

A disability definition

Agreeing on a common definition of disability is not an easy task. Several attempts have taken place in the past years, at various levels.

At present, there is no one unique and agreed definition of disability. The lack of a clear definition partly explains the lack of statistics and figures on disability in Europe.

Until very recently, the definition of disability has been determined by **a medical approach**. This approach was largely based on pity and charity towards disabled people, which should be “cured” in order to fit in society.

Since its establishment, the **European Disability Forum** has worked actively to overcome the medical model and to spread a notion of disability based on a **social approach**.

While the medical model is based on the persons’ “impairment” and “lack of ability”, the social model shifts the focus onto “disability” due to surrounding barriers.

Disability is therefore understood as the result of the interaction between the individual’s impairment and the barriers created by society (be social, environmental and attitudinal).

While the medical model puts the responsibility on the “individual”, the social model stresses society’s responsibility to include and accommodate the needs of all persons, including people with disabilities.

According to EDF, disability relates to people that currently have a disability, had a disability in the past, may have a disability in the future, or are associated with a person with a disability

SOURCE : <http://www.edf-feqh.org/>