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Disability Awareness week at the ECA 2022



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COURT
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Introduction

This year, for the second time, the European Court of Auditors organised a **Disabilities Awareness Week** (November 28 to December 2) around the international day dedicated to people with disabilities. By organising a dedicated week, the ECA aimed to raise awareness and promote **an inclusive ‘can-do’ culture** focusing on what disabled people **can do** in life and at work.

The week was sponsored by ECA Member Marek Opioła, who took on the role of the ECA’s first Disabilities Ambassador. This role, as described in the [ECA's D&I Policy and Action Plan \(2021-2025\)](#), includes proposing and sponsoring actions, hosting events,



bringing knowledge to the ECA through partnerships, publishing articles, and more. Mr Opioła has expressed great interest in the subject of disabilities at the ECA since he joined the Court. He has warmly welcomed and supported our initiatives, and we have worked closely together and exchanged views on the subject of disabilities at the ECA.

During the ECA’s Disabilities Awareness Week, a series of webinars, workshops and events took place, all of which were open to all EU institutions and agencies. We are firmly convinced that sharing experience and knowledge is an important step towards creating a fair and inclusive future for all of us, and we are thankful to the staff from other EU institutions who accepted our invitation to participate in our onsite and online events.

In addition, an onsite exhibition dedicated to people with disabilities, entitled **“Photo Confrontation”**, was hosted at the ECA. The exhibition is part of the [European Film Festival “Integration you and me”](#), which has been held in Koszalin, Poland, since 2003.

Lastly, on 2 December, to mark the occasion of the [International Day of People with Disabilities](#) on 3 December, we published [a tweet](#) to demonstrate the ECA’s strong commitment to promoting an inclusive workplace for people with disabilities.

The Agenda for Disability Awareness Week 2022

28 November – 2 December

Monday, 28 November

Disability Awareness Week 2022 – Opening event

- o Speaker: Polish Minister Paweł Wdówik, Secretary of State and [Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People](#)



For the opening event of Disability Week, ECA Member Marek Opiola, ECA HR Director Veronica Ardelean, and ECA D&I officer Olga Ioannidou welcomed guest speaker Polish Minister Paweł Wdówik, Secretary of State and Government Plenipotentiary for Disabled People.



Mr Wdówik, a person who has a disability himself, described the situation regarding people with disabilities in national and European administrations, as well as the EU's policy and future prospects for this area.

The presentation was followed by a very interesting Q&A exchange in hybrid mode.

Pictures – Disability Awareness Week 2022 – Opening event.

Source: @ECA

Tuesday, 29 November

EPSO presentation: “Disability & reasonable accommodations in EPSO’s selection procedures”

- Speaker: Carine De Baets, EPSO



Carine De Baets works at EPSO, where she is a member of the Diversity & Inclusion team. As a carer for two children with a disability, she has practical experience regarding the provision of reasonable accommodation. While working at the Council in previous years, she used her personal experience to create a procedure for requesting reasonable accommodation, instigated their very successful Positive Action Programme for Trainees with a Disability, and saw through the introduction of digital accessibility.

Picture – Carine De Baets

Ms De Baets’ presentation took place online, and focused on EPSO’s actions to ensure equal opportunities in its selection procedures for candidates with disabilities or medical conditions. The way EPSO defines reasonable accommodations, the procedures for candidates to request reasonable accommodation adjustments in the selection tests, and the types of accommodations possible were just some of the topics covered in the presentation. Many staff from different institutions, agencies and bodies attended the event, and exchanged views with the speaker at the end of the presentation.

Wednesday, 30 November (morning)

“What doesn't kill you makes you a warrior”: dealing with disability and war memories through art

- Speakers: Lance Corporal Grzegorz Rankan, and Master Corporal Tomasz Rożniatowski – Polish veterans from Afghanistan

Mr Opióła welcomed two Polish veterans from Afghanistan – Lance Corporal Grzegorz Rankan, who suffered from PTSD, and Master Corporal Tomasz Rożniatowski, who lost an arm during his tour of duty. Despite their ordeals, both soldiers are still on active military duty.



The soldiers talked about their experiences, how they and their families cope with their disabilities, and how they found comfort in different types of art – one in painting, the other in martial arts. They also shared their thoughts on how to face sudden visible or hidden disabilities that affect either our loved ones or ourselves. The event took place at the ECA in hybrid mode with the assistance of three Polish interpreters. From the European Commission in Brussels. For online interpretation, the ECA's IT team used INTERACTIO, a recently introduced tool at the ECA.



Pictures – Polish veterans from Afghanistan and ECA Member Mr Opióła.

Source: @ECA

Wednesday, 30 November (afternoon)

Webinar on Disability Mainstreaming

- Speaker: Katrien van der Heyden, EIPA

In this webinar, Katrien van der Heyden from EIPA talked about disability often being invisible in society or stereotyped into frames that prevent people with a disability from developing their full potential. The EU can play – and needs to play – an important role in making our societies more inclusive. The presentation provided insights into what disability is about and what role the EU can play. It also showed how disability can be mainstreamed into existing policies.

In this basic introduction to the subject, participants from different EU bodies had an opportunity to learn about basic concepts and the EU institutions' role in disability mainstreaming, and to become familiar with the EU's strategy for people with disabilities.

Thursday, 1 December (morning)

Luxembourg wins 2022 Access City Award

- o Speaker: Corinne Cahen, [Luxembourg's Minister for Family Affairs and Integration and Minister for the Greater Region](#)

Luxembourg City won the **2022 Access City Award** for its efforts to become more accessible for people with disabilities. The European Commission selects the award winner each year from among cities with more than 50 000 inhabitants that submit their actions and strategies to become barrier-free cities and improve the well-being of everyone who lives and works there. Corinne



Cahen, Luxembourg's Minister for Family Affairs and Integration and Minister for the Greater Region, came to the ECA to present a hybrid event on Luxembourg City's "Design for all" approach, which is aimed at making the urban environment more accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities. ECA Member Joëlle Elvinger, together with ECA Secretary-General Zacharias Kolias, welcomed Ms Cahen to the ECA.



Picture – Event: Luxembourg wins 2022 Access City Award.

Source: @ECA

Thursday, 1 December (afternoon)**Disability Equality workshop**

- Camelia Gheorghies, ECA trained facilitator for PwD

Camelia Gheorghies works as a translator at the ECA, and has been trained as a Disabilities facilitator at the International Training Center of the ILO. The workshop she gave on site was an awareness-raising exercise. It was based on a dynamic, participatory and interactive approach, consisting of group work exercises, enacting scenarios, games, and discussions. The main aim of the workshop was to persuade people to change their attitudes and practices with a view to ensuring greater inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream services and activities.

Friday, 2 December

**Presentation of the “Confrontation” photo exhibition at the European Film Festival
“Integration you and me”**

- Speaker: photographer Wojtek Szwej from the European Film Festival
“Integration you and me”



The photographer Wojtek Szwej came from Poland to present the “Photo-confrontations: One moment” exhibition, which was on display at the ECA during the month of December and was dedicated to people with disabilities. The exhibition is part of the [European Film Festival “Integration you and me”](#), which has been held in Koszalin, Poland, since 2003.

Wojtek Szwej: “Photo confrontations is a challenge for all the photographers who participate. During the photography sessions, artists collaborate with models to capture photographs both in studio and outdoors. The results show just how differently one can interpret the theme of disability through images in a way that is creative, bold and artistic! Each of these photographs tells a separate tale, but together they create a story about beautiful, strong and inspiring people.”





Picture – Photographer Wojtek Szwej, and ECA D&I officer Olga Ioannidou.

Event: Presentation of the “Confrontation” photo exhibition.

Source: @ECA

projects

inclusive

ECA

awareness

positive action

integration

ability

potential

enable

objective

barrier-free

accessibility

people

arts

can do culture

design for all

diversity

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