

Accessibility Conferences: The Rights and Services of People with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses in Finland

November 18, 2025 INFONET Alliance organized an online event within the series “Accessibility Conferences.” The topic of the day was: *The Rights and Services of People with Disabilities and Chronic Illnesses in Finland*.

Invited expert: Mahmoud Hassan (Finland) — Development Manager, Hilma – The Support Centre for Immigrant Persons with Disabilities and Long-Term Illnesses from Finland. Hilma’s mission is to promote the rights, equality, and inclusion of immigrants with disabilities or chronic illnesses in Finland through guidance, advocacy, and education for both individuals and professionals. Mr. Hassan is a lawyer holds a Law degree and has extensive professional experience in Finland across the fields of social services, integration, and community development. Throughout his career, he has worked with municipalities, NGOs, and government bodies to strengthen the participation and wellbeing of immigrants in Finnish society. Under his leadership, Hilma has expanded its partnerships and is currently involved in a joint Nordic-Baltic project that promotes cross-border collaboration and the exchange of best practices on disability inclusion. In addition to his work at Hilma, Mr. Hassan is a member of the City of Helsinki’s Equality and Non-Discrimination Advisory Board, where he contributes his expertise to advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion in local governance.

The presentation introduces **Hilma** - the Support Center, operating under the **Finnish Disability Forum** since 2006. Hilma serves all disability groups and immigrant across Finland. Its mission is to promote the **integration, independence, and social inclusion** of immigrants with disabilities by improving access to services and amplifying the voices of disabled immigrants in decision-making. Hilma provides a wide range of **practical services**, including counselling, help with applications and benefits, peer support groups, information materials, and cooperation with authorities.

The presentation also highlights key **challenges** faced by immigrants with disabilities in Finland: language barriers, limited awareness of rights, difficulties navigating the healthcare system, cultural stigma, social isolation, and barriers to employment. These issues often intersect with poverty, war trauma, and lack of accessible information. At the same time, Finland offers important **opportunities**, including comprehensive disability services, rehabilitation plans, financial benefits, housing support, education and employment programs, and strong NGO support structures. Hilma plays a central role in helping individuals understand these rights, access services, and participate fully in Finnish society.

This activity is part of the project “**Strengthening Civic Participation in Azerbaijan**”, co-financed by the European Union (EU) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

For additional information: Victor Koroli, Project Director. +373 69252453, vkoroli@gmail.com

The project “Strengthening Citizen Participation in Azerbaijan” is co-financed by the European Union (EU) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ). The project partner is the Public Association “NFONET Alliance”, which implements the project “Strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations in Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova through the exchange of experience, lessons learned and good practices in the field of social inclusion of people with disabilities”.