Global University Disability and Inclusion Network (GUDIN)

# The first global network of universities and colleges for the inclusion of people with disabilities is born in Paris.

Paris, April 9, 2019. This Monday in Paris, under the leadership of Handicap International and the Harkin Institute, universities, colleges and institutes of higher education around the world laid the foundations of the first global network to better think about access to higher education for students with disabilities. 1 billion people are disabled today in the world. Underrepresented in higher education, that is to say almost nonexistent, they are the forgotten group in the student life.

# Higher education & disability: the missing link

Like primary education and employment, higher education is a universally recognized right that continues to be denied to millions of people with disabilities. Exclusion factors are numerous. Deprived of access to education, more than 32 million children with disabilities are now excluded from school and have no access to higher education as a consequence. For the few people with disabilities who do, other difficulties arise: the prevalence of prejudice and the inadequacy of universities and structures of student life to disabilities.

"Access to higher education is today the missing link in the path of people with disabilities to employment. This is the consequence of a lack of commitment of higher education stakeholders for decades." Says Hervé Bernard, Director of Social and Professional Inclusion at Handicap International.

The stakes are huge. Today the extremely low qualification rate of people with disabilities does not allow them to access sustainable and dignified jobs. At the same time, companies that want to integrate people with disabilities do not manage to recruit on trades with high expertise.

# Federate higher education stakeholders around a global network

What are the exclusion factors that affect the ability of higher education institutions to integrate more students with disabilities? Is it possible to define a common, shared and global vision of an inclusive higher education system? These are among the issues debated this Monday in the amphitheater of the Regional Council of Ile-de-France which brought together 60 participants from universities, colleges and institutes of education worldwide (France, Canada, Senegal, Austria, Sierra Leone, Palestine, Bangladesh, Egypt, China, Senegal ...)

At the end of round tables which allowed to exchange on the good practices already implemented (ex: the Conférence of the Grandes Ecoles, the INSA Lyon, Association on Higher Education and Disability ...), the participants set the objectives of the GUDIN global network:

* Exchange and share information and best practices on the inclusion of people with disabilities in higher education;
* Work at the construction of a common advocacy at national and international level;
* Bring strength of advice and resources to improve the accessibility and pedagogical practices of higher education institutions;
* Structure and support the collection of data on the access of students with disabilities to higher education;
* Improve the visibility of departments working on disability issues in universities.

For the first year of its existence, the Association on Higher Education And Disability will take over the presidency of the GUDIN with the support of Handicap International.