

#UrgenceHandicap:

organisations representing persons with disabilities lodge complaint against France

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HANDICAPÉS
EN FRANCE?*



*You are a disabled person in France ?

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#UrgenceHandicap

Organisations representing persons with disabilities lodge complaint against France

Persons institutionalised in another country far from their family and community. Families waiting for more than 15 years for appropriate housing. Lack of access to health care. These breaches of international and European conventions are denounced in a collective complaint against France lodged to the Council of Europe by the European Disability Forum and Inclusion Europe, with support of 5 French advocacy organisations (APF France Handicap, CLAPEAHA, FNATH, Unafam, Unapei).

The complaint against France was made by the two European associations in an effort to uphold the human rights of persons with disabilities. The complaint asserts that France is breaching the legal obligations it committed to in the [European Social Charter](#) and [the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#).

The collective complaint addresses failures by the French state, such as:

- **Lack of equal and effective access to social support services**

Not only are many persons with disabilities not able to access support services, but France is effectively using the freedom of movement to exile people. Today France is not providing the right for all persons with disabilities to live with their families and in their communities: in December 2015, **5385 adults and 1451 children were placed in social services and institutions in Belgium** ([Rapport d'information fait au nom de la commission des affaires sociales sur la prise en charge des personnes handicapées en dehors du territoire français, page 20](#)). In some cases, more than 200 kilometres away from their families.

- **Lack of equal and effective access to healthcare**

There is a lack of coordination between social and health services, and certain healthcare services are not accessible. This means that some persons are not able to access essential health services.

- **Lack of equal and effective access to housing**

The lack of accessible and adequate housing prevents persons with disabilities from accessing housing. It creates long waiting lists: sometimes more than 15 years.

- **Lack of essential support to independent living**

Adequate support and personal assistance solutions for people with disabilities are often missing. This makes it impossible for them to work, live and participate independently in society.

- **Failure in its duty to protect families**

Lack of support for persons with disabilities is affecting family members, as they need to be in charge of the support themselves, with consequences on their health and well-being. Other families see their loved ones placed in institutions far away from their homes (Notably in Belgium, in some cases more than 200 km away from home.)

- **Failure in its duty to protect work-life balance**

Lack of support for persons with disabilities is affecting family members, as they need to be in charge of the support themselves. When families are obliged to support their relatives with disabilities, this can lead to lack of job security as, in some cases, family members need to reduce their working hours or to stop working.

These failures to uphold the rights of persons with disabilities and their families often put them in a very difficult position. The situation is all the more worrying as the bilateral agreements between Belgium and France highlight how freedom of movement can be used to undermine the rights of persons with disabilities to live independently in the community. They are exiled in a different country, away from their families, without it being a choice. France is also violating the commitments it took when joining the [European Social Charter](#) and [the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UN CRPD).

Inclusion Europe and the European Disability Forum agreed to lodge the complaint considering that a successful complaint could set a precedent for the cases of other European countries that are also in breach of the European Social Charter and the UN CRPD. Persons with disabilities in France and elsewhere in Europe are still waiting for their rights enshrined in these treaties to become a reality.

Yannis Vardakastanis, President of EDF says *"France is not respecting the basic human rights of persons with disabilities, which is unacceptable. It is especially concerning to see how France is effectively exiling people. Countries have to do better and uphold the human rights of all persons with disabilities, and we will use all the tools at our disposal to ensure they do so."*

Maureen Piggot, President of Inclusion Europe, comments: *"A high number of those bearing the consequences of the inaction of the French state are people with intellectual disabilities and their families. People with intellectual disabilities have the same right as others to live a healthy, independent, dignified life. When the state fails to provide appropriate support, the disabled person suffers and the whole family pays the price as parents and siblings step in to fill the gaps. France and other European countries should fulfil their obligations, and we will continue to take action if they don't."*

Albert Prévos, Executive Committee Member of the European Disability Forum stated:

"The lack of support from the French government for the implementation of the requirements of the UN Convention, particularly as regards the exercise of legal capacity on an equal basis with others, has a very negative impact in the lives of persons with disabilities. It's not only about breaching treaties and conventions, it is about respecting our human rights."

A collective complaint against the French State: how does it work?

Disability in France: a group of associations that represent persons with disabilities and their families have lodged a collective complaint against the French State, due to the non-observance of fundamental rights protected by the European Social Charter.

In France, persons with disabilities do not have access to an independent life included in society, contrary to the principles stated in European and international conventions. In 2018 this situation is still a source of major discrimination, and, for a very high number of persons with disabilities, this constitutes an obstacle to access to:

- social life
- social welfare services
- protection against poverty and social exclusion
- healthcare
- housing.

This situation effectively places many families in a precarious situation, meaning that France is not respecting:

- the right of these families to social and economic protection
- the right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and equal treatment.

In May 2018 a group of associations representing persons with disabilities and their families lodged a collective complaint before the European Committee of Social Rights of the Council of Europe to denounce unacceptable situations that leave many French citizens on the fringes of society and in situations of social distress.

This claim is supported by a French group of associations and has been lodged by European Organisations of Persons with Disabilities.

The claim is initiated by persons with disabilities and affected families, grouped in a network of five French associations (APF France Handicap, CLAPEAHA, FNATH, Unafam and Unapei) that represent all categories of persons with disabilities. According to estimates, 20% of French people have a disability.

The claim has been lodged by two European organisations (the European Disability Forum and Inclusion Europe) on behalf of these French associations, with a view to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in France and creating a precedent that could benefit persons with disabilities in other European countries.

The right of persons with disabilities to an independent life included in society is an objective pursued across Europe, based on:

- the European Social Charter
- the Council of Europe Disability Strategy 2017-2023
- the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- the Sustainable Development Goals adopted on a worldwide scale
- the European Pillar of Social Rights recently adopted by the European Union
- the European Union Disability Strategy 2010-2020.

Nevertheless, there is still a lot of work to do across the continent. The situation in France points up the obstacles to the effective application of this right, and the European associations expect that the decision of the European Committee of Social Rights will bring about improvements in the application of the right across the whole of Europe.

What is a collective complaint procedure?

The procedure sets out to improve the effective application of rights that are guaranteed by the [European Social Charter](#). An international treaty created within the framework of the Council of Europe, the European Social Charter guarantees the fundamental social and economic rights of European citizens and imposes European legal obligations on France.

A decision concerning persons with disabilities in France will be made in 18 months' time, i.e. in late 2020. If a violation of the Charter is recognized, and if France does not show the will to redress the situation, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will adopt a recommendation addressed to France. Monitoring is guaranteed: France will have to provide information on the measures taken to apply the decision of the European Committee of Social Rights, taking into account the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

The European Committee of Social Rights has already found that France violated the Charter in the fields of the rights of persons with autism, of the right to housing and concerning corporal punishment against children. The verdicts of the European Committee of Social Rights strongly urged France to review or expedite its policies. The decisions taken in 2003 and 2013 against France regarding the situation of children and adults with autism have directly led to a series of plans for Autism that have been implemented in France since 2005. The procedure started in early 2006 by ATD Quart-Monde on the right to housing in France was followed by the adoption of a law on the enforceable right to housing on 5 March 2007. On 7 March 2018, a bill on preventing ordinary disciplinary violence was submitted, with the support of the Minister of Solidarity and Health. This initiative follows the condemnation of France by the Committee in 2014.

A collective complaint against the French State: which violations?

ABSENCE OF EQUAL AND EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO SOCIAL SERVICES

Keltoum, the mother of Ryad, 21 years old, a person with autism exiled in Belgium

"Diagnosed late with autism, Ryad has never had support adapted to his needs. Since 2012 he has been living in Belgium, 200 kilometres away from us. Initially, so as not to break our bond, we brought him home at weekends, but he could not sleep, and neither could we. We felt a sense of guilt and were afraid to disturb the balance he possibly had found in the facility he lives in. On top of that, the fact of driving 800 km each month, sleepless weekends followed by working weeks, it was simply unmanageable. So, we stopped these trips home at weekends. Now, we see him in Belgium for three hours, then we come home and are left feeling that we abandoned him yet again."

Sylvie, sister of Paul, 34 years old, a person with psychosocial disability

"My brother has a psychosocial disability. He suffers from schizophrenia. I've supported him every day for 10 years. He has been in a psychiatric hospital for 3 years due to a lack of suitable housing for him. In 2015, the hospital asked me to find a foster family for my brother. However, there are no places available in my area. The hospital came back to me to propose a facility in Belgium, given that there was a waiting list of between six and eight years for a group home in our area. I am shocked that no solution can be found closer to home. My brother is very close to his family and the environment that he has always known. I will have to make return trips from France to Belgium (six to seven hours one way) to collect him so that he can visit our mother. This does not include the disastrous effects that this radical change in environment could have on Paul's already fragile mental health."

What the European Social Charter stipulates

Under the European Social Charter, France should guarantee each person with a disability the individual right to equal and effective access to community-based disability specific support services, as well as services provided for the population at large. This access should allow them to decide where they want to live.

The reality

Many persons with disabilities find themselves without access to support services, or only have access to services that are not adapted to their specific needs and their life plan.

Persisting referrals of persons with autism to psychiatric hospitals due to a lack of adequate support,

insufficient support resources for persons with multiple disabilities, lack of policies to support ageing persons with disabilities, lack of services for persons with mental disabilities, insufficient measures in terms of support for schooling, which denies some children access to education, ... there are many examples that make up a scenario of inappropriateness of the services provided, or even a complete lack of these support services.

This situation has lasted for several years, despite warnings from individuals and associations. For persons with disabilities and their families, the inability to exercise the right to access support services leads to situations of distress, in which they feel that they have come to a dead end.

Given the lack of services in France, some persons and their families feel obliged to go to Belgium. The “Belgian solution” is not a choice, it is a forced exile, imposed by a lack of adapted responses in France.

In 2016, 5653 adults and 1459 children with disabilities were taken into care in Belgium *

A study by *CEDIAS CREAHI Ile de France* estimates that 42% of persons with disabilities placed in Belgium are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. However, nothing has been envisaged in the National Strategy for Autism in the field of neuro-developmental disabilities disorders proposed by the government last April to urgently respond to this situation.

While the government has made the inclusion of persons with disabilities a priority, it needs to recognize the dire situation thousands of persons with disabilities are facing, especially the most vulnerable. An inclusive policy should aim at addressing the delays and gaps that have accumulated over the years. For it to be effective, it should not leave anyone on the sidelines.

Even today, persons with disabilities do not have effective access to community-based specific services, due to the scarcity and poor adaptation of these services, and/or because the resources necessary are not available. The situation in France constitutes a denial of freedom of choice to persons with disabilities and of their needs and expectations.

By not ensuring equal and effective access to social services for persons with disabilities, France is violating the European Social Charter (article 14)

**ARS Hauts-de-France Supervisory Board, July 2017 Situation France-Belgium*

ABSENCE OF EQUAL AND EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

André, a person with disability

"When I call the doctor, it's very hard for me to get an appointment when I tell the receptionist that I receive disability allowance and ask if their practice is accessible. What's more, when I get an appointment, the doctor does not take my disability sufficiently into account in the exchanges I have with him or her. My limited resources due to my disability do not allow me to benefit from complementary health insurance policies, which leads me to give up healthcare that is nevertheless necessary for me, so my health suffers. Fees for healthcare, consultations and technical aids leave a big hole in your pocket. I also have to delay buying my medication because of the cost involved."

Stéphane, married with Catherine, 46 years old, a woman with a psychosocial disability

"My wife has a psychosocial disability. She has been diagnosed bipolar in 2001, and has had to stay several times at the hospital in the psychiatric ward. The last time, in 2015, she complained to the staff that she had very acute belly ache. But despite her repeated demands and warnings, she could not see a doctor. It's only when she started to have very high temperature that a nurse managed to have her taken care of. It was peritonitis, an emergency surgery was performed. 100% of non-treated peritonitis end up with the death of the patient, hence my wife nearly died in the hospital because nobody wanted to treat her. I'm very angry, and I'm afraid that she might get another health problem when she has to stay at the hospital again."

What the European Social Charter stipulates

Under the European Social Charter, France should take measures aimed at guaranteeing the effective right to health and access to healthcare for persons with disabilities, based on equality with others. These measures mainly consist of guaranteeing accessibility of the healthcare system and making it inclusive.

The reality

Persons with disabilities are faced with major obstacles in accessing healthcare, including due to poor coordination between support services and healthcare services. Healthcare professionals have been insufficiently trained and prepared to receive and treat persons with disabilities. For people with disabilities, these difficulties can go as far as having their treatment refused, even in primary care. These difficulties add up to those related to the disability itself. The healthcare needs of persons with disabilities are often greater or require a specific approach. This does not even account for the large number of persons with disabilities who are obliged to give up accessing healthcare altogether due to a lack of adapted places of consultation and/or equipment.

The fact that the needs of persons with disabilities regarding their access to healthcare are often not taken into account sometimes has serious consequences for persons with intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities or psychosocial disabilities. This includes inadequate – and sometime abusive – psychiatric treatments that can lead to hospitalisation, forced care on occasions (accompanied by

abusive measures involving isolation and restraint), or the lack of a holistic treatment within general and psychiatric care.

As for women with disabilities, their breast cancer rates are twice as high as those of the general female population, due to a lack of adapted screening and diagnosis equipment.

In France, persons with disabilities, unlike the rest of the population, do not effectively, fully and completely enjoy the right to health protection stated in article 11 of the Social Charter, although the healthcare system should be accessible to the entire population.

By not ensuring the equal and effective access of persons with disabilities to healthcare, France is violating the European Social Charter (article 11)

ABSENCE OF EQUAL AND EFFECTIVE ACCESS TO HOUSING

Fatima, a woman with disabilities and mother of two children

"Suffering a disease that disables me, and as a single mother of two children, I have been on a social housing waiting list for 15 years. It is only thanks to an association of single women that I have been able to survive in a small flat, although very far from my place of work. For this reason, I have had to stop working for several long years, leading to a situation of great insecurity, with two children to look after. My disability means I cannot travel long distances, and as I do not have access to accessible housing, I already was obliged to turn down job offers, which in turn stops me from having a social life worthy of the name. The impossibility of finding accommodation inevitably leads to difficulties in every aspect of daily life."

Olivia, 28 years old, a person with physical disability

"I am looking for a flat. I am a paraplegic manual wheelchair user. However, there are very few properties on the housing market that are accessible to wheelchair users. Another problem is that I drive to work, so I need an adapted parking lot inside the building. This is very difficult, because there are very few of these parking lots, and we do not have priority to get them. I can't just park on the street and get out of my car to go to my flat. It's just not feasible on a daily basis. I've been looking for a flat for over a year, and at one point I thought I had found the ideal place. When I was about to sign the contract at the notary's office, we realised that the parking space allocated to me was a 'normal' one. Because of this, the deal fell through!"

What the European Social Charter stipulates

Under the European Social Charter, France must guarantee persons with disabilities the right to housing, and particularly access to social housing on the basis of equality with others, taking their specific needs into account.

The reality

Persons with disabilities encounter many difficulties in finding a place to live. This is due to accessibility problems that are particularly linked to

- the fact that adapted flats are lacking or the shared parts of a building are not accessible
- a lack of social housing adapted to the requirements of persons with disabilities; and
- disregard of the priority given to persons with disabilities within the framework of demand for social housing, which leads to particularly long waiting lists.

All this takes place in a context of a scarcity of housing to satisfy the demand from people without access to adequate housing. These difficulties are compounded for persons with disabilities: delays in housing allocation are even longer for persons with disabilities than for other applicants.

Under the ELAN bill (a law on the evolution of housing, planning and the digital era), the measures proposed by the government in April go against the needs of persons with disabilities. Indeed, the bill plans to reduce the number of accessible new housing units to 10%, as opposed to 100% today,

which is a big step backwards. The introduction of this housing quota is, moreover, discriminatory and contradicts the right of persons to freely choose where they want to live. Thus, access of persons with disabilities to services and facilities that allow access to housing is far from satisfactory in France.

By not guaranteeing the effective right of persons with disabilities to housing, France is violating the European Social Charter (article 31)

LACK OF ESSENTIAL SUPPORT TO INDEPENDENT LIVING

Ricardo,

"I would like to change my wheelchair because mine is 10 years old and is starting to fail; it is no longer adapted to my disability. I have tried 3 or 4 wheelchairs to find a replacement model. The problem is that the wheelchair that would suit me costs € 7,300. The MDPH [Maison Départementale des Personnes Handicapées, French public interest group for persons with disabilities and their families] can cover € 1,500, Social Security € 500 and the complementary health insurance policy € 300. So, I still have to find the remaining € 5,000! The social worker and the occupational therapist have advised me to try and find a way to finance the sum. I have created a campaign on a crowdfunding website and am appealing to the public's generosity to reach those € 5,000. I don't know why the cost of wheelchairs is not covered completely. My wheelchair is my legs!"

Paule, the mother of Francis

"Our 36-year-old has a psychosocial disability, and he has been under treatment on a voluntary basis for more than ten years. He now lives on his own without adapted support. After six years in rehabilitation care he has been directed towards a group home. We have visited several places and soon realised that they were not at all adapted to our son's needs. These places do not offer any specific support for people who suffer from psychosocial disabilities. So, we quickly organised a studio apartment for him, sadly realising that without support he would not be able to go out on his own, and it would become a kind of prison cell for him. Our son is fearful of living on his own. He doesn't have the right to home get someone who helps him living on his own because he has been refused a disability compensation allowance ("PCH" in France). We are too old and tired to continue giving him on our own the support he needs to live decently and with dignity in society. Our son has a university degree and his head is full of ideas. But without adapted, stable and continuous support he can never be really independent or find a job. We are very worried about his future."

What the European Social Charter stipulates

Under the European Social Charter, France must apply to make the right to an independent life effective for persons with disabilities. They have the right to technical aids and to personal assistance to offset their disability, and to be included in society.

The reality

The legal framework of the disability compensation allowance in France and its implementation do not allow persons with disabilities to gain access to all the assistance they need, adapted to each situation. This is the result of conditions for eligibility and overly-restrictive practices that are often far removed from the real needs of people in all aspects of their everyday lives (particularly for persons with mental or intellectual disabilities). It is also due to excessively strict conditions for financial support and administrative practices that block access to aid.

Furthermore, the disability compensation allowance is currently too restrictive and does not cover all the needs of persons: household tasks, parenting support, communication aids.

The associations (mentioned in the press release) deplore the numerous shortcomings in the implementation of the right to compensation. Many gaps have been detected: a very low disability compensation allowance, which does not cover things that have to be paid for – with high price increases in recent years – and assistance programmes that have been reduced, even though the situation of the people affected did not change.

The French system of personal assistance is based on a disability policy that is still marked by a medical approach based on the limitations linked to the disability, not a human rights approach. This does not allow persons with disabilities to obtain the personal assistance needed to live included in society while their life choices are being respected.

By not guaranteeing the effective right of persons to independence, social integration and community life, France is violating the European Social Charter (article 15)

NON-FULFILMENT OF THE DUTY OF PROTECTION TO FAMILIES

Eliane and Jean-Luc, parents of Manon, 28 years old

"We live in Nord-Pas-de-Calais and our daughter Manon was studying in Toulouse when she had to be admitted to hospital. She now lives in a flat adapted for persons with psychosocial disability in Toulouse. We would like to live closer to her but we cannot afford to do so. It is impossible to have access to a structure for her near to where we live. Her sister lives in London, she has no friends, only us and she calls on us constantly. She does not want to speak to anybody, she just shrinks into her shell more and more. We feel completely helpless, we need to be close to her, especially as she has attempted suicide on several occasions."

Adeline, mother of Gaëtan and Hugo

"I have two children with severe intellectual disabilities. They are also epileptic and have behavioural issues, probably due to a genetic illness. They attend a specialised structure for a few hours a week. The rest of the time they spend at home with me. I would like to give you a more comprehensive testimony on the isolation of our family, but I have to take Gaëtan to the hospital for a physiotherapy session. I have to take both my children, as immediately afterwards I have an appointment with Hugo's neurologist in another hospital. Maybe tomorrow, between two other appointments..."

What the European Social Charter stipulates

Under the European Social Charter, France must guarantee the protection of families of persons with disabilities and provide them with the necessary assistance and support, including services.

The reality

Many families either take on the responsibility of supporting their relatives with disabilities due to the lack – or poor adaptation – of support services, or they are obliged to accept that their family member has to travel far to get support worthy of the name, and in the case of children, parents are sometimes deprived of their custody. This leads to major (and negative) upheavals in family life, putting them in a situation of great precariousness in economic, social or even health terms.

By not ensuring effective access by persons with disabilities to an independent life included in society, placing many families with one or more persons with disability in a precarious position, France is not fulfilling its duty to protect these families, in violation of the European Social Charter (article 16).

OBSTACLES TO WORK/LIFE BALANCE FOR WORKERS

Franck Marie, father of Dorian (10 years old), who has autism

"My son is 10 years old. He has autism. Getting my son into school is more like a combat course. We managed to get a special needs assistant for 10 hours a week, which only represents 2 hours at school per day. So, he is at school for 2 hours a day in an ULIS (inclusive education local unit) in Saint-Nom-La-Bretèche, while we live in Versailles. I live alone with him. My parents help me a lot, but what can you do when your child only goes to school for a few hours every day? How can you balance your work and personal life in that situation? Last year my son's special needs assistant fell ill but she has never been replaced. No solution has been proposed, either for my son or myself. I had to drop everything to look after him and I had to leave my job. I had to put my life on hold to take care of my son."

Olivier, brother of Sébastien, 43 years old, who has a psychosocial disability

"My big brother Sébastien is 43. Our parents are dead. He lives in an apartment with three other persons with psychosocial disabilities. The support provided is not sufficient, though: 1 hour of home help and nurse visits for 1-2 hours a week. So I am continuously asked to be available to take care of his personal hygiene, meals, housework, washing... Basically, I had to reduce my working hours and my salary. One day a week is dedicated to Sébastien: appointments with his guardian, doctors, the social worker in the hospital, administrative procedures, plus washing clothes and shopping. My wife and children suffer in this situation, due to my absences and to the lack of financial resources, even though my wife also works. What's more, my job is on the line: my boss allowed me to reduce my working hours, but he now says that he would like to rescind my contract to take someone on full-time. I lost my previous job due to this "double life". I am worried about the future, for my family life. However, I cannot abandon my brother: I'm the only one he has."

What the European Social Charter stipulates

Under the European Social Charter, France undertakes to implement or promote suitable services for workers who have family responsibilities to relatives with disabilities. These services ensure the effective exercise of the right to equal opportunities and treatment for workers who have family and other responsibilities.

The reality

Many family members who have to support their relatives with disabilities in the face of a lack of another solution for that person encounter difficulties in balancing their family and work life.

They are forced to reduce, stop or change their professional activity, or may not be in a position to apply for jobs. They lose rights (to holidays, a pension, unemployment benefit...) They also lose opportunities for promotion and career development, etc. This situation particularly affects women, as 6 carers out of 10 are women.

By not fulfilling its obligation to provide community-based support services that allow people who have relatives with disabilities to balance work and family life, France does not respect the

commitment it is subject to. **By not ensuring effective access by persons with disabilities to community-based support services, France is violating the European Social Charter (article 27).**

Presentation of the complaining NGOs and associations

EUROPEAN DISABILITY FORUM

The European Disability Forum is an independent NGO that defends the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe. It is run by persons with disabilities and their families. EDF is a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe.

www.edf-feph.org

INCLUSION EUROPE

Inclusion Europe is an association of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Europe. Since 1988, Inclusion Europe fights for equal rights and full inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families in all aspects of life. The association has members in nearly 40 European countries. Inclusion Europe focusses on a number of key areas, mainly: Education, Legal capacity, Non-discrimination, Independent living, Social inclusion and Accessibility & Health. The association is based in Brussels in Belgium.

www.inclusion-europe.eu

APF FRANCE HANDICAP

APF France Handicap is a large French organisation recognised as promoting the public interest, that defends and represents persons with disabilities and their relatives. It brings together 100,000 people: members, staff, volunteers, users, etc. plus tens of thousands of donors and other supporters. APF France Handicap is based on humanist, activist and social values and is a project of general interest aiming at an inclusive society that shows solidarity. The association works against discrimination and in favour of equal rights, citizenship, participation in society and free choice of lifestyle of persons with disabilities, and their families. APF France Handicap intervenes in all areas of daily life with 550 services spread across the country. Its socioeconomic model, unique and original in Europe, allows APF France Handicap to be in tune with the desires and needs of persons with disabilities and their families.

www.apf-francehandicap.org

CLAPEAHA

The liaison and action committee of parents of children and adults with associated disabilities communicates the specific concerns of persons with rare and/or complex disability (multi-sensorial conditions such as deafblind, multiple disabilities...) with often severe impairment of their ability to

make decisions and to carry out essential tasks of everyday life. It is behind the creation of the National Rare Disability model.

<http://www.clapeaha.fr>

FNATH

Thanks to 100,000 members and a network of 1,000 associations at regional and local level, FNATH supports, defends and represents persons who have suffered a life accident (whatever the origin of the accident or illness) in their efforts to exercise their rights. It supports around 15,000 new people, including litigation in the courts, to help them gain recognition of their rights. Apart from this defence of individuals, FNATH works and advocates on both the national and local level to defend people's collective rights.

www.fnath.org

UNAFAM

Unafam is an association founded in 1963 and recognised as promoting the public interest. It welcomes, listens to, trains, informs and supports families and other close ones of persons who suffer from mental disorders, and defend their common interests.

The inclusion of the person concerned, solidarity, activism, and democracy in health constitute the basic values on which Unafam builds its action to support families, improve the life path of persons who suffer from psychosocial disabilities, favour their inclusion into society and work, and increase their independence in everyday life.

It has more than 14,500 members, 120 local sections and 300 drop-in centres.

<http://www.unafam.org>

UNAPEI

The first federation of associations in France for the representation and defence of the interests of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families, Unapei works to bring about a united and inclusive society. Unapei and its 550 member associations work for every person with disability to be considered a fully-fledged citizen, able to enjoy services adapted to his/her needs. They bring together more than 55,000 member families and 71,500 volunteers, and employ 94,000 professionals in 3,100 services that support 200,000 persons with disabilities across France.

<http://www.unapei.org>