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**European Disability Forum
on behalf of
Austrian National Council of Persons with Disabilities**

Human Rights Council, seventeenth session

**Item 6, Consideration of UPR Outcomes
Austria**

June 7, 2011

Thank you, Excellency.

The Austrian National Council of Persons with Disabilities, which has 78 member organizations, is, through the European Disability Forum, a member of the International Disability Alliance. The Council also associates itself with the statement made by the Initiative Human Rights Now made by the previous speaker.

Austria ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008 and has committed itself to the principles and rights enshrined therein. The paradigm shift as stipulated in the CRPD has largely not been realized in Austria. Importantly, the principles of accessibility and inclusion are not recognized as cross cutting issues. Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the area of education and work is not ensured. Moreover, measures to realize independent living are lacking. In order to realize comprehensive participation in society, it is necessary that inclusion of persons with disabilities and their representative organizations in all measures, which affect them, is guaranteed from the outset.

At present, participation in this form is not sufficiently guaranteed in Austria. The change of paradigm from exclusion to inclusion is hardly visible in Austria. Public campaigns, which do not discriminate or exclude persons with disabilities in public discourse, are lacking. The depiction of persons with disabilities in the media has to be changed – away from pity, and towards self-determination and inclusion. Moreover, disability in Austria is still rather defined through the medical instead of the social model.

Austria lacks a national policy to establish comprehensive accessibility. Numerous barriers exist, which prevent persons with disabilities from equal and independent participation in many areas of life. There are only individual measures towards improvement of accessibility. The Austrian education system is not inclusive and does not support persons with disabilities. Separation and a low level of inclusion with necessary support also describe the employment situation of persons with disabilities. Finally, persons with disabilities face an above average risk of living in poverty of 18%, with women of working age being most affected by manifest poverty. The main reasons for this are lack of, or low quality of education and subsequent effects on job opportunities.

The Austrian National Council of Persons with Disabilities acknowledges that the Austrian government has now committed itself to developing a National Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities. It is a welcome move. A main challenge in creating the National Action Plan is ensuring participation in line with the CRPD's obligation. Another main challenge is ensuring that the National Action Plan will address the need for changes of perception throughout mainstream society rather than "just" focusing on persons with disabilities. In this vein it is the National Council's hope that the UPR recommendations will also be interpreted through the prism of inclusion and accessibility to ensure better implementation of the human rights of persons with disabilities.

Thank you.

