



# Inclusion Days 2017 – Speeches and Statements

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# Welcome statement

**Federal Minister of Labour and Social Affairs  
Dr Katarina Barley, Member of the Bundestag**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Today, at the first international Inclusion Days, we can see that inclusion is becoming an increasingly diverse issue. This can be seen from a glance at the programme: every continent is represented, and a long list of countries are featured. From Canada to Australia, from Peru to Bangladesh, from Ethiopia to Sweden – to name just a few of the countries which, over the next two days, will tell us how inclusion is being advanced there in a wide range of different areas, such as work and training, infrastructure or disaster risk reduction for people with disabilities. For it is clear that the route to an inclusive society is as varied as the societies in which people with and without disabilities live together. We are keen to find out more, listen to each other and learn from each other. And this year's Inclusion Days once again offer us an outstanding opportunity to do just that. So wherever you come from – I wish you a very warm welcome to Berlin!

Last year, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities celebrated its tenth anniversary. It states unequivocally that human rights self-evidently also apply to people with disabilities. Since its entry into force in Germany in 2009, we have also been bound by the Convention. We expressly affirm our commitment to it, and we have already achieved a great deal of progress on the issue of inclusion in recent years. But much more still remains to be done.

Our motto has been, and remains: “Removing barriers – opening up opportunities”. We are seeking to do this not by going over the heads of people with disabilities, but by working in partnership with them. And together we were able to reach several important milestones on the road to an inclusive society in the last electoral term.

One important step was, undoubtedly, revising the Federal Government's National Action Plan to produce the National Action Plan 2.0, which was adopted in June 2016. Many people – including, above all, people with disabilities and their organisations – played an active role in this dialogue, including at the 2014 and 2015 Inclusion Days. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank all those who got involved!

I am especially glad that we have taken action, in the form of the Federal Participation Act, to significantly enhance the autonomy of people with disabilities – particularly with regard to their participation in working life. In future, it will be easier to move from a sheltered workshop to the open labour market. And with the “Budget for Employment”, we are creating an incentive for employers to offer people with disabilities a job in their companies. Those who have their own income will be able to keep much more of it in future. That was a key demand made by people with disabilities and their organisations.

Starting in 2018, the reforms contained in the Federal Participation Act will begin entering into force in several stages. For example, there will be significant improvements in relation to integration assistance from 2020. To give you just one example: the income and assets of spouses or civil partners will no longer be offset against assistance in future. And the allowances for individuals' own income and assets will be significantly higher. The



Federal Participation Act is one of the biggest social-policy reforms in recent years. We are enhancing autonomy and participation by simplifying procedures and giving greater weight to the wishes and ideas of people with disabilities.

Another important milestone is the revised Act on Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, which entered into force in the summer of 2016. For example, the Federal Contact Point for Accessibility is now well-established: it provides advice on accessibility to federal authorities, as well as associations, companies and members of the public.



For the past year, people with disabilities and organisations have also been able to turn to an impartial Arbitration Service if they feel they have been subjected to discrimination. It is based at the office of the Commissioner for Matters relating to Persons with Disabilities and has met with a very positive response.

I also wish to mention the financial support provided to self-advocacy organisations. One million euros is available for this each year.

One topic which will challenge us more and more is digitalisation. This process has been under way everywhere for some time now, and is affecting all areas of life. Technical advances are opening up major opportunities, including for greater mobility, autonomy and flexibility. The CRPD rightly calls on the States Parties to ensure that people with disabilities can access new information and communication technologies on an equal basis. For they open up new means and opportunities for participation for people with disabilities in particular – in working life, for example, or in rural areas. The fact is, we need to do even better when it comes to making the most of these opportunities. “Nothing about us without us” – in this spirit, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs will continue to seek a dialogue with people with disabilities about the values, rules and requirements of digitalisation.

Dialogue – that is the right concept to finish on. We have come together today for the international Inclusion Days. I would therefore like to expressly underline that the Federal Government places a high value on international cooperation in this field, too. In particular, it is part of the DNA of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, as the “focal point” for the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to maintain bilateral contacts at both the technical and political level – with France, Austria, Bulgaria, Turkey, China, Viet Nam, Australia and Brazil in recent years, for example.

The Inclusion Days today and tomorrow offer us what is undoubtedly a unique opportunity to engage in an international dialogue. I am sure that we can benefit from other countries’ reports and examples.

I am certainly delighted to have the opportunity to learn about these examples with you. And I am confident that by working together, across national borders and continents, we can succeed in ensuring that inclusion becomes an even more diverse issue in the coming years.

On this note, I hope that the Inclusion Days 2017 will be unforgettable for us all! Thank you.



## Lecture

# *The UNCRPD – a indispensable tool*

**Abstract by Yetnebersh Nigussie, Senior Inclusion Adviser, Light for the World international and winner of the Alternative Nobel Prize**

Persons with Disabilities are one of the largest minorities; significantly overlooked in previous development and human rights discourse. They still face many barriers to leading independent and dignified lives. In particular, women with disabilities are especially at risk of systematic exclusion and discrimination. The World Report on Disability highlights this fact in its analysis. Yet the recommendations section does not contain any reference to gender and/or women and girls with disabilities! Nor does it recommend that cross-cutting attention be paid to gender disparities or ending violence against women and girls with disabilities.

The UNCRPD is an indispensable tool to be used as reference while talking of inclusion of persons with disabilities. Being highly influenced by the disability movement from the inception till now, it is evident that persons with disabilities and their organizations have opened a new path which is participatory and transparent in the human rights treaty development process. They have demonstrated strong analytic skills of the problems at hand along with solutions that will serve to also tackle other forms of inequalities globally.



Despite the fact that the CRPD has introduced a number of transformative steps in human rights and development which are worth to talk about, I would like to dedicate the following minutes for sharing my views on the paradigm shift it brought to approach disability, the strategy the Convention follows to define the role of persons with disabilities and their organizations and the prerequisites for changing the rights in the CRPD to realities for persons with disabilities at the ground.

The Convention has brought a shift of thinking that disability is no longer an object of charity. Persons With Disabilities are entitled to rights which in turn introduces duty to the respective states. The strategy the Convention follows in defining the role of persons with disabilities and their organizations is another important milestone in legitimizing their participation. This is beyond mere participation; Rather, full and effective participation which can lead to meaningful inclusion. The CRPD also goes beyond proclaiming such



advancements of human rights. It underlines the need for awareness raising and capacity building at all levels. As stipulated in Article 4, the convention is applied at each administrative units of governments. This provides a golden opportunity to embrace grassroots DPOs and their respective authorities to abide for the obligations specified in the CRPD.

A number of significant development discourses including the post 2015 Agendas have used the Convention as reference to devise future developments.



That is why Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development goals have come up with multiple references on persons with disabilities and base themselves on the overarching principle of “Leave no one behind!”

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities need to be understood as the human rights framework for any given development initiative including the SDGs. Such alignment of these two important global instruments is indispensable in ending exclusion and discrimination of all persons with disabilities regardless of gender, age, geographical location or any other status. This will consequently bring us closer to our vision of an inclusive society whereby persons with disabilities are valued, their voices are heard and their capabilities are recognized.

## Speech

### *Self-help organisations – a driving force for inclusion?*

**By Klaus Lachwitz, President of Inclusion International, London, and General Secretary of the International Disability Alliance, Geneva and New York City**

I would like to discuss the topic I have been given on the basis of my experiences as President of Inclusion International and General Secretary of the International Disability Alliance.

The International Disability Alliance (IDA) is the umbrella organisation of all global organisations of persons with disabilities. One of its members is Inclusion International, the international network of national associations and organisations representing people with intellectual disabilities and their families. Inclusion International has more than 200 member organisations from 115 countries. IDA's other members include the World Blind Union (WBU) or the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), for example. All of these organisations represent people with disabilities and enjoy consultative status at the United Nations.

The first question I ask myself is: are these self-help organisations?



Self-help groups usually involve people who have an impairment coming together to discuss certain topics and take joint action. We talk about self-help organisations if these people establish a permanent organisational structure with the aim of representing their interests at national or international level. The CRPD also acknowledges the existence of these organisations.

Well over 100 such organisations exist in Germany. Most of them are members of the Federal Association of Self-

Help Organisations, through which they are represented on the German Disability Council. There are a large number of organisations which seek to influence policy at federal level and the level of Germany's *Länder*, or federal states – although they do not always share the same objectives. Nonetheless, I wish to mention that the disability organisations which make up the German Disability Council and private charities do seek to coordinate their approach when there are debates about the implementation in Germany of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in particular. For example, an alliance of self-help organisations, social organisations and private charities was set up several years ago specifically for this purpose, in order to produce a joint alternative report to the Federal Government's State Party report on the implementation of the UN Convention. Alliances of this kind reflect the meaning and purpose of the CRPD, as paragraph (3) of Article 33 of the CRPD, which deals with "National implementation and monitoring" of the Convention, states that: "Civil society, in particular persons with disabilities and their representative organizations, shall be involved and participate fully in the monitoring process."

Almost no other country has such a multitude of different organisations representing the interests of people with disabilities.

Inclusion International, for example, for the most part represents national self-help organisations. These are often small organisations, active at national level, of people with an intellectual disability, known as self-advocates, and their parents, other family members and friends (peers). Such organisations primarily join Inclusion International to press for the realisation of human rights at international level, i.e. especially at the level of the United Nations.

Special mention should be made of the fact that self-advocates are playing an ever more important role. For example, 2016 marked the first time that a self-advocate – Robert Martin, New Zealand – was successfully elected to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, an 18-member body of experts.

For several years already, the Council of Inclusion International has included five self-advocates with an intellectual disability from all five regions. They have set up “Empower Us!”, a globally active platform for self-advocates. The situation is similar at the International Disability Alliance. Most of its member organisations of people with disabilities are traditional self-help organisations.

My second question is whether these organisations are a driving force for inclusion.

The term “inclusion” is on everyone’s lips today. It is an undefined legal term whose use was initially avoided by the Federal Government, which arranged for the German translation of the CRPD in consultation with the other German-speaking countries (Austria, Luxembourg, Switzerland) in 2008. Even today, the official German translation, which was promulgated in the Federal Law Gazette in 2008, states that the English term “inclusion” is to be paraphrased using the German term *Einbeziehung*, or “involvement” (see Article 3 of the CRPD), and



that the term “inclusive education” used in Article 24 means *integrierte Bildung*, or “integrated education”. This has led Austria to withdraw its support for what was originally a joint translation of the CRPD, and to publish its own translation in 2015, which self-evidently uses the terms *Inklusion* (“inclusion”) and *Inklusiv* (“inclusive”).

Among people with disabilities, there is no doubt whatsoever that the CRPD as a whole is based on the principles of inclusion and participation (see the general principles enshrined in Article 3 (c) of the CRPD). In

other words, it aims ideally to transform society in such a way that people with disabilities are equal citizens of a country which is accessible, which has dismantled prejudice against people with disabilities, which has created equality of opportunity in all areas of life, and which avoids all forms of segregation. Although this ideal has not yet been achieved anywhere, the individual human rights set out in the CRPD from the perspective of people with disabilities provide a roadmap for how the societies of the States Parties must develop in order to ensure “full and effective participation and inclusion in society”.

Self-help organisations have indeed acted as a driving force in this groundbreaking development. Not only did they play a vital role in ensuring that the UN adopted a Convention text which was shaped by worldwide organisations of people with disabilities. They have also succeeded in ensuring, via their member organisations at national level, that the CRPD has now been ratified by more than 170 States Parties.

That said, it is important to point out that the CRPD’s implementation at national level varies a great deal from country to country, and the ability of self-help organisations to act as a cornerstone of this process and a driving force in civil society depends primarily on whether governments are even willing to allow, recognise and support civil-society initiatives. While it sounds good to say that more than 170 of the 195 UN member states have ratified the CRPD, it is very dispiriting to realise that – as a leader in the magazine *Der Spiegel* recently stated – “just 87 of these 195 countries are free, 59 partly free, and 49 not free”.





Nonetheless, I would like to offer a few positive examples which make clear that organisations of people with disabilities have not only succeeded in kick-starting processes of social change, but have also achieved concrete improvements in relation to the implementation of the CRPD.

A few years ago, it was still almost taken for granted that people with intellectual disabilities were denied the right to make their own decisions, appear in public, express opinions and act autonomously on central issues of daily life. Today, it is increasingly common for people with intellectual disabilities to act as self-advocates. Many have learned to express key demands in simple language, and specifically to state that the CRPD guarantees free and universal suffrage for all, without restriction, that every child with an intellectual disability has the right to attend a mainstream school, that every adult with an intellectual disability should have the opportunity to work in an inclusive labour market, and that no one is required to live in “special types of housing”. This has led to special schools being abolished in some Canadian provinces, and British Columbia having legislation which states that every person enjoys full legal capacity and must receive whatever support they require in – as Article 12 of the CRPD puts it – “exercising their legal capacity”. It has led to MENCAP, the UK member organisation of Inclusion International, being able to announce two years ago that in Greater London many people with an intellectual disability had been transferred from sheltered workshops to the open labour market. And it has led the European Commission, with the European Parliament’s support, to embrace deinstitutionalisation and decide that funding from the European Social Fund will no longer be used to build and modernise institutions in future, but only to fund services for people with disabilities living in the community.

The member organisations of the World Blind Union can be proud of the fact that they have won the campaign for the Marrakesh Treaty, which allows published materials that are subject to copyright to be reproduced and distributed in accessible formats such as Braille, large print or audio editions, without requiring the copyright holder’s permission. The World Federation of the Deaf can point to the fact that sign language is used and supported in a growing number of countries. Women with disabilities have resolutely pressed for the adoption of the Istanbul Convention, which prohibits violence against women.

The International Disability Alliance has also achieved a great deal. Today, it is the most important contact for the United Nations and its agencies, such as the World Health Organization, UNESCO, etc., in the field of support for people with disabilities. It has also managed to shed its reputation as primarily representing organisations of people with disabilities from the Global North, and has played a significant role in helping many African organisations to come together to form the African Disability Forum (ADF). Its main focus today is the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. While the precursor of this sweeping political programme, the Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015), failed to so much as mention the concerns of people with disabilities, the International Disability Alliance has succeeded in convincing the UN member states to expressly refer to the problems faced by people with disabilities in several Sustainable Development Goals.

## Speech

# *The CRPD Committee: a critical voice and driving force*

### Summary by Theresia Degener, Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

This speech will cover three topics: firstly, the first decade of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from 2006 to 2016; secondly, stakeholders on the international stage who are involved in the implementation of the CRPD; and thirdly, the work and role of the Geneva-based UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The first decade of the CRPD has shown that it has not only changed international disability policies, but transformed international law as a whole: the worldwide strengthening of national human rights monitoring, the reinforcement of the human rights-based approach to development policy and humanitarian affairs, and the shift away from the medical model of disability and towards a human rights-based model are just few of the key developments in this context. Remarkably, we are close to achieving universal ratification of this human rights convention. In September 2016, at the celebrations marking the tenth anniversary of the CRPD at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, it was announced that just 37 countries had not yet ratified it. In December 2017, just 15 UN members had not yet done so.

The number of stakeholders engaging with the CRPD at international level has increased. The UN CRPD Committee in Geneva, the Conference of States Parties in New York, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council have now been joined by the office of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, the office of the Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility and the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism. The first ten years of the CRPD have seen the establishment of a large number of bodies, rapporteurs and associations which deal with the Convention's implementation. This means, above all, that the issue of human rights and disability has become visible and taken shape within the United Nations.



The meeting time of the CRPD Committee in Geneva has been extended from two to eight and a half weeks per year due to the high ratification rate and the heavy workload resulting from this. In addition to examining the reports submitted by the States Parties, the Committee can create jurisprudence by formulating General Comments. Although they are not directly binding, these comments on individual articles or specific themes are highly respected. To date, the Committee has adopted five General Comments on the subjects of equal recognition before the law, accessibility, women with disabilities, inclusive education and independent living. In 2015, the Committee also adopted guidelines on the right to liberty within the meaning of Article 14 of the CRPD. In all of these documents, the Committee has reinforced the shift away from the medical model of disability and developed the human rights-based model. By the end of 2017, around 60 reports submitted by the States Parties had been examined. In the dialogues which the Committee conducts with representatives of

the States Parties, it is the issues that already played a major role in the negotiations on the Convention which are now proving to be major challenges: legal capacity and involuntary measures, institutionalisation and segregation, and gender equality.

By the end of 2017, the Committee had taken decisions on about 15 of the large number of individual communications it has received. These include cases where people with disabilities were denied the right to vote because they had been placed under guardianship, where blind people were prevented from using bank machines, or where defendants with disabilities were denied due process of law.



If we take a bird's eye view of the CRPD Committee as part of the United Nations, it is clear that there have already been major achievements in relation to accessibility, but at the same time inconsistencies are emerging. Not all of the specialised committees which are part of the UN human rights system follow the CRPD Committee's jurisprudence, and at the regional level of the Council of Europe, too, backward-looking tendencies are emerging when it comes to setting standards. This applies in particular to the topic of involuntary measures in the context of medical treatment.

In conclusion, it can be said that disability as a human rights issue has become internationally visible; and at the regulatory level, there has been a shift from the medical to the human rights model of disability. But the major question for the CRPD's second decade will be whether the established rhetoric on human rights also leads to a human rights strategy which has an impact at national level and brings about concrete changes in the law and policies at national level.

## Introductory statement

# *Peer support in the framework of rehabilitation benefits under Book IX of the Social Code*

**Summary by Dr Friedrich Mehrhoff, Rehabilitation Strategies Unit, Deutsche Gesetzliche Unfallversicherung (German Statutory Accident Insurance)**

The short film about the Peers in Hospital pilot project at the Berlin trauma centre, and specifically the topic of “Amputees Helping Amputees”, is part of the statutory accident insurance system’s Action Plan 2.0 on Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2015-2017), which consistently promotes peer involvement. The first Action Plan (2012-2014) already stated that the statutory accident insurance system facilitates the provision of support to people with disabilities by people with disabilities (peer principle) – in the framework of both in-patient and out-patient treatment of people covered by accident insurance and throughout the entire rehabilitation process, in partnership with organisations of people with disabilities.



One initiative has been the creation of a “Peer Map”. All statutory accident insurance institutions have, in recent years, worked to identify peers among the persons they insure, and have added suitable individuals to a Peer Map of Germany, which is available in electronic form to all statutory accident insurance institutions. Now, in 2017, more than 200 people can be found on it for different injuries and at different locations. The peers supplement the accident insurance institutions’ rehabilitation management in complex cases; the institutions have

around 3000 rehabilitation managers who follow formalised procedures to help people who have experienced serious accidents and support them in the process of returning to work and re-entering the community.

Peers have their travel expenses reimbursed in line with the Federal Travel Expenses Act for their meetings with people who have experienced a similar injury or illness; an allowance of 65 euros plus compensation for loss of earnings is in line with the rules for the members of the board of governors (social partners) of the statutory accident insurance system. To “register” as a peer, individuals must firstly be interested in serving as a peer. In addition, individuals must have come to terms with their own injury/illness so that they can serve as a role model. Peers must also be emotionally resilient, open in their interactions with other people, and good listeners. They are generally not required to have undergone training. That said, in 2017 peers were offered an opportunity to engage in an exchange of experience; uptake was very high and it was found to be helpful.





Peers do not provide legal or medical advice; nor do they provide advice on products (assistive devices). Peers are also not a replacement for professional psychological counselling for insured persons. Instead, peers offer encouragement by talking about how they came to terms with their own injury/illness, and by pointing out ways in which living and working conditions can be changed. The sole aim is to support the inclusion of other people with disabilities and make positive resources available. Peers and those they are supporting are not required to limit their discussions to the subject of disability. Topics can include health, work, family and finances. Peers sign a confidentiality agreement, and individuals who want to receive peer support sign a consent form. The peers are themselves covered by accident insurance.



## Input

### *Voices of Individuals: Collectively Exploring Self-determination (VOICES)*

**Abstract by Clíona de Bhailís, Centre for Disability Law & Policy, National University of Ireland, Galway, Ireland**

The Voices of Individuals: Collectively Exploring Self-determination (VOICES) project aims to change the law in relation to the right to legal capacity for people with disabilities. The right to legal capacity is covered by Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and includes both the ability to be a holder of rights and an actor in law. The project takes an innovative approach to legal capacity law reform by publishing the stories of those with lived experience of disability and pairing them with legal or social sciences scholars to develop grounded ideas for legal reform in line with the CRPD. The VOICES project is global in scope with participants from 11 countries including Ireland, the United Kingdom, Kenya, Australia, Germany, Canada, Bulgaria, India, Sweden, Czech Republic and China.



After the project's first workshop in April 2016, 16 storytellers and 16 respondents were selected and paired up to work together in the project. These pairs have worked together to co-author a story and response piece for inclusion in a book at the end of the project in one of four areas – criminal responsibility, contractual capacity, consent to medical treatment and relationships and consent to sex. While working together the pairs will also attend a thematic workshop in their chosen thematic area. The project plans to hold its concluding conference and book launch in October 2018.

# Closing statement

**Gabriele Lösekrug-Möller**

**Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs**

Ladies and gentlemen, dear guests,

We have reached the end of two exciting days with a packed programme. 50 interpreters, 25 hostesses and hosts, more than 100 international guests who have shared with us their examples of good practice in the implementation of the CRPD, and, last but not least, all of you, who have listened to and participated in the discussions yesterday and today – all of this testifies to the fact that the international Inclusion Days have been a special kind of event. It has been an event which has posed many challenges for us as organisers, particularly with regard to accessible communication. But it has also shown that it can be done – you just have to do it!

Over the past two days, we have been able to do a great deal together to expand our horizons. From Israel's "Supportive Housing" programme, to the reform of Irish guardianship law, to projects from Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Indonesia to tackle the multiple discrimination faced by women: we have received a

great deal of important input which we should now use to make progress in the further implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, including in the areas where there is room for improvement.

This year, at the Tenth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD in New York and in many bilateral discussions with government representatives, people with disabilities, human rights institutions and service providers, I have had the opportunity to learn what is happening in other countries with regard to the CRPD's implementation. I am thinking, for example, of a new disability insurance scheme introduced in Australia with individual support packages tailored to people's direct needs. Or a study conducted in Portugal on the subject of teachers with disabilities, who have a very positive influence on their pupils and their perspective on disability and inclusion. Or encouraging projects in Israel on the use of Easy Read and sign language.

However, as I listened to the many reports from other countries on their experiences, it was also clear to me that difficulties are still common in the concrete implementation of legislative projects, for example with regard to the long-term financing of certain initiatives. These are problems with which we in Germany are also very familiar. But I also found that there is great interest in other countries in engaging in a further intensive bilateral dialogue with Germany. For the progress Germany is making with regard to the inclusion and participation of people with disabilities is attracting international attention. By that, I do not mean that everything is perfect and we have achieved every aim. But we are dynamic, we are moving forward, and we are making steady progress. Let's continue to use this momentum in future to make Germany even more inclusive!

What specific areas should we address in this context? Three issues are particularly important to me:

Firstly, accessible communication, particularly in relation to people with cognitive impairments and people who are deaf. In other words, this is about "Easy Read" and sign language. Although we have created the initial framework in this area by revising the legislation on equal opportunities for people with disabilities, we must



now implement the individual measures step by step and in a structured manner in order to ensure inclusive and accessible communication for and with all people with disabilities.



The second key point is about protecting people with disabilities against violence. This was already a focus of the UN Committee's concluding observations on its examination of Germany's initial report in 2015, particularly with regard to women and girls with disabilities, who are recognised as a vulnerable group by the CRPD. The Federal Government has therefore ensured that the National Action Plan 2.0 provides for discussions between the Federation and the *Länder*, or federal states, on protecting people with disabilities against violence. These discussions will focus, above all,

on whether the current legal and financial framework at federal, *Land* and municipal level already meets the requirements for a comprehensive and effective strategy to provide protection against violence – and what improvements we still need to make in this area. The same applies to the establishment of independent authorities with a human rights mandate and the independence of complaint mechanisms inside institutions. The UN Committee's recommendations emphasised the importance it attaches to these points.

The third point relates to the sensitive area of personal rights. In concrete terms, I am referring to the avoidance of involuntary placement or treatment and the rights of people with mental impairments. I would be very pleased if we could make further progress in this area during this electoral term, for example through the findings of the Federal Government's ongoing research project on the avoidance of involuntary measures in the psychiatric services system.

All of these are issues which you could potentially focus on again at the next Inclusion Days. You will have the opportunity to continue discussing other countries' experiences, including specifically with regard to these issues, which were presented to us yesterday and today. Perhaps there will also be a special focus on the UN Committee's examination of Germany's second State Party report, which is due to take place in late 2018/early 2019.

Personally – and perhaps you feel the same way – I enjoy looking back not just on this year's event, but also those held in recent years: on the many interesting reports, the discussions – which are lively, and at times heated, but on the whole always fair – and the large number of interesting encounters with government and civil-society stakeholders, going far beyond the so-called "disability scene". And over the years, this event format has not only proved its worth; it has also reinvented itself each year with different topics – while at the same time offering a living example of participation within the meaning of the UN Convention!

I would be delighted if this remained true in future, and I hope that it will.

Many thanks to you all for being here for the Inclusion Days 2017.

Thank you!



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