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DISCIT Final Report - Executive Summary

The FP7 project DISCIT provides new knowledge about the diversity in disability policy in European countries and emerging possibilities for policy learning and innovation across Europe. This knowledge shows what steps policymakers and stakeholders need to take to enable persons with disabilities to exercise Active Citizenship and participate fully in society on an equal basis with others.

In DISCIT, 10 organisations (six universities, two research institutes and two Civil Society Organisations) from 10 different countries (Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and UK) worked intensively together over a period of three years (February 2013 – January 2016). Through the involvement of the European Disability Forum (EDF, Belgium) as one of the Consortium Members, an International Scientific Advisory Committee, a European Stakeholder Committee and National Stakeholder Committees, the DISCIT team was able to involve civil society and policy makers during the lifetime of the project.

When examining how policymakers and stakeholders discuss disability policy and put it into practice, DISCIT has taken into account the different levels of governance involved and their interrelationships: first, international policy and law (notably the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities); second, regional policy and law (EU legislation, strategies, Social Fund grants, etc.); third, national policies (policy and law on cash transfer, services delivery and social regulation); and finally, subnational/local policies (systems of provisions and regulations). A major issue has been whether the decision-makers succeed in coordinating actions taken at these different levels of disability policy governance and make these actions mutually supporting.

DISCIT collected and analysed data in three steps: First, the team started by synthesising policy documents and existing statistics and findings from earlier research. The purpose of this step, which the team mainly carried out in 2013, was to map and analyse the overall structures of national policy systems and developments in the situation of persons with disabilities over time. Second, during 2014, the team conducted 217 life course interviews with an almost equal number of women and men, with four main types of disabilities, from three birth cohorts (born

around 1950, 1970 and 1990) and in nine countries (Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and UK). The interviews provided new knowledge about the experiences and perceptions of persons with disabilities, and change and continuity within and across countries. Third and finally, in 2015, the team conducted 85 interviews with other informants (experts) in the nine countries to assess the actual development in disability policy and the degree of coordination between levels of policy governance in practice.

All this work led to eight Policy Briefs in different European languages, 60 varying dissemination activities (including conferences, press releases and videos) and 25 scientific Deliverables, of which DISCIT has published 22 as working papers on its websites. The international publisher Routledge has agreed to publish the two main joint scientific publications from DISCIT - two edited volumes - by the end of 2016 or early 2017. Furthermore, four colleagues involved in DISCIT are currently working with their doctoral theses partly based on DISCIT findings. By 2017, DISCIT Consortium Members will have published at least 10 peer-reviewed scientific articles.

For further information, please contact:

Bjørn Hvinden, Scientific Coordinator DISCIT, bjorn.hvinden@nova.hioa.no, or
Bettina Uhrig, Project Manager DISCIT, bettina.uhrig@nova.hioa.no

DISCIT - <http://discit.eu> and <https://blogg.hioa.no/discit>

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