

DISABILITY RIGHTS DEFENDERS

know your rights, use them

Narrative Report 'Disability Rights Defenders'/ 'IL Nordic Network' September 2020 – June 2021

Disability Rights Defenders (DRD) / 'IL Nordic Network' is a project of Independent Living Institute (ILI)¹. This report summarizes the activities, results and outcome of DRD from September 2020 to June 2021.

The goal of DRD is to spread and deepen legal expertise to defend disabled people's rights and to empower disabled people and their organizations to take cases to court. DRD is strengthening the network of individuals and organizations with an interest in disability rights and disability laws. The members of the network share their expertise, advice, experiences and methods in the closed Facebook group. Content and resources from the discussion on Facebook are summarized in a newsletter during the year. Furthermore, webinars open to anyone are offered on how to use the law as a tool for social change.

The main result of the DRD after having established the network is the further development of the network and reaching out to more and more countries making the network a world network. Spreading knowledge and expertise within the network is high on the agenda. The number of members continues to grow. The network counts a total of over 2.300 members from over 100 countries at the end of June 2021. The main activity, besides the direct exchange of knowledge in the FB group, was the organisation and realization of webinars and network meeting. During the year DRD held a Nordic Network meeting with over to 40 participants. Through the medium of Facebook posts were made by members of the network. In the November newsletter we shared news and resources on disability rights. The number of subscribers when this report is written is 568 subscribers which is showing a gradual increase of subscribers.

During the year many people were involved in the work of DRD. A strategic planning committee exists consisting of Jamie Bolling (Independent Living Institute), Adolf Ratzka (Independent Living Institute) and Vibeke Melroy Melström (ULOBA). Selina Griesser who has been the project leader of DRD is on maternity leave so others in ILI are assuming the work, mainly Jamie Bolling. Adolf Ratzka supports the project in the position of an advisor and co-editor of the newsletter. Linda Robertsson is in charge of the administration and economy and Philip Day works with the communication technical issues. Ola Linder advised the project members concerning legal questions.

¹ ILI is a Swedish foundation and policy development center specializing in consumer-driven policies for disabled peoples' self-determination, self-respect and dignity. It is based in Stockholm and works to promote opportunities for disabled people for more personal and political power, full participation and equality through information, education, lobby and project activities.

DRD carried out the activities as planned in the annual plan. Here below is a more specific description of the work carried out.

Facebook group

The closed facebook group '[Disability Rights Defenders \(The Law as a Tool\)](#)' connects people from all over the world with an interest in disability rights. The members have very different backgrounds - from being disabled themselves, or having a family member with disabilities to law professors on disability rights and human rights activists. In the group they share their knowledge, questions and advise as well as news and resources on disability rights. The administrators of the group were moderating the discussions, deleting inappropriate post and checking membership requests.

Newsletter

The content of the facebook group was summarized in our newsletter. The newsletter was sent out in November 2020 sharing cases and court decisions, ressources, news and announcements, job offers, funding possibilities and informed about opportunities to participate in conferences and evaluations. There is a newsletter in the pipeline having been worked on with the plan to publish in November 2021. Newsletters are published on [ILL's website](#).

Webinars

A webinar was held in cooperation with ENIL, the European Network on Independent Living on Legal Remedies on November 17 2020. This was based on the survey conducted in 2019 which is described below. The report on this event can be found at this link <https://www.independentliving.org/drd/webinar-2020-11> . The recording of this event is at this link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WElyTwDSSyI> .Other webinars are being planned for the fall of 2021 where DRD will participate in the ENIL Freedom Surf to take place in September.

Webinar Guide

We continuously improved the process of organizing the webinars and increased the number of participants with every webinar. Based on our experiences and findings we developed a [guide on how to plan, organize and hold webinars](#). Due to the Corona pandemic many organisations were forced to shift their activities to online platforms like Zoom and the guide aims to provide support for these organisations. It contains a timeline including all necessary steps to plan and hold a webinar. Different icons mark concrete tips and examples, steps where we recommend to pay attention and tips for more accessibility. The guide was shared with the network on facebook and on the ILL website.

Survey on Remedies

DRD conducted a survey on remedies in cooperation with the project '[Article 19 as a tool](#)' and published the [results in a short report](#) on the website. This report analyses and summarizes the results of a questionnaire on remedies. The questionnaire was shared through the Facebook group and the newsletter lists of both projects. Further, it was sent to different stakeholders and lawyers mostly situated in Europe. There is a need for deeper discussions

on tools for strategic litigation, including effectiveness of legal and injunctive remedies, different forms of compensation for violations of human rights and procedural strategies for impact, as important tools to fight against violations of disability rights. Thereby, every law system and country has different ways and possibilities to redress violations. The report is based on a survey conducted with the aim to gain an overview of the topic of remedies, to see where and what law systems in general are lacking or which remedies can be transferred from one country to another for better effectiveness in using the law as a tool for social change and individual justice.

Nordic Network meeting

A meeting was held on November 5th with representation of leaders of Independent Living from 9 northern countries. The 40 leaders discussed ways of advancing Independent living within the northern European countries. A report is at this link: <https://www.independentliving.org/drd/kick-off-2020-11> . The recording can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=durQV1Ho3fM>

Website

DRD has so far published all its outcomes, reports and newsletters on the ILI website. As there are limited possibilities concerning the structure and design we decided to create our own website. With disabilityrightsdefenders.org we have our own domain where we set up a page with wordpress. On the website we publish information about the DRD network and share our activities like newsletters and webinar reports. Further there is the possibility to spread resources like articles, reports and funding opportunities. We are planning to include our database on court cases that we have started only offline so far. A searchable database of other networks and organizations will be helpful for the members of the network to find support in their home country or for specific purposes.

Outlook

DRD is looking forward to continuing its work thanks to the support of Bente Skansgårds Independent Living Fund. We will carry on with our well established activities like the facebook group the newsletters and the webinars and focus on strengthening the network in the Nordic countries.

DRDS

Disability Rights Defenders Sweden was started during the ILI project Using the law as a tool. The organisation is led by Susanne Berg who has been the chair for the past three years. Court cases are driven in the spirit of IL and for change in the Swedish system.

DRD within ILI has been cooperating with DRDS in for example the court case on Richard Sellin and his discrimination when seeking a job. Cooperation is on-going for presentations to be held during the ENIL Freedom Surf in September 2021.