Inria announces a "Disability Plan", to develop the impact of its research in this field and to become a disability-friendly employer.

For a national research institute like Inria, there are two sides to the disability question. On the one hand, the Institute can engage in research to contribute to improving quality of life and workplace integration for disabled people. On the other, it has a social responsibility as an employer itself.

Today, 25 of the Institute's project teams, in most cases in conjunction with a partner (University, engineering school, CNRS, other research organisation), are working in one way or another on disability. The time has now come to catalyse these efforts and boost Inria's real impact in this area either by setting up interdisciplinary research actions, by strengthening partnerships with voluntary sector organisations or by increasing technology transfer, in particular through disability-related technology startups;

Inria also has a duty to become an exemplary disabled employer: this is one of the objectives set out in the COP 2019-2023 (Objectives and Performance Contract) which the Institute has just drawn up with its supervisory authorities.

It is in this context that Inria recently announced the implementation of an ambitious action plan focused on disability, on the occasion of a visit to the Inria Paris research centre, on 19 November, by Ms Sophie CLUZEL, Secretary of State to the Prime Minister in charge of the Disabled.

Increasing the societal impact through research and innovation focused on disability.

Inria's research activities on disability are conducted with disabled people, carers and experts, whether upstream to co-design solutions (participatory design) or downstream to trial solutions in situ in the real world. This approach is absolutely indispensable if any real impact is to be made. These research projects are also subject to validation by an ethics committee (the COERLE) which examines experimental protocols submitted to it, verifies the participation of disabled people (enlightened consent) and the exploitation of the results. Some of these research activities will lead to the creation of startups or be used to support the development of existing startups.

Inria's disability plan aims to boost the impact of this research with an action plan with several components and aims:

> To launch, at the beginning of 2020, a major disability challenge (IPL), covering research, development and technology transfer. This challenge will be co-built with voluntary bodies and experts, who will identify technological sticking points and, possibly, the companies explicitly involved.
> By the same occasion, to identify innovative industrial ecosystems, including key large groups and startups that could potentially be supported on the technological side.
> To form partnerships with experts/networks of disabled people to allow "real-life" testing during research projects.
> To promote the Inria Foundation's dedicated programme to amplify these actions.
> To run an experimental programme in 2020 to host young people on the autism spectrum on placements with research teams, to help develop a hosting programme.
Being an exemplary disability employer

In spite of different awareness-raising actions already taken at the Institute over a number of years, the percentage of disabled people employed still needs to be improved, particularly among the scientific workforce. Fewer than 2% of the Institute's employees are disabled, a long way from the 6% quota it is legally bound to meet.

The Institute wishes to radically change this situation and intends to do so by implementing proactive policies, not only for the support functions, but also and especially for scientific positions, in particular to:

- Increase the number of applications from people with disabilities by working with the networks of actors in this field and by publishing job advertisements on specialist websites.
- Increase recruitment by contract hiring and granting tenure as provided for by Article 27 of Law no. 84-16.
- Offer Inria's disabled staff members working conditions similar to those of other employees, in particular by adapting the working environment (including in terms of digital accessibility).
- Improve measures to keep disabled staff in the workforce, especially by setting up a "wraparound" case management system and a process for supporting people back to work after long periods of absence.
- Raise awareness and provide in-house training for all the Institute's staff and encourage employees with a disability to declare themselves as such.

Supporting public policy on digital accessibility through exemplary implementation.

In a world that has gone entirely digital, Inria's role is also to work on accessibility and, for example, to:

- Conduct an effective, exemplary Inria-wide policy in this respect, applying the WCAG (Web content accessibility guidelines) to all future Inria communication items (including the website and intranet) and scheduling the adaptation of internal Inria software to visually impaired users.

For Bruno Sportisse, "Disability must be one of the great Inria causes, not only in its research work, but in its role as an employer. Whether it is recruitment, evaluation or working conditions, a lot remains to be done and it will be necessary to mobilise everyone to put our Disability Plan into practice, as it is included in our COP 2019-2023 plan with the stated aim of progressing towards the 6% quota of disabled workers. One of the collective challenges is that this must also apply to the scientific workforce: there is no reason disability cannot go with excellence, and we have to be able to update our recruitment procedures and the way we evaluate applicants. We have a duty to become a disabled-friendly digital institute!".

About Inria:

Inria is the French national research institute for digital science and technology. World-class research and technological innovation are part of its DNA, with the aim of developing and supporting scientific and entrepreneurial projects that create value for France, within a European perspective.

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