



PROGRAMME

HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE

“INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: EMPOWERMENT AND SUPPORT IN A COMMUNITY FOR ALL”

7 May 2026, City of Dreams Hotel, Lemesos (Limassol)

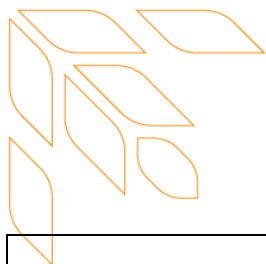
Concept Note

Empowerment, self-determination and autonomy, are core values embedded in the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. To make these values a reality, it is crucial that persons with disabilities have access to high-quality, inclusive, community-based and person-centered support social services, that respond to individual needs. This Conference will highlight concrete examples of such services, that are developed, delivered and monitored with the active and close involvement of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities. An “Autonomous Union of Values that Leaves No One Behind” which is one of the five pillars of priorities of the Cyprus Presidency is a Union that supports and strengthens the autonomy of every person.

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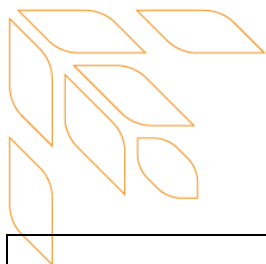
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08:00 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:30	Welcome and Opening Session: “Rights of Persons with Disabilities – Leaving No One Behind”
	Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Cyprus Clea Hatzistefanou-Papaellina
	Keynote speech:
	Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, European Commission Hadja Lahbib
	Intervention from:
	President of the European Disability Forum Yannis Vardakastanis
09:30 – 10:30	1st Session: Setting the Scene: Supported Decision-Making as the Basis for Self-Determination and Autonomy This first session aims to refresh our understanding on the fundamental human rights of autonomy and self-determination and why support in making choices and taking decisions is crucial to enable and empower self-determination and autonomy of persons with disabilities
	Opening speech:
	Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights, Cyprus Maria Stylianou-Lottides
	Panel:



	Moderator and introduction: Chairperson, Cyprus Confederation of Disability Organisations, Themida Anthopoulou
	Senior expert on disability, DG Justice and Consumers, European Commission and Member of the UN Committee on the rights of persons with disabilities Inmaculada Placencia Porrero
	Member of the European Economic and Social Committee Pietro Vittorio Barbieri
	Vice-President, European Disability Forum Gunta Anca
	Person with lived experience Soufiane El Amrani
	Q&A
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee break
11:00 – 13:00	2nd Session: Best Practices and Evidenced-Based Mechanisms for Supported Decision-Making What can we learn from policy and legislative reforms, best practices and mechanisms that have been implemented to support persons with disabilities in making free choices and taking decisions? Which are the crucial factors for effective support and successful decision-making?
	Moderator: Head of Disability Unit, DG JUST, European Commission, Lucie Davoine
	11:00 – 12:00 Panel 1: Policy and Legislative Reforms
	Secretary of State, Ministry of Social Rights, Consumer Affairs, Spain

	Ms. Rosa Martínez
	Director, Decision Support Service, Ireland Aine Flynn
	Legal and Policy Advisor to the Minister for Inclusion and the Voluntary Sector, Malta Dr Alistair de Gaetano
	Acting Director of the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, Cyprus Christina Flourentzou-Kakouri
	Q&A
	12:00 – 13:00 Panel 2: Delivery of Services in Practice
	General Director, Support-Girona, Spain Josep Maria Solé i Chavero
	Director of Inclusion Czechia and Board member of Inclusion Europe Camille Latimier
	Senior Adviser, Mental Health Europe Kristijan Grđan
	Cyprus Confederation of Disability Organisations , Andreas Papadopoulos,Project Manager and Ioanna Maroulli, Officer
	Q&A
13:00 – 15:00	Lunch
15:00 – 16:30	3rd Session: Social Support Services for Employment, Independent Living and Social Inclusion The third Session will highlight more concrete examples of high-quality, inclusive, community-based and person-centered support social services in other important areas of everyday life. Home care, personal assistance, social assistance, job coaching, entrepreneurship support,



	assistive technology, alternative methods of communication, are some of them.
	Moderator and introduction: President of the European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), Ms Kirsi Konola
	European Court of Auditors Stef Blok and Aleksandra Klis-Lemieszzonek
	Chief Executive Officer, European Social Network, Alfonso Lara-Montero
	Cyprus Paraplegics' Organisation (Home care services), Katerina Panayiotou, Organisation Board Member Agathi Themistocleous, Director of Services
	Voice for Autism, Cyprus (Job coaching services at a social enterprise) Ellen Georgiou-Pontikis and George Christou
	Q&A
16:30 – 17:00	Closing Session – Looking ahead
	Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, Ireland Norma Foley
	Head of Disability Unit, DG JUST, European Commission, Lucie Davoine
	Cypriot Advocates Team Representatives, Styliani Paphiti and Stella Tsambri Stella Fournaraki (Psychologist, Supporter)
	Permanent Secretary of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, Cyprus Yiannis Nicolaides
20:00	Dinner