

COSP-15, Round Table 2; Economic empowerment and entrepreneurship of persons with disabilities

Ms. president!

My name is Henrik Gustafsson and I am a member of the Finnish delegation. I work as a lawyer at Finnish Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities (as known as FPD) and I am a board member of Finnish Disability Forum and a board member of Abilis Foundation.

My work has a human rights touch and basic ground in the UN CRPD. It requires a lot from State parties and other actors to ensure right to earn a living by work on an equal basis with others. According to UN CRPD article 27 we need individual services and assistive devices and transportation and support like reasonable accommodations to support entrepreneurship of persons with disabilities.

The FPD has in 2016-2018 coordinated an entrepreneurship project 2016-2018 which aimed to foster entrepreneurship among persons with disabilities. The project also published a Guide for a Disabled Person to Become Entrepreneur. One result of this project was an establishment of new NGO of Finnish disabled entrepreneurs. We consider this project a good practice.

The FPD has conducted a survey together with the national Social Insurance Institution (as known as Kela) among disabled entrepreneurs to get more information about which kind of living conditions and support and individual services they need. In the answers there were concerns of having energy to do their work and try to manage administration and cope with challenges of disabilities for example the lack of support in every day's life. After reading the answers Kela has planned to arrange specific rehabilitation course including peer support for disabled entrepreneurs.

In the Global South we need more funding so that local NGO's and the disabled members can earn a living by work and get incomes by entrepreneurship. European Union and its' member states should fund more grass root projects of local NGO's in the Global South. Persons with disabilities should be fully included these projects and they must be assisted so they can earn their own money in the future. I remind also that disabled women and girls are in vulnerable position and this topic needs an special attention in funding decisions.

Finally, I would like to suggest that the United Nations could arrange an awareness-raising campaign of entrepreneurship of persons with disabilities. According to UN CRPD article 8 key measure is to arrange such campaigns.

Thank you!