

## Conference abstract

# Defining disability – Re-defining policy

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** In 2002, an EC study reported that different European countries define disability differently, and this is one of the primary reasons why no common Europe-wide policies on disability exist. The EU-MHADIE project was funded with the aim of producing recommendations and guidelines for future common disability policies. The WHO's ICF classification and its bio-psycho-social model of disability was the theoretical reference to ground existing and survey data on.

**Description of care and policy practice:** MHADIE project demonstrated the feasibility and utility of the ICF, as a model of disability and functioning, for the harmonisation of data across populations and sectors in Europe, and for the development of realistic, evidence-based and effective social policies for persons with disabilities that will achieve equality of opportunities and full participation, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

**Discussion:** Disability is an ever-changing experience, and so data that recognize its dynamic nature must be gathered, through longitudinal studies that use a consistent definition of disability. The research performed within MHADIE has demonstrated the feasibility, utility and value of ICF classification and model in harmonising data across populations and sectors in Europe. MHADIE researchers have demonstrated that it is possible to develop realistic, evidence-based and effective social policies for persons with disabilities and that it is essential to share the same disability definition. By providing a common framework for defining and measuring functioning and disability, MHADIE's results help to improve the accuracy and comparability estimates of prevalence of impairments and disability Europe-wide. MHADIE results show, among other, that family and transportation policies are key factors for all persons with disabilities, and dedicated European policies are needed to improve and emphasize their role.

**Conclusions:** A definition of disability underlying ICF's principles was produced, together with policy recommendation divided into statistical, clinical and education sections that have been presented at the European Parliament and are available at <http://www.mhadie.it>.

## Keywords

**ICF classification, disability, UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

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Presentation slides available from:

[http://www.bridgingknowledge.net/Presentations/Symp1\\_Leonardi.pdf](http://www.bridgingknowledge.net/Presentations/Symp1_Leonardi.pdf)