



# FEPEDA Newsletter 2/2025

## Greetings from the President

Dear FEPEDA members, organisations, and families across Europe,

Welcome to the final FEPEDA Newsletter of 2025. I am pleased to introduce myself as the newly elected President of FEPEDA, following my election by the Management Committee on 25 October 2025. It is a great honour to serve our federation in this role.

I am 52 years old, married, and the father of two sons. Our youngest son is 20 years old. He is deaf, has cochlear implants, and uses sign language. We live in Gothenburg, Sweden, and our family has been actively involved in the Swedish organisation DHB for more than 15 years. I currently also serve as President of DHB.

FEPEDA plays a vital role at the European level by bringing our member organisations together to learn from one another, support each other, and strengthen our advocacy for better conditions for deaf and hard of hearing children, young people, and their families across Europe.

I would like to warmly thank Mr André Cuenca from France, who served as President of FEPEDA from April 2021 and who continues his commitment as Vice President and Editor of this Newsletter.

Two important events marked the second half of 2025: the FEPEDA Annual General Assembly and participation in the European Day of Persons with Disabilities (EDPD).

The Annual General Assembly was held in Toulouse, France, in October 2025, with strong participation from member organisations across Europe, both in person and online. Exchanges highlighted the many actions undertaken by members to support deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.

FEPEDA was also represented at the European Day of Persons with Disabilities in Brussels on 4–5 December 2025 by Vice President André Cuenca. The event, organised by the European Commission and the European Disability Forum, addressed key challenges and opportunities for improving the lives of persons with disabilities (see further details in the following pages).

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**Fédération Européenne des Parents d'Enfants Déficients Auditifs**  
**European Federation of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children**  
**Europäischer Verband der Eltern Hörgeschädigter Kinder**  
**Federación Europea de Padres de Niños con Discapacidad Auditiva**

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On behalf of FEPEDA, I sincerely thank all members for their commitment to defending rights and improving the quality of life of deaf and hard of hearing children, young people, and their families at national and European levels.

I wish you and your families a Happy New Year.

Warm regards,

**Daniel Lakso Tesak**  
President of FEPEDA



# European Day of Persons with Disabilities

## December 4 and 5, 2025

### Brussels - Belgium

Hosted by the European Commission in partnership with the European Disability Forum this annual event brings together policymakers, organisations, and persons with disabilities to shape a more inclusive European Union.

This two-day event features debates and discussions with policymakers, experts, and disability advocates, marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

André CUENCA attended this event as FEPEDA representative.

- **Opening:**

- Strengthening the strategy in favour of persons with disabilities, establishing equality and non-discrimination, inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Right to independence for persons with disabilities: Inclusion in the UN Convention, persistent obstacles (discrimination, poverty).
- Findings:
  - 24% of people over the age of 16 are persons with disabilities.
  - Under-representation in employment.
  - Limited and expensive adapted housing.
  - Rights still far from being a reality (access to employment, transport, etc.).
  - Inhumane practices (forced sterilisation).
  - Emergency plans drawn up without people with disabilities.
- Call to action:
  - Remove barriers and stereotypes.
  - Need for a stronger legal framework.
  - Creation of a European fund for accessible housing.
  - Transform a society that renders people with disabilities invisible.

- **Panel 1 (Strategy 2021-2030) :**

- The importance of the environment for inclusion.
- Independent living as a right (1 million people in institutions).
- Strategy against poverty (people with disabilities are more affected).
- Management of AI and algorithms

- **Panel 2 (Inclusive European budget):**

- European funds are used for institutions instead of independent living.
- Need to fund housing and enable people with disabilities to live as they wish.
- Punish violations of rights.
- UN Convention not integrated into horizontal documents.
- Desire to impose budgets at national level.



- **Accessible Cities Award 2026: Recognising efforts to improve accessibility (cinema, theatre, etc.)**
  - Special mention for technology and information: Piacenza, Italy
  - Special mention for accessibility and emergency preparedness: Valencia, Spain
  - Special mention for accessible accommodation: Salzburg, Austria
  - 3rd prize: Rennes, France
  - 2nd prize: Valencia, Spain
  - 1st prize: Zaragoza, Spain
- **Panel 3 (Crisis preparation and management):**
  - Persons with disabilities are vulnerable in times of crisis.
  - Including persons with disabilities in emergency plans issue is a matter of survival.
  - Improvement of transport and emergency response services.
  - Guidelines currently being developed (2026).
  - Training to recognise types of disability.
  - Improvement of early warning and communication systems (112).
  - Sign language recognised
  - National crisis management plans must take all needs into account.
- **Conclusions:**
  - Shortcomings in actions, call for stronger commitment.
  - Clearer rules for the use of European funds.
  - Draw on the expertise and ideas of persons with disabilities.
  - Accelerate the implementation of the strategy.
  - Budget monitoring by EDF with constructive criticism.



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EDPD Conference room



André CUENCA with members of European Platform of Deafness



## Previous FEPEDA meetings

A **Bureau meeting** was held on September 30, 2025:

- Preparation of Next General Assembly and Management Committees meetings scheduled in October 2025 in Toulouse – France
- Review of Communication Plan document to improve FEPEDA communication
- Review of FEPEDA expanding plan documents to motivate new organisations to become members of FEPEDA

Since October 2025, members of FEPEDA Bureau are:

Daniel Lakso-Tesak as President

Antoanetta Yarichkova as General Secretary

Sari Paloposki as Vice President

Juan Diego García Gallardo as Vice President

Cosmin Brasov as Vice President

André CUENCA as Vice President

Franziska Geiser-Bedon as Treasurer

(\*) FEPEDA Constitution allows four Vice-Presidents in the Bureau

**General Assembly (GA)** meeting was held on October 25, 2025, in Toulouse – France and online. It was preceded by a first **Management Committee (MC)** meeting on October 24 to prepare the GA and followed by a second MC meeting on October 25 to elect the Bureau.

The meetings were attended by 16 participants (14 members in Toulouse and 2 members online) from 13 European countries. Two members sent apologies as they were not available at these dates.

In addition to the usual items to be dealt with at a GA meeting, such as finances, the budget, the annual report and the action plan, discussions took place on various subjects presented by the country representatives:

- Report on EDF AGA meeting held on June 21 and 22, 2025 at Vilnius - Lithuania
- Participation of FEPEDA to the next EDPD: European Day of Persons with Disabilities; December 4 and 5, 2025 in Brussels, organised by the European Commission
- GPODHH Parents conference in June 2026 in Bad Ischl – Austria
- FCEI-conference in Austria in June 2026 in Bad Ischl
- FEPEDA expanding plan in the objective to have new members in FEPEDA in the next years
- Communication to reinforce with a communication plan: draft was presented during the meetings, and a working group has been defined to detail and to implement this plan
- Report on Website, Facebook and Newsletter (next one to be issued for the end of 2025)
- Webinars to be prepared and scheduled: Youth Exchange, parents' leadership and prevention of hearing loss
- Chart overview to better know the rights of families in Europe: education, allowances, ...



- Presentation and exchanges on:
  - Family caregiver's situation with presentations by French and Spanish members
  - Experiences on the results from DHB-project "Between two worlds" by Swedish member

The General Assembly members elected Italy, Estonia and Lithuania members to the Management Committee

The Management Committee elected the new President Daniel Lakso, from Sweden, who replaces André Cuenca, from France, who had been President for 4,5 years. André Cuenca was elected Vice-President.

Congratulations to Daniel for his election as President.



View of the meeting room



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FEPEDA members in Toulouse



Handover between the former FEPEDA President and the new President



## Upcoming FEPEDA meetings

- Bureau meeting virtually by Zoom will be held in January 2026
- Management Committee meeting on April 2026 in Sibiu – Romania
- Bureau meeting virtually by Zoom will be held in September 2026
- General Assembly meeting in October 2026, venue TBD

## Main items

### European Accessibility Summit

Finish and Czech members of FEPEDA attended the European Accessibility Summit online on the 14th of October that was held by European Disability Forum (EDF).

The keynote minister Rob Beenders (Belgian Minister of Persons with Disabilities and Equal Opportunities, Consumer Protection, and the fight against Social Fraud) delivered the opening keynote at the event. The topics of the panels were: AI for Accessibility, Accessibility and Public Procurement, Inclusive Learning: Accessibility in Higher Education and Accessibility in Video Games

### Communication

FEPEDA has several supports of communication: Website, Facebook, Newsletters. However, members decided to improve FEPEDA's communication.

A draft communication plan has been issued during the Bureau meetings, including tools such as newsletters and social media. The key is to clearly define the objectives and the target audiences, and this plan needs to be developed in a more concrete way.

This Communication Plan was presented and reviewed during the GA and MC meetings in October 2025 in Toulouse. A working group was defined to develop this plan in a more concrete way, by translating these ideas into specific measures and activities.

In the field of communication, webinars are planned in 2026 by FEPEDA.

### FEPEDA expanding plan documents

An action has been taken to have more organisations as members of FEPEDA. A presentation was given on the proposed FEPEDA Expansion Plan during the meetings in October,

It was agreed that the next step should be to prepare introductory materials to present the European Federation in a way that appeals to new associations.

Using the existing presentations, a simple joint document would be drafted. This document could later be refined and presented in a more polished and visually attractive format.



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# Country News

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## Bulgaria

### Signergy – International Youth Exchange under the Erasmus+ Programme

From 11 to 18 September 2025, the Association of Parents of Children with Hearing Impairments organized the international youth exchange “**Signergy**” with the support of the **Erasmus+** programme.

Young people with hearing impairments from Lithuania, Poland, Spain, Georgia, North Macedonia, and Bulgaria gathered in Sinemorets to exchange ideas and experiences on topics such as human rights, social inclusion, and European values.

The participants had the opportunity to learn about good practices from different countries, discuss how local and European policies for people with disabilities are implemented, and explore the role of education, advocacy, and youth empowerment. The programme included workshops, interactive games, presentations, and visits to historical towns such as Ahtopol, Tsarevo, and Sozopol. The group also immersed themselves in the natural beauty of Strandzha by taking a boat trip along the Veleka River.

During the national evening, the Bulgarian team presented traditional costumes and folk dances, and guests enthusiastically joined the Bulgarian *horo*. Participants from the other countries also showcased their cultures through culinary and artistic presentations.

Many participants shared that the experience was transformative—not only because of the new knowledge they gained, but also because of the friendships they formed. “I have never felt so accepted and understood,” said a participant from Georgia. “I learned that language is not a barrier when there is a desire to communicate,” added a young person from Poland. A Bulgarian participant shared: “I am proud to represent my country and to show that young people with hearing impairments can be active, inspiring, and strong.”

The **Signergy** project left a lasting impact on everyone involved, creating a space for dialogue, empathy, and mutual respect—foundations for a more inclusive and connected European society.



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**Co-funded by  
the European Union**





## *Czech Republic*

### **Czech Republic news: 35 years anniversary, conferences and more!**

Regarding the changes in the Czech social system, which are part of the agenda for CDS TAMTAM social work counseling, we are anticipating that the President of Czechia will sign a law increasing allowances for the care of individuals with disabilities classified at levels I and II. Additionally, a new social system reform is being introduced that consolidates several allowances—such as those for housing, children, and livelihood—into a single allowance, simplifying the process for recipients by reducing the number of forms they need to complete.

There will also be changes to the humanitarian allowance affecting Ukrainian refugees, including children with disabilities. Recipients will now be required to provide updated health documentation and submit to household checks. Furthermore, a new National Strategy for the Development of Social Services for 2026-2030 has been announced.

Our social activation service is part of a project titled “Deaf Multicultural Worker in Social Services.” The goal of this initiative is to establish a prototype social service for individuals with hearing disabilities, which will include a deaf employee capable of communicating in Czech sign language. Our social activation employee is also involved in creating the “National Plan for Supporting Equal Opportunities for People with Disabilities 2026-2030.” Additionally, our staff has participated and will participate in various seminars and conferences, including the “Nenech se” conference, which focuses on preventing aggressive behavior in children, and the “Tinnitus Symposium.” We have observed an increase in the number of client families seeking our services, particularly those with specific needs and challenges.

The early aid services continue to prioritize interdisciplinary cooperation among social services, health services, and the education system. Two employees from the early aid services attended the “Advancing Comprehensive Early Childhood Intervention” conference in Lisbon. We have also begun offering services from our early aid workers specialized in a method known as “Team Around the Child/TAD.”

We have been filming fairy tales in Czech Sign Language, working on translations to CSL, and adding signs to our mobile app. Numerous events have taken place, including a Night with Andersen, various cultural events, a garden party for families, family camps, and participation in festivals and conferences. On October 14th, our employee attended the European Accessibility Summit, where Belgian Minister Rob Beenders was a keynote speaker. He previously served as the Director of Global Public Advocacy at Cochlear, where he advocated for hearing health and equitable access to assistive technologies.

We have published several interviews featuring deaf actors [Stephanie Nogueras](#) and [Joshua Castille](#), both of whom appeared in the HBO series “The Accused.”

Last but not least, we celebrated our 35th anniversary, coinciding with FEPEDA's anniversary as well!



## *France*

### **French Sign Language (LSF) Visual Dictionary** **An innovative and accessible tool**

A new **visual dictionary in French Sign Language (LSF)** is now freely available online at [www.commentcasesigne.fr/dico-visuel-francais-lsf/](http://www.commentcasesigne.fr/dico-visuel-francais-lsf/)

The dictionary includes nearly **3,000 illustrated articles**, each presenting:

- A **sign language video**
- A **simple written definition**
- **Visual pictograms** to support understanding
- **Links to external resources** (encyclopaedias, grammar guides)

Designed to be **intuitive and fully visual**, the dictionary does **not require users to type or search by written words**. Instead, users can **browse through categories and visual icons**, making it especially suitable for **young deaf children, early readers, and visual learners**.

While the dictionary is primarily intended for native French users, it may also be helpful for **deaf learners from other countries** who wish to discover **LSF** and improve their **written French** through visual association.

The platform is optimised for **tablets and mobile use** and will continue to grow over time with new content and features.

The LSF Visual Dictionary would not have been possible without the support and trust of several partners: ANPEDA (\*) which financed and supported the project, as well as the Autisignes association, whose technical assistance greatly contributed to the dictionary.

You can access to the video presentation of the tool with the following link. As it is for the French Sign Language, the presentation is in French. However, it should be possible to get a good idea of the possibilities offered by this tool.

<https://commentcasesigne.fr/presentation-du-dico-visuel-lsf/.>

(\*) ANPEDA: French National Federation of Associations of Parents of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children



## Romania

### The St. Nicholas Good Deeds Fair – A Celebration of Giving and Community

In the spirit of generosity and togetherness, **BNI Sibiu** and **BNI The Power of Many** proudly organized the **St. Nicholas Good Deeds Fair**, a Christmas charity event dedicated to bringing joy to both children and adults while supporting a meaningful cause.

The fair came to life thanks to the incredible involvement of dedicated organizers and volunteers from our community, who shared their time, energy, and creativity. Families and visitors of all ages enjoyed a festive atmosphere filled with warmth, kindness, and true holiday spirit.

Children took part in a variety of interactive activities — from creative workshops and face painting to temporary tattoos and engaging games. The fair also featured beautiful winter decorations, handmade products crafted with care, and a special stand filled with donated toys, all sold for charitable purposes.

A special focus of the event was **raising awareness for our association's mission**. Children and young people with **cochlear implants** actively engaged with visitors, sharing their experiences and helping make our cause more visible within the community. Their presence reinforced an essential message: *children and young people with cochlear implants can achieve anything their peers can*.

Our association hosted a **creative workshop** where children wrote heartfelt letters to Santa Claus, expressing their dreams and wishes. We also introduced "**The Hearing Journey**", a specially designed coloring book that tells the story of a little bunny's path — from diagnosis to cochlear implantation, recovery, and full social integration. This gentle and educational activity helped children and adults alike understand the journey toward hearing and inclusion.

As part of our workshop, participants decorated a **Christmas tree made entirely from recycled materials**. The tree was adorned with colorful hand cut-outs, each bearing personal messages, wishes, and words of encouragement — a beautiful symbol of unity, sustainability, and collective support for our cause.

The festive day was enriched by a captivating **organ concert** in the church, followed by heartfelt **Christmas carol performances** that filled the air with emotion and joy. Guests enjoyed delicious food, warm drinks, and freshly made pancakes and gingerbread, completing the cozy holiday atmosphere.

All funds raised during the event were fully donated to our association and will be dedicated to organizing the **2026 Summer Camp for Hearing-Impaired Youth** — reinforcing our shared commitment to supporting meaningful causes and making a lasting positive impact in our community.

The **St. Nicholas Good Deeds Fair** was more than a charitable initiative — it was a vibrant reminder of the power of collaboration, generosity, and the true spirit of the holiday season.



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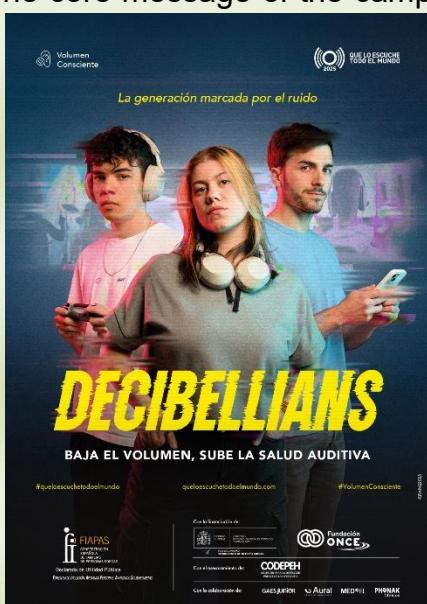


## Spain

### FIAPAS WARNS: NOISE IS AN INVISIBLE ENEMY

The Spanish Confederation of Families of Deaf People (FIAPAS) reinforces once again its commitment to the prevention, early detection and appropriate management of hearing loss with a new edition of the campaign *“Let the whole world hear it”*: DECIBELLIANS. In 2025, the initiative focuses on noise as an invisible enemy and on its impact on hearing health, particularly among teenagers and young adults.

The core message of the campaign highlights the urgent need to protect hearing from risky listening habits and continuous exposure to harmful noise levels. These practices are causing progressive hearing loss to appear at increasingly younger ages. FIAPAS stresses that caring for hearing during childhood and adolescence is essential to ensuring health, wellbeing and full participation throughout life.



The initiative includes a [video](#) aimed at families, young people, schools and society at large. With this, FIAPAS seeks to amplify its message and contribute to building a culture of hearing-loss prevention.

This campaign aligns with the demands set out in the [FIAPAS 2025 Manifesto](#), which states that the right to hear is indispensable for exercising fundamental rights such as health, education, access to information and social participation.

In line with this, FIAPAS calls for:

- Screening programmes and ongoing monitoring of hearing health across all paediatric age groups and for people over 50.
- Universal access to hearing aids and hearing assistive devices, without discrimination based on age.
- Public policies to prevent hearing damage and tackle noise pollution.
- Effective hearing accessibility in educational, workplace, healthcare and social settings.

FIAPAS reminds us that, if the right to hear is not guaranteed, it is not only health that is compromised but also access to fundamental opportunities for inclusion and equality.



## *Sweden*

### **To the Newsletter from DHB Sweden**

If a deceased person has no spouse or close relatives and has not left a will, his/her property goes to the Swedish Inheritance Fund. The Fund supports non-profit organisations and other voluntary associations wishing to test new ideas for developing activities for children, young people, older people and the disabled.

One of our projects just ended. The project is called *Mellan Två Världar* – Between Two Worlds. Between Two Worlds tells the story of what it's like to be young and hard of hearing and to feel caught between the hearing world and the signing world and the sign language community. How it affects people's lives.

The aim is to empower young hard-of-hearing people and to increase understanding among family members and professionals.

Focus groups comprising young people with hearing loss and other experts have helped gather valuable experience and insights. This has resulted in a book, brochures, lectures, recorded talks and informal videos based on various themes on the subject.

The QR-code gives you access to all the materials. You can also access it with this link:  
<https://www.dhb.se/mellan-tva-varldar/>

There is material in English and there are videos you can watch with subtitles from You Tube.



In February 2026 we are starting a new project funded by the Swedish Inheritance Fund:  
The Project is called "Lättare Rätt".

The Project will create a web app with useful and sought-after material that can facilitate the entry into adulthood for young deaf or hard of hearing people who use sign language and have a neuropsychiatric disability. The material will be collected in close collaboration between older people from the target group, who have accumulated experience, and younger people who are now in the transition from primary and secondary school into adulthood. Young people in the target group often have difficulty finding relevant information about life and society that meets the needs and conditions that exist and that is also presented in a form that is accessible to the target group. With the help of the web app,



young people are guided in questions about becoming adults, including in matters relating to being able to ask qualified questions and make informed decisions.

More to come about this project later on.

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*FEPEDA wishes a Happy New Year  
to you and your family*

