



ASSIST NEWSLETTER — ISSUE 4 – DECEMBER 3, 2025

Celebrating Mothers with Disabilities Across Europe – International Day of Persons with Disabilities

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Welcome to the fourth edition of the **ASSIST Project** newsletter, released in celebration of the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**, under the theme: *“Fostering disability-inclusive societies for advancing social progress.”*

In this edition, we focus on the voices of mothers with disabilities across Europe. Motherhood is a profound journey for any woman, but for mothers with disabilities, it comes with unique challenges, barriers, and experiences that are too often overlooked.

As part of the **ASSIST Project**, which advocates for inclusive maternal healthcare, we spoke with mothers from Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Finland, Bulgaria, and Greece to better understand their experiences. Their stories reveal resilience, creativity, and the urgent need for systemic change to ensure that all mothers can thrive.

We also share the latest news and updates from the project, highlighting how ASSIST continues to promote inclusive practices in maternal healthcare.

About the project

The **ASSIST Project** is a three-year project co-funded by the EU under the Erasmus+ Programme, aiming to reduce discrimination and attitudinal biases among

healthcare professionals when treating women with disabilities during motherhood.

The Project will offer training to medical students and healthcare professionals to provide more inclusive and welcoming care, supported by a Digital Ecosystem using a Virtual Learning Environment and 3D simulations. It also promotes advocacy to drive policy change and strengthen NGO capacity, emphasizing positive behaviour and inclusive practices in healthcare. To achieve these objectives, the **ASSIST Project** has brought together a consortium of three

Want to make a difference? Here's how you can contribute!

Subscribe to our newsletter and follow us on social media to stay informed and engaged.

Advocate for the rights of mothers with disabilities by raising awareness and speaking up for equal healthcare access.

Participate in events and discussions organized within the ASSIST Project framework.

Connect with us to explore collaboration opportunities or share valuable insights.

💡 **Every action counts—join us in driving change today!** 💡

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higher education institutions from Italy and Greece, as well as seven organizations from Greece, Belgium, Italy, Norway, and Ireland, focusing on the rights of mothers, persons with disabilities, education, and digital innovation.

[Learn more about the project on our website!](#)

Motherhood and Disability: Voices from Across Europe

December 3: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Challenges of Motherhood with a Disability

Mothers with disabilities face a wide range of challenges, from societal attitudes to physical and sensory barriers.

Societal Prejudice and Misconceptions

Many mothers reported encountering judgment and doubt about their abilities. One mother from Ireland shared:

"I have been challenged daily, for example, suggesting I shouldn't take my children on a train as I couldn't keep them safe. I have also been advised not to travel with them at busy times such as weekends. It is often assumed that I am not their mother..."

Italian mothers described similar experiences: *"Before I became pregnant, they told me that I would never be able to carry a pregnancy to term. When she was born, they told me I wouldn't be able to take care of her. At school, the other mothers, and sometimes even the teachers, considered me a second-class mother."* *"I had social workers. Over time, when I needed a little*

help... often society creates difficulties for simple things, based only on appearances. Society is not yet prepared for motherhood and disability."

Physical, Sensory, and Practical Challenges

Mothers with visual and/or hearing impairments described the practical adaptations needed to safely care for their children. One mother from Slovenia explained:

"As a mother with deafblindness, raising a child is very challenging. It was important to me that my daughter and I were always in contact, that she held my hand so I could keep her safe... Everything must be in its place, you need to know the space you live in very well, and things should not be changed so that accidents or problems don't occur."

Another mother from Bulgaria added:

"When I gave birth, I used technical aids (a vibrating device) so I could follow when the child woke up or cried... When an interpreter did not come, we communicated by writing things on paper so I could read them. Communication would have been a major obstacle if I did not have the right to an interpreter."

These experiences highlight the need for accessible healthcare, assistive technologies, and supportive environments to ensure safe and empowered motherhood for women with disabilities.

Overcoming Barriers and Building Resilience

Despite these challenges, mothers with disabilities demonstrated remarkable resilience, creativity, and problem-solving. They learned to navigate societal barriers while creating loving, safe, and inclusive environments for their children.

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"Despite my visual and hearing impairments, I created a family and I always had the support of my relatives. It also would not have been possible without interpreters and personal assistance. My husband has always been a great help to me, and he still is today." – Bulgaria

"Now I no longer let anyone walk all over me, now I no longer have to prove anything to anyone." – Italy

Mothers creatively adapted daily routines, relied on family or interpreters, and used technology to maintain independence. Many emphasized the role of associations, peer networks, and community support in helping them navigate parenting with a disability.

Needed Support and Systemic Change

Mothers stressed that support needs to be multi-dimensional: emotional, social, practical, and policy-oriented.

Emotional and Social Support

"Being met without prejudice as a person, sufficient services tailored to individual needs, opportunities to study and work, and the ability to influence one's own life." – Greece

Practical and Policy Support

"Maternal healthcare could become more inclusive by providing accessible facilities and equipment, training staff on the needs of women with disabilities, and ensuring that all women receive personalized care without discrimination." – Greece

Healthcare Accessibility

"It would be very helpful to have more sign language interpreters in public institutions, hospitals, and maternity services to make communication easier." – Slovenia

Empowerment Through Recognition

Mothers highlighted the importance of acknowledging their autonomy and capabilities:

"I would suggest to not undermine the value of life experiences and how transferable the skills of being disabled are to being a mother. Time management, advocacy, resilience, decision making, values and beliefs, inclusion, and prioritising." – Ireland

Lessons and Pride

Motherhood has strengthened resilience, nurtured empathy, and taught creative problem-solving. Mothers expressed pride in their ability to balance personal and family life, and in raising children who are more aware, empathetic, and inclusive.

"I truly believe, having a disability has enabled our children to be resilient, independent and incredibly self-aware and aware of the needs of others." – Ireland

"The world needs to know that a mother with a disability needs support, not pity." – Slovenia

"I feel proud to be a woman and a mother with a disability because every day I show myself and my children that difference is not weakness, but strength." – Greece

Message to the World

Mothers emphasized that disability does not define their ability to be nurturing, capable, or loving. With support, accessibility, and understanding, they can fully embrace motherhood and raise children who contribute to a more inclusive society.

"A mother with a disability is a mother like any other, with her own limitations, like others, and with the necessary support, she can do everything like others." – Italy

"Being a mother with a disability does not reduce my ability to love, care for, and raise my child. What is most needed is understanding, respect, and

acceptance—not assumptions or prejudice.” – Slovenia

Through these testimonies, the **ASSIST Project** highlights the urgent need for inclusive maternal healthcare and social structures that empower mothers with disabilities to thrive, while nurturing children who grow up understanding diversity, empathy, and inclusion.

Latest updates on the project

Get Ready for Our Info-Days Across Europe!

We are excited to announce that four Info-Days will be held in our partner countries in the upcoming months – Brussels, Dublin, Athens, and Turin! These events will showcase the project’s courses, traineeship opportunities, and educational resources, while bringing together mothers with disabilities, students, policymakers, and civil society for dialogue and exchange of good practices.

The Info-Days will be hybrid, allowing both in-person and online participation, and will provide a unique opportunity to learn, connect, and share ideas.

Stay tuned for more details, including dates, agendas, and registration information – you won’t want to miss these engaging events!

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