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BOOK REVIEW

European yearbook of disability law, Volume 3, edited by Lisa Waddington, Gerard Quinn and Eilinoir Flynn, Cambridge, Antwerp, Portland, Intersentia Publishing, 2012, 435 pp., (paperback), ISBN 978-1-78068-090-3

General

The European Yearbook of Disability Law is part of the ongoing research programme of the Maastricht Centre for Human Rights of Maastricht University and the Centre for Disability Law and Policy of the National University of Ireland Galway. Already the title ‘Yearbook’ indicates to a reader that the book is a review of the past. The book is the third of a kind (volume 3) and it covers the time period from September 2010 to January 2012. The book is recommended to be read together with the first two volumes. In that way the reader has a possibility to get a more elaborate overview of European disability law and the progress since 2009.

According to the book cover the Yearbook’s core consists of a review of the preceding year’s significant events, as well as policy and legal developments within the institutions of the European Union. In addition the Yearbook contains a series of articles on current challenges and development from senior analysts and academics working in the field. The aim of the book is to provide critical insight in the evolution of European disability law and policy.

Structure

The book consists of three parts:

- I Articles and practitioners’ notes
- II Annual review of the European law and policy
- III Annex of key documentation

The book has been edited by Professor Lisa Waddington from European Disability Forum Chair in European Disability Law Maastricht University, Professor Gerard Quinn and Dr Eilinoir Flynn from National University of Ireland, Galway. Along with the editors, the editorial board and the advisory board are introduced in the first pages, but their specific roles are not discussed in more detail. From the reader’s perspective it would have been useful if more detailed description of the editors and their roles relating to the book’s topic and its questions would have been given.

The first part of the book consists of expert articles, followed by the core part of the book, part II, the annual review of European law and policy. Since only in part II background information about the European Union and disability as well as detailed information about institutions’ roles and actions is given, it would have been more

reader-friendly to place the articles after part II. In the current order, a lot of prior knowledge of EU's activities is required if the book is to be read in chronological order. As the articles are aiming for a critical approach, a reverse order would have been favourable.

As the main topic of the book is disability, it would have been desirable that in the beginning different concepts and definitions had been given and the aim of the book had been more specified. Especially because disability as a concept may have various dimensions within European countries. Also the concept of 'disability law' could have been defined so that it would have been clearer with which of the different branches of the law the book is concerned.

Content

The book lives well up to its cover promise. However, without the Yearbook's volumes 1 and 2, understanding all concepts in its entirety may be challenging. The book, and especially its part II, serves well also as a handbook covering the activities of the EU institutions, its bodies and decisions made inside the EU. Because of the substantial factual content, the book is not an easy read, at least not from the viewpoint of a non-mother-tongue speaker of English.

Single remarks

An index would have been beneficial as it helps the reader to find the desired information more easily. The practices of the European Court of Human Rights are described and referred to by using applicants' and defendants' names (x v y). This reference style can be criticized for lack of information, though it should not be considered a defect of the book. By referring to the content or essence of the judgments instead of the parties' names, the utility value of the book would have increased and eased the reader's task to find the information he is looking for.

Further thoughts

When reviewing the employment rate of disabled people usually only their position in open labour market is discussed. This stems directly from the EU's aim to increase employment possibilities for disabled people, especially in the open labour market and to enable an even bigger portion of disabled people to earn their living in the open labour market. It should be however taken into account that disabled people may work and be employed also in the so called semi-labour market in different EU-countries. The open labour market is not the only way for disabled people to earn their living; although the goal in itself is to be supported. And finally, when discussing the EU's strategies and actions, a more specific review, which takes each member states existing situation into account, might have been beneficial.

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