



Statement to the agenda item 5(j) “Action Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health: towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Europe – leaving no one behind (resolution EUR/RC66/R7)” of the 69th World Health Organization Regional Committee for Europe from 16–19 September 2019

The International Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (ISPRM), IAPO, Studiorum, COTEC, WFOT, MWIA (5 others) celebrates the effort of the European regional committee in the development of an Action Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health; however, notes with concern the notorious absence of persons with disabilities as a specific development group. Even if in the resolution EUR/RC66/R7, Member States were urged to implement the Action Plan and reduce the burden of illness in their populations, giving particular attention to vulnerable, disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups, the special approach of the sexual and reproductive health, that persons with disabilities needs, was not considered in the action plan, or at least not explicitly named in the progress report document EUR/RC69/8(D).

Article 25 of the CRPD states that *“States Parties shall provide persons with disabilities with the same range, quality and standard of free or affordable health care and programs as provided to other persons, including in the area of sexual and reproductive health and population- based public health programs”*¹. In 2009, WHO wrote in its report on sexual and reproductive health for persons with disabilities that *“Persons with disabilities have the same sexual and reproductive health needs as other people. Yet they often face barriers to information and services. The ignorance and attitudes of society and individuals, including health-care providers, raise most of these barriers - not the disabilities themselves. Increasing awareness is the first and biggest step”*², but seems that, this reality 10 years later, is not different.

People with disabilities have: special needs to achieve full enjoyment of sexuality, special needs in contraception, childbirth and postnatal care, special needs for access to assisted reproductive technology and, continue to have, huge barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health programs such as cervix or breast cancer detection. We urge the Regional Committee to include people with disabilities as a specific work group and to carry out a European sexual and reproductive health survey that includes people with disabilities. We urge Member States to develop national policies on sexual and reproductive health especially aimed at persons with disability.

¹ Article 25(a). UNEDITED, A. (2015). Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

² Groce, N. E., Izutsu, T., Reier, S., Rinehart, W., & Temple, B. (2009). Promoting sexual and reproductive health for persons with disabilities: WHO/UNFPA guidance note.