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**Launch of Bridging the Gap project in the
presence of the commissioner Neven
Mimica**



The European project Bridging the Gap-Inclusive policies and services for equal rights of persons with disabilities, was launched on December 5th in Brussels in the context of the European Disability and Development Week (EDDW). The event took the form of a high-level meeting in which the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, made the opening speech.

During his speech, the commissioner presented Bridging the Gap as a “groundbreaking project” which will address the common challenges “in finding ways to improve our practices, shift our mind-sets and actions in order to ensure the full rights and participation of all women, men and children with disabilities, in all aspects of daily life”.

The Commissioner was accompanied during the opening remarks by Victoria Wulf Barreiro, Development Cooperation Counsellor of Permanent Representation of Spain to the European Union, Patrick Clarke, Vice-President of the European Disability Forum, Birgit Van Hout, Regional Representative in Europe of the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights and Sofie From Emmesberger, Ambassador of Finland to the EU’s Political and Security Committee.



Launch Event

All speakers highlighted Bridging the Gap's role for the promotion of the rights and of the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities, in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals.

After the opening remarks, the lawyer and disability rights activist Yetnebersh Nigussie, who in September 2017 was awarded the prestigious Right Livelihood Award, introduced the project's main context of reference as well as the main topics of discussion of the day: Inclusive education; Ensuring CRPD compliance in the SDGs through international cooperation; and Gender equality.

The event was attended by nearly 100 people who took part in discussion panels which gathered around the same table experts, decision-makers, representatives and actors of the civil society to discuss about the contribution the European Union and the Bridging the gap project can bring to the current momentum for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in international development, turning political commitments into concrete actions.



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