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An Overview of the Means of Recognising Disability Status within the EU and EFTA Member States

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Mutual Recognition and Mobility of Disability Status and Benefits

Kind of Benefits

- social protection and income
- transport
- support for independent living
- employment
- education and training
- housing
- health care
- information and communication
- access to leisure and culture


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Ways of Classifying Impairment Level

- Percentage level of impairment, e.g. France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, and Spain.
- Percentage of reduced earning capacity resulting from an impairment, e.g. Bulgaria, the Netherlands, Norway and Slovakia.
- Classification of impairment level, e.g. mild, moderate or severe impairment, e.g. the Czech Republic and Latvia.
- No general categorisation system, e.g. United Kingdom and Ireland.

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Ways of Determining Eligibility for a Disability-Related Benefit

- Eligibility based on an individualised and benefit-specific evaluation
- In some cases eligibility is determined on the basis of:
 - a medical assessment; or
 - an assessment of need, which may include a medical assessment.


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Ways of Determining Eligibility for a Disability-Related Benefit (2)

- Eligibility based on receipt of another disability-related benefit, such as a disability pension, or possession of a disabled person's card, certificate or registration.
- Some benefits are only available to people with specific kinds of impairments.
- Sometimes individuals must meet additional non-disability related criteria in order to receive a benefit.

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Overall Picture

- Great diversity in terms of:
 - The kinds of benefits that are provided.
 - The value of benefits.
 - The way in which impairment or disability is measured or classified.
 - The impairment or disability level needed to qualify for a particular benefit.
 - The evaluation or assessment methods.
 - The eligibility criteria which are not related to disability.
- All of these factors make achieving mutual recognition of disability status within the EU and EFTA a challenge.

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Examples of European Mutual Recognition Schemes and Recommendations

European Parking Card for Disabled Persons

- 1998 European Community Recommendation.
- People with disabilities can apply for a special parking card in their own Member State, and this gives them access to certain parking-related benefits. The parking card has a standard European format, and is recognised in all Member States.

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Examples of European Mutual Recognition Schemes and Recommendations (2)

- Member States retain complete discretion to determine the benefits granted to holders of the card and to determine who is eligible to receive a card – but provide the same benefits to individuals who have cards issued in other Member States.
- This leads to differences in who can qualify for the card, the way in which eligibility is assessed, and the related benefits.

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Examples of European Mutual Recognition Schemes and Recommendations (3)


European Youth Card

- A very successful mutual recognition scheme established within the framework of the Council of Europe.

Council of Europe European Card for substantially handicapped persons

- (1977) – a mutual recognition scheme which never really got started.

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Examples of European Mutual Recognition Schemes and Recommendations (4)

Lack of Information regarding comparability of disability status

A barrier to mutual recognition of disability status acquired in another Member State.

Recommendation: EU could establish an inventory of national disability benefits and eligibility criteria, to facilitate mutual recognition.

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Examples of European Mutual Recognition Schemes and Recommendations (5)

Barriers experienced when taking up residence in another Member State

(1) Gap in time between when people lose entitlement to disability-related benefits in their original Member State and gain, in practice, a comparable benefit in their new Member State.

This gap is caused by the need to assess an individual for eligibility in the new Member State.

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Examples of European Mutual Recognition Schemes and Recommendations (6)

(2) Uncertainty about entitlement to benefits in new Member State.

Recommendation: Individuals should be allowed to apply for benefits in the new Member State prior to taking up residence there. If eligible, those benefits should be made available immediately on arrival.

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