

**Legal professionals exchange good practices for access to justice for persons with disabilities**

More than 100 notaries, lawyers and the judiciary from different European states met on 21st April in a new workshop of the Just4All Project, which is co-funded by the EU Justice Program (2014-2020), to sharegood practices and experiences in relation to access to justice for persons with disabilities.

Miguel Ángel Cabra de Luna (Doctor of Law, Member of the European Economic and Social Committee on behalf of the Spanish Social Economy Employers’ Confederation - CEPES) was in charge of welcoming delegates to the workshop called ‘’Ensuring access to justice for persons with disabilities - Sharing experiences’’, and presenting the Just4All project. In his speech, he highlighted the need to strengthen the obligations of the European Charter of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by providing training for each and every profession involved in access to justice for persons with disabilities.

Once the workshop was declared open, the session was divided into 4 blocks.

In the first session, José María Gómez-Riesco Tabernero de Paz (Chair of the Working Group on Family Law of the Council of Notaries of the European Union, CNUE), Almudena Castro-Girona (Chair of the Human Rights Commission of the UNIL) and Cristina Noemí Armella, President of the International Union of Notaries, UINL) shared the good practices used in the notary profession and the institutions they represent, with respect to access to justice for persons with disabilities. Some of the ideas highlighted included the role of notaries in access to justice and, specifically, their role as guarantors of informed consent, the impact that implementing the CRPD has had in the notarial field, and the importance of the *Notarial Guide of Good Practices for People with Disabilities* created by the International union of Notaries.

In the second block, called Good Practices and Lessons Learned conducted by the legal profession, Panagiotis Perakis (Vice President of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, CCBE) spoke. He raised several examples of good practices in European law - such as the judgement of the Court of Justice of the European Union in Case C-846/19 - as well as international experiences. Eva Ribó Fenollos (Coordinator of the Disability Working Group of the General Council of Spanish Lawyers, CGAE), highlighted the training work done by the Working Group and designed in partnership with organisations from the disability sector.

In the third block, called Good Practices and Lessons Learned by the judiciary, Filippo Donatti (President of the European Network of Councils for the Judiciary, ENCJ) stressed the importance, among other issues, of ensuring access to the legal profession for persons with disabilities and the potential obstacles for persons with disabilities that may arise from the use of new technologies. Juan Manuel Fernández (Member of the General Council of the Judiciary, CGPJ), highlighted some of the initiatives undertaken by the Justice and Disability Forum aimed at more effective protection of persons with disabilities, such as including disability training for judges and prosecutors, eliminating restrictions on access to a career in the law or the prosecution for persons with disabilities, and giving out annual Awards for work done to support persons with disabilities.

In the last block, called Together for Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities, Ana Peláez Narváez (Vice-President of the CEDAW) was one of the speakers. Her intervention focused on the specific barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities in accessing justice, and the need to include a gender approach as part of the commitment to access to justice for all people. Eva Pastrana (Council of Europe) also took part and she explained the tasks done by this institution and its willingness to undertake removal of barriers through training for legal professionals. Marta Hirsch-Ziembitska (Senior Adviser to the European Ombudsman on compliance with the European Charter of Fundamental Rights), gave a presentation on a number of interventions by the European Ombudsman in favour of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The seminar ended with closing remarks from the partners of the Just4All project. Leandro Escudero Atienza, Manager - Professional & Consulting Services Spain of Thomson Reuters, expressed his appreciation and said he was very satisfied to have taken part in this project, and he shared his thoughts on the main achievements of the project. James Crowe (President of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, EASPD), highlighted the great work that has been done in Just4All and said that moving forward, he hoped this will continue. Rafael de Asís noted some of the tasks still pending in order to achieve justice for all, and he stressed how important training is to be able to include the human rights approach when working in legal professions, and the benefit of publicising and promoting good practices. Finally, Miguel Ángel Cabra de Luna highlighted that notaries, lawyers and the judiciary in the European Union are firmly committed to achieving access to justice for people with disabilities.

This seminar was the last of a series of workshops held between January and March 2021 by the Just4All Project for legal professionals in the European Union. The aim of these workshops was to reflect on the situation of people with disabilities in Europe, and the obstacles that stand in the way of effective access to justice.

Led by the **Fundación ONCE**, whose partners include **Thomson Reuters**, the European Disability Forum (EDF), the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD) and the Human Rights Institute "Gregorio Peces Barba" of the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, this project aims to promote access to justice for **persons** with **disabilities** by **raising awareness, and giving training** to legal **professionals** on the needs of persons with disabilities.