and assistive technology are necessary to make up an accessible environment. Having said that the ultimate goal is design for all, so products and services will be usable out of the box and persons with disabilities won't need assistive technologies any more.

### **3. Accessibility, assistive technology and the UN CRPD**

Accessibility and assistive technologies for goods and services are such a basic for equal participation in society that references in the UN CRPD can be found in many articles. What it is important to reminder is that accessibility (and links with assistive technologies) is a general principle: it means that this is of application for the implementation of all articles of the UN CRPD.

- Relevant articles are (not an exhaustive list):
  - o Article 2 Definition of Universal Design
  - o Article 4 General obligations and reference to accessibility and assistive technology (cost, research and development, standardization)
  - o Article 9 - Accessibility
  - o Article 19 living Independently
  - o Article 20 Personal mobility
  - o Article 21 – Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information
  - o Article 24 Education
  - o Article 25 Health
  - o Article 26 on habilitation and rehabilitation
  - o Article 26 habilitation and rehabilitation
  - o Article 27 work and employment
  - o Article 28 adequate standards of living and social protection
- Many articles refer to "services": Services as a concept of making all parts of what a service is accessible (i.e. material, premises, information).

#### 4. AT service delivery system for persons with disabilities

EDF has no official position on the AT service delivery system for persons with disabilities. However, building on our experience as disabled people, we could like to highlight certain aspects:

- About the AT delivery systems in European countries:
  - o The AT delivery systems vary a lot from one European country to another. Refer to the study Internal market for inclusive and assistive ICT, targeted market analysis and legislative aspects (available online at: [http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/activities/einclusion/library/studies/assistive\\_market/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/einclusion/library/studies/assistive_market/index_en.htm)).
  - o Persons with disabilities generally have a lower income, so when a AT is not subsidised by public authorities, they often cannot afford it and it can lead to exclusion from social activities.
  - o AT delivery system: EDF in favour of consumer oriented model where the person with a disability is put at the centre and with a one-stop-shop.
  - o When the system is decentralised (i.e. AT is delivered by regions or cities), importance of having the same rules applying all over the country.
- The different steps of the AT delivery system
  - o Evaluating the technology needs of the person with a disability and ensuring appropriateness between AT and expected activities to be performed
  - o Get the right information about AT and the best price
  - o Purchasing the AT devices in a reasonable timeframe
  - o Customizing the AT device and ensuring maintenance (e.g. update of software)
  - o Ensuring usefulness of AT over time (e.g. ICT AT evolves rapidly and changes every 5 years is a too long period to keep pace with mainstream ICTs)
  - o Coordinating the AT with other types of services, including education and habilitation plans for instance
  - o Training or technical assistance for the person with a disability, and relatives in case of a child with a disability
  - o Training and technical assistance for professionals including individuals providing supportive services (e.g. education, health, etc)
  - o Fluid funding mechanism

## **5. Thematic networks in the EU (ETNA and ATIS4all)**

- WHY?
  - Difficult to ensure efficient and timely availability of assistive technology.
  - Knowledge is patchy, fragmented, or absent.
  - Lack of competition due to poor information spread and fragmented market.
- HOW? Two thematic networks to build a web portal and search engine for AT
  - 43 institutions from 16 countries
  - Etna: European Thematic Network on Assistive information technology
  - ETNA to build search engine for AT with multi-lingual interface
  - ATIS4all: Assistive Technology and Inclusive Systems for All
  - ATIS4All to build and dynamise web portal with collaborative tools to facilitate distribution of info

## **6. By Bue Vester-Andersen, EDF Representative in ATIS4All, and Nadège Riche, New technology and innovation officer, 16 May 2012**