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## **Mobile Phones and the Internet: Progress or Setback for the Integration of People with Disabilities?**

UPJ and O<sub>2</sub> invite to an online discussion about barrier-free access to modern communication media

**MUNICH. Barrier-free access should have long been a standard for modern technologies, in the Internet as well as with mobile phones. But are these media actually able to meet this requirements in the real world? Telefónica O<sub>2</sub> Germany and the non-profit organization UPJ have extended an invitation to discuss about current handicapped-accessible technologies such as mobile phones and the Internet on [www.diskutiere.de](http://www.diskutiere.de). The focus will be on the question: "How do modern telecommunications influence the social integration of people with disabilities?" While the technologies are not designed for the specific requirements of this target group, they are already prepared to improve communication capabilities.**

For most people, mobile phones and the Internet have become a part of their daily lives. But what about people with disabilities? Are they excluded from social developments because they are not able to use the new technologies? Or are they enabled to use completely new information offerings, have more possibilities to express themselves and can even benefit from better networking with other people? O<sub>2</sub> wants to find out more about the requirements, needs and problems of people with disabilities with respect to the currently available means of communication.

"As a responsible telecommunication company, we want that people with disabilities can also leverage digital communication offerings," says Stephan Becker-Sonnenschein, Vice President Corporate Communications at Telefónica O<sub>2</sub> Germany. "We are interested in a dedicated dialog with the people concerned as well as experts and interested individuals in order to find out what the telecommunication industry can do to optimize the usage of media for this target group."

Everyone is invited to take part in the discussion, whether as a person concerned, representative, family member, colleague, employer or simply interested party. Expert contributions, downloads, links and a small survey supplement the discussion and support the opinion-making process. The online debate takes place on [www.diskutiere.de](http://www.diskutiere.de), UPJ's platform for the discussion of topics around the social responsibility of companies, initiated by O<sub>2</sub>.

The discussion will be open from October 26 to December 31, 2009. The contributions will subsequently be evaluated by UPJ and further expanded by experts and parties concerned.

**Telefónica O<sub>2</sub> Germany GmbH & Co. OHG** belongs to Telefónica Europe and is part of the Spanish telecommunication group Telefónica S.A. The Company offers its German private and business customers postpaid and prepaid mobile telecom products as well as innovative mobile data services based on the GPRS and UMTS technologies. In addition, the integrated communications provider also offers DSL fixed network telephony and high-speed internet. Telefónica Europe has about 48 million mobile and fixed network customers in Great Britain, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany.

**UPJ** is the German national network of engaged businesses and local non-profit intermediary organizations. Its activities are focused on projects that contribute to the solution of societal challenges by creating new connections between businesses, civil society organizations and public authorities. The non-profit UPJ e.V. also supports these stakeholders with information and consultancy to improve the development and implementation of their Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Social Responsibility activities.

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