

## 22<sup>nd</sup> European Social Services Conference

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### Investing in people and communities Social inclusion and social development

#### **Nordic Day 2014**

##### **Violence against women with disabilities – how to prevent, recognize and respond to it.**

Women with functional impairments are victims of violence to a greater extent than other women, but this has long been an invisible social problem. These women are rarely seen, in research as well as in public debate. The violence looks different from violence against other women and often relates to the woman's disability. The situation of women with disabilities who are victims of violence is marked by dependence on the outside world and in many cases also on the perpetrator. The problem is made invisible as a result of ignorance, prejudice and complexity. These women are particularly vulnerable because of their functional impairments.

In the Nordic countries, women with disabilities are a particularly vulnerable group, for example in programmes against domestic violence. In recent years, alarming reports have been published. Reports of hidden cases of abused women with disabilities and also the existing system's difficulties in meeting the target groups' needs and rights. Internationally, the theme of violence against women with disabilities has been recognized explicitly in several contexts including the UN, EU and Council of Europe.

The safety aspect is central to the theme. The states need to develop systems to prevent and detect violence against women with disabilities. There are also several aspects of legal security. Legal systems need increased knowledge on what various functional impairments mean in terms of needs of protection and accessibility. Legal systems need to be more accessible to people with disabilities. Also in terms of information: many women with disabilities do not know where to turn if they are subjected to violence or threats of violence.

In addition to the states' commitments and obligation to protect its citizens from violence according to their social and legal system, the Nordic countries have also ratified the UN Convention on the rights of women, CEDAW. There are also a number of relevant articles in the UN Convention on Human Rights for persons with disabilities, UNCRPD. For example Article 6 (Women with Disabilities), 16 (right to be free from exploitation, violence and abuse), 12 (equality before law), 13 (access to justice).