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EDF Board mailing June 18th

Dear Board Members,
I hope this message finds you well.

Earlier this month, EDF participated to the [European Development Days](#). We realised that the accessibility measures in place were limited and could be easily improved. After discussing with Humanity and Inclusion, we decided to prepare an official complaint of letter so accessibility can be improved throughout all EU events. The text of the letter is available in annex here.. It was signed by the following organisations:

- European Disability Forum
- SOLIDAR
- LIGHT FOR THE WORLD International
- European Environmental Bureau
- EU-CORD
- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- CONCORD Europe
- Humanity & Inclusion
- CBM
- ADD
- Bridging the Gap II
- International Disability and Development Consortium

Annex

Re: Official complaint about accessibility issues during the European Development Days 2018

Dear Mr Manservisi, dear organisers of the European Development Days 2018,

Thank you for organising such an interesting event! Gender inequality and women empowerment are in fact important issues we need to tackle. The sessions were inspiring and major themes related to gender equalities were constructively discussed. We would like to recognise the importance of the European Development Days and we fully support its continuation.

However, we regret that persons with disabilities encountered barriers to full participation during the event at Tours and Taxis, in spite of the accessibility measures in place. We would like to open a dialogue with you to showcase the issues persons with disabilities faced. This aims to provide recommendations to enhance the accessibility for the European Development Days 2019. We believe it is extremely important that EU events are accessible for all persons with disabilities, regardless of the type of disability, in line with the EU's obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Here are our main concerns and recommendations about accessibility:

- No clear indication was provided outside to guide persons in a wheelchair or with reduced mobility to enter the event. On the first day, they had to queue to the main entrance before being told that they could not enter because there was no ramp. They entered through the backdoor which was accessible. The path toward the backdoor was paved with a lot of holes and gravels. It did not help the smooth transfer for wheelchair users. Furthermore, at the end of the ramp, laid a step to access it. For next editions, we recommend providing clear indications from the beginning on where is the entrance for persons in a wheelchair or with reduced mobility. We also recommend foreseeing the provision of ramps without steps on it.
- The way to the stage for speakers was not accessible. A speaker in a wheelchair had to go to a different stage to make her speech. In another session, since no ramp was provided two hours after the request was made, the speakers had to get out of her wheelchair and climb the steps to go to the stage. We ask the organizers to provide a ramp to stages.
- The toilets for persons with disabilities was only accessible with a passcode. Yet, this passcode was written in small characters which made it hard to read for anyone. We recommend writing the passcode in a more visible way, the size of characters should be broader.

- Staff were not trained on accessibility or informed on accessibility measures that existed during the event. A person with disabilities had to ask three different staff members before finding out where the toilets for persons with disabilities were. We recommend providing awareness training on accessibility to all staff involved in the event.
- There was no specific taxis stop. It was a challenge for persons with disabilities to find a taxi after the event to go back home. We recommend foreseeing dedicated taxi spots close to the entrance / exit.
- There were no specific parking places for persons with disabilities. Consequently, persons with physical disabilities had to walk a long way from the place they left the car to the entrance. Also, there were gravels on the path which was dangerous for crutches users and for persons who are blind.
- The access from the main rooms to the food truck court was blocked by stairs. In addition, the ramp was obstructed by a fence. Consequently, persons with physical disabilities could not freely go to the food court to choose the food they wanted. We recommend the organizers to ensure the ramp access to the food court is not obstructed by obstacles.
- Sign languages interpretation was only available in two rooms (Rooms A2 and A4), preventing the access of deaf persons to other sessions. Limiting the use of interpreters to only few sessions is also preventing deaf persons from accessing the information they want. We recommend discussing with the interpreters for a flexible deployment. Interpreters should discuss with deaf persons on which session they want to attend. Thus, deaf persons could access the information they need.
- The sessions involving sign language interpreters were live-streamed. Yet, the projection of the interpreters on the screen was small-sized. Consequently, it was difficult for deaf persons to watch it and understand the content due to the small size of the interpreters. We recommend enlarging the size of the projection of sign language interpreters on the screen.
- The event should also be accessible to persons with intellectual disabilities. This implies providing information for each session in Easy to read version so people with intellectual disabilities can easily decide which sessions to attend.

- At the time of participants registration, accessibility needs should be requested. A special guide on accessibility should be prepared and made available especially to those who would have expressed accessibility needs, prior to the event.

The organizers should consult organizations of persons with disabilities on accessibility matters in the future. We recommend to review the accessibility arrangements for next year by visiting the venue with experts in accessibility issues prior to the event.

We are open to a dialogue to enhance the access of the European Development Days to persons with disabilities. This event is important for our organisations and we would like to ensure that it benefits equally all participants.

