

Press Release



Non-discrimination of persons with disabilities in disaster situations - new ISL project

Berlin, 23rd of February 2024: The organisation of persons with disabilities "Selbstbestimmt Leben in Deutschland e.V. (ISL)" ("Independent Living in Germany") is starting 2024 with a new project called "Non-discrimination of disabled people in dangerous situations and humanitarian emergencies". The project is being financed by the Participation Fund for three years.

Wars, climate change and disasters: The 21st century presents mankind with profound challenges. And for persons with disabilities in particular, they pose an existential threat. This is why Article 11 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (short: UN CRPD) stipulates that "States Parties shall, in accordance with their obligations under international law (...), take all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of danger (...)."

Despite this human rights requirement, inclusive disaster management is still in its infancy, especially in Germany, where it is non-existent. Current impressive examples include the handling of disabled people during the coronavirus pandemic and the flood disaster in the Ahr valley, which left twelve disabled people dead in one facility.

"With this project, we want to inform persons with disabilities about exactly what they can do in the event of a disaster and how they can prepare for it. We also use the exchange with international institutions and self-advocacy organisations ('OPD') to adapt best practice examples for people with disabilities in Germany," explains Maria-Victoria Trümper, who is responsible for the project.

"The brand-new 'Concluding Observations' of the State Review of Germany 2023 clearly emphasise the lack of an all-encompassing, inclusive and human rights-based strategy for disaster risk reduction. The Geneva Committee of Experts on the Implementation of the UN CRPD therefore recommends, among other things, a national emergency plan, which should be drawn up in significant, active cooperation with and through consultations with people with disabilities," Trümper continues.

Due to the urgency of inclusive civil protection, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is drafting the next "General Comments" on Article 11 of the UN CRPD. They will serve to explain individual articles and guiding concepts of

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human rights conventions in more concrete terms and also make them more accessible for national courts and administrations.

Trümper further emphasises: "Guidelines and recommendations for action on inclusive disaster prevention have long been available und implemented internationally. Two examples are the 'Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction' and the 'IASC Guidelines'. Looking at Germany, one wonders why a) these catalogues of measures have not yet been implemented here and b) there is no information available for persons with disabilities that includes them? The Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance ('BBK') has issued a behavioural recommendation. However, it only states that disabled people should turn to helpers in the event of a disaster. This cements the classic deficit thinking about disabled people and minimises them as objects of help. This suggests that they were not included in the preparation, let alone considered."

The "Interessenvertretung Selbstbestimmtes Leben in Deutschland e.V. (ISL)" is a human rights-oriented self-representation organisation and the umbrella organisation of the centres for self-determined living for persons with disabilities in Germany. It was founded along the lines of the US "Independent Living Movement" in order to assert the self-determination of disabled people in Germany as well.

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