



Increasing and improving the portrayal of people with disabilities in the media

Country: Spain

Organisation: Fundación ONCE - www.mediaanddisability.org

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Partners involved: ABM (Germany), CND (Italy), MEOSZ (Hungary), HSO (Sweden), TV-GLAD (Denmark), EACA (Belgium), RNIB (United Kingdom), Servimedia (Spain), NSIOS (Slovenia), Integracja (Poland)

Target Group: Mainstream media organisations, disability NGOs

Programme Description:

In 2003 the European conference on media and disability highlighted the need to change the way people with disabilities are portrayed by the mainstream media. It became clear that there was a lack of relevant data on the topic that also needed to be addressed.

The project, coordinated by Fundación ONCE, in 2006 and 2007 in partnership with twelve organisations originating from nine different countries sought to establish cooperation, mainly at a national level, between mainstream media and disability organisations in order to initiate a process to change the under representation of people with disabilities in media and promote an accurate portrayal of people with disabilities; it included a wide range of activities. In all the countries that took part (Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom) media training was given to disability NGO personnel dealing with issues of diversity. Among other activities, this included different seminars at national and European level for disabled people organisations and media to build mutual knowledge and understanding. Promotion of employment has been one of the key recommendations in order to have a sustainable impact, however this has to be seen as a mid term objective.

The project produced a Guide on Media and Disability produced by the Broadcasting Creative Industries Disability Network based in London and a training tool for disability NGOs. Both are available on the project website.

An understanding of how the media work and how to promote diversity effectively was a first step towards changing attitudes held about people with disabilities.

Challenge: Low expectations of what people with disabilities can do and not thinking of the possibility that people with disabilities can become media professionals.

Solution:

- Implementing employment practices with the input of people with disabilities.
- Through constructive dialogue media employers learn that it is possible to have a disabled member of staff. It also builds the confidence of people with disabilities to apply for jobs that were previously closed to them because of their disability.
- Have disability organisations who understand how to present each case and how media work in order to establish a fruitful and long lasting relationship.

"The work on monitoring media is an area which has come out as a need and demand both from the media and from disability organisations." Leonor Lidón Heras, Fundación ONCE

"Sometimes, maybe the exclusion of people with disabilities is not so much a lack of good will but rather a lack of knowledge and imagination." ABM, national partner in Germany