



Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030

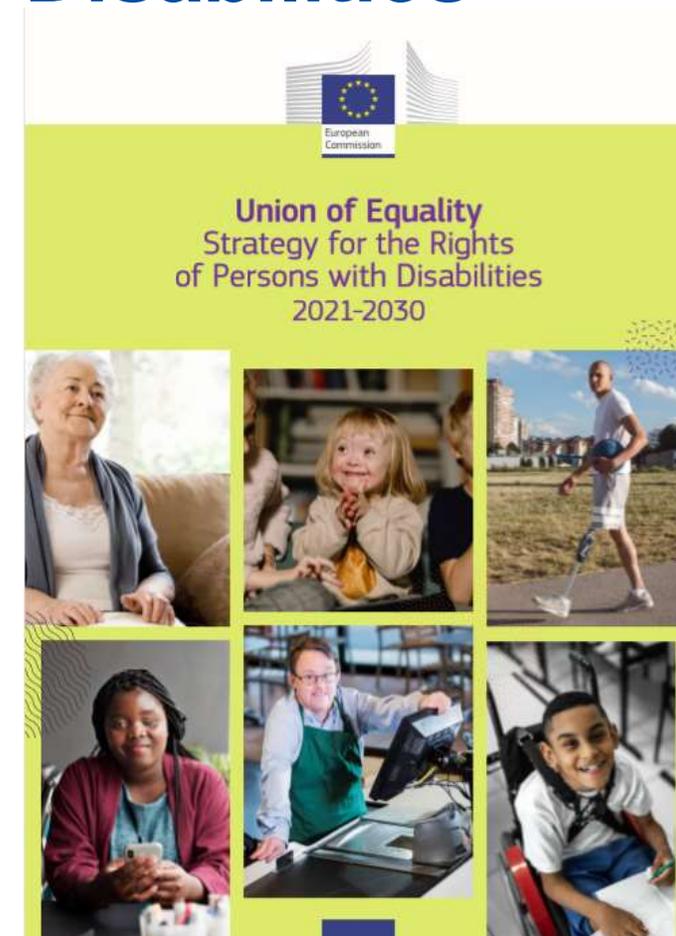
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Union of Equality : Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Why a new Strategy?

- **Combating discrimination** = anchored in Treaty of the European Union and Charter of Fundamental Rights
- **Right of persons with disabilities to inclusion** = Principle 17 of the European Pillar of Social Rights and this Strategy forms part of the Action Plan
- **Building a Union of Equality** in all of its senses = one of the priorities of this Commission
- **87 million EU citizens have some form of disability !**



Union of Equality : Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Strategy contains **8 priority areas** :

1. Accessibility – An enabler of rights, autonomy and equality;
2. Enjoying EU rights;
3. Decent quality of life and living independently;
4. Equal participation and non-discrimination;
5. Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities globally;
6. Efficiently delivering the Strategy;
7. The Commission's ambition for the next decade - leading by example;
8. Awareness, governance and measuring progress.

57 Commission actions

+ 7 COM flagship initiatives

23 calls on Member States

EU Funding (I)

- EU Funds including NextGenerationEU – opportunity for a disability-inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery.
- The Common Provisions Regulation
 - enabling conditions, one requires that a **national framework to ensure implementation of the UNCRPD is in place**, and one criterion relates to **accessibility**
 - Provision on non-discrimination and obligation on accessibility.
- EU funding supports areas such as **deinstitutionalisation, socio-economic inclusion of persons with disabilities, access to services, inclusive education and healthcare, making cultural heritage more inclusive and ensuring accessibility.**
- **UNCRPD Member State focal points** – can have an important role in supporting the fulfilment of the relevant enabling conditions through the programming period.

EU Funding (II)

The Commission will also:

- explore funding opportunities through **the new Citizenship, Rights, Equalities and Values Programme (CERV)** to foster engagement of citizens with disabilities on equal basis with others;
- support Member States **to use EU Funds in compliance with the UNCRPD** and respecting **accessibility** ensuring that EU funds do not support actions that contribute to **segregation or exclusion**.

The Commission calls on Member States to

- **ensure partnership with regional, local authorities, representative organisations of persons with disabilities, civil society**, fundamental rights bodies and other stakeholders in the design and implementation of EU funds;
- **encourage the UNCRPD focal points** to support the fulfilment of the relevant **enabling conditions** throughout the programming period.

Priority area 1: Accessibility



Millions of persons with disabilities experience barriers to use transport, to access buildings or to receive information

In 2022, the Commission will launch a ***European resource centre AccessibleEU*** to increase coherence in accessibility policies and implementation of EU law.

Further Commission actions for a barrier-free Europe include

- guidance with regards to accessibility under the **public procurement directive**
- a reinforced **EU digital government strategy** comprising accessibility and inclusiveness
- review of the **passenger rights regulatory framework** and revision of the **Urban Mobility Package**

Priority area 2: Enjoying EU Rights

2.1 Moving and residing freely

The Commission will propose creating a *European Disability Card* by end of 2023 with a view to be recognised in all Member States.

It will build on the experience of the ongoing EU Disability Card pilot project in eight Member States and upon the European parking card for persons with disabilities.

2.2 Fostering participation in the democratic process



National rules deprive **800 000 EU citizens with disabilities** of the right to participate in European Parliament elections justifying on the basis of their disabilities or mental health issues

The Commission will

- work with Member States in the **European Cooperation Network on Elections** to support full electoral participation and accessibility of the European elections.
- establish in 2023 a **guide of good electoral practice** addressing participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process.
- address the needs of citizen with disabilities in the **compendium on e-voting** under the European Democracy Action Plan.

Priority area 3: Decent quality of life and living independently

3.1 Developing independent living and community-based services



More than 1 million children and adults with disabilities aged less than 65 and more than 2 million aged 65 and over live in institutions

The Commission will by 2023 issue *guidance* recommending to Member States improvements on *independent living and inclusion in the community*.

The Commission will present by 2024 a *European Quality Framework for Social Services of Excellence for persons with disabilities*.

The Commission calls on Member States to

- implement good practices in the area of **mental health**;
- promote **accessible and disability-inclusive social housing**.

3.2 Developing new skills for new jobs

The Commission calls on Member States to

- **set targets** for the participation of adults with disabilities in learning in the context of national skills strategies and the action plan to implement the Social Pillar;
- ensure **inclusive and accessible VET programmes**;
- build upon the results of the **Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills** with social enterprises for integration (Pact for Skills).

3.3 Fostering access to quality and sustainable jobs



50.8% of persons with disabilities are in employment compared to **75%** without disabilities



37.6% of persons with disabilities are inactive compared to **17.6%** of persons without disabilities

In 2022, the Commission will present a

package to improve labour market outcomes of persons with disabilities, seeking cooperation with the European Network of Public Employment Services, social partners and organisations of persons with disabilities.

- publish an implementation report on the **EU Employment Equality Directive (2021)** – possible review;
- issue a disability-inclusive **Action Plan on Social Economy (2021)**.

The Commission calls on Member States to

- to **establish targets** for increasing the employment rate of persons with disabilities and reducing employment rate gaps in line with the revised Social Scoreboard and the Social Pillar Action Plan; to strengthen **employment services**; to facilitate **self-employment, entrepreneurship**.

3.4 Consolidating social protection systems



28.4% of persons with disabilities are at risk of poverty and social exclusion compared to **18.4%** of persons without disabilities

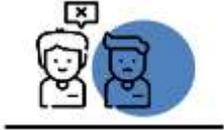
The Commission will launch a **study and guidance** to support Member States in further **reforms of social protection** for persons with disabilities.

The Commission calls on Member States to

- define measures to tackle **gaps in social protection** for persons with disabilities

Priority area 4: Equal access and non-discrimination

4.1 Improving access to justice, legal protection, freedom and security



52% of persons with disabilities feel discriminated against

The Commission will

- work with Member States to achieve **alignment of the 2000 Hague Convention** on the international protection of vulnerable adults with the UNCRPD and to pave the way for its ratification by all Member States.
- provide **guidance to MS on access to justice** for persons with disabilities and on measures to support the participation of persons with disabilities as **professionals** in the justice system.

4.2 Access to social protection, health care, education and goods and services including housing

The Commission calls on Member States to

- enable the adoption of the **Commission proposal for a horizontal directive** on implementing the principle of equal treatment outside the field of employment including disability;
- support cooperation between the EU and the national UNCRPD frameworks and members of European networks of rights defenders.

4.3 Inclusive and accessible education

The Commission will

- issue a **toolkit for inclusion in early childhood education and care** (-> synergies with European Child Guarantee).
- support Member States to further develop their **teacher education systems** addressing shortages of teachers in Special Needs Education and competences of all education professionals.

The Commission calls on Member States to

- support the development of **inclusive (reference) schools**;
- advance on **supported learning in inclusive mainstream settings**.



20.3% young people with disabilities leave school early, but only **9.8%** of those without disabilities



Only **29.4%** of persons with disabilities attain a tertiary degree compared to **43.8%** of those without disabilities

4.4 Sustainable and equal access to health care



4 times more persons with disabilities report unmet healthcare needs than those without disabilities

The Commission will

- address issues related to health and disability through the Steering Group on Promotion and Prevention (SGPP) for the **sharing of validated health-related good practices**;
- support stakeholders to address and alleviate the burden that the **COVID-19 pandemic** imposes on **the mental health** of European citizens;
- address inequalities for persons with disabilities in accessing **cancer prevention**.

The Commission calls on Member States to

- improve access for persons with disabilities to the **entire healthcare portfolio**;
- develop support strategies for patients with disabilities related to **rare diseases**.

4.5 Access to art and culture, leisure, sport, and tourism

The Commission will

- **promote and raise visibility of the art works** by persons with disabilities and It will enhance **equal participation in sports** through a study and through developing partnership with the International Paralympic Committee.
- promote the development of accessible tourism via the **European Capital of Smart Tourism** award.

The Commission calls on Member States to

- encourage **arts of persons with disabilities** (e.g. exhibitions) and to make more art collections and museums accessible to persons with disabilities.

4.6 Ensuring safety and protection

To combat violence and abuse, the Commission will

- carry out targeted **actions within the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025** and the **EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child**;
- provide **guidance** to Member States and practitioners, including police officers, on improving support for victims;
- invite the FRA to **examine the situation of persons with disabilities living in institutions** in relation to violence.

The Commission calls on Member States to

- implement the **Common European Asylum System *acquis*** taking into account the specific needs of vulnerable people including persons with disabilities;
- facilitate the **training of protection officers and interpreters** dealing with asylum claims by vulnerable persons.

Priority area 5: Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities globally



An estimated **1 billion people** live with disabilities in the world

The Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission (HRVP) will:

- update the **Toolbox on the “Rights Based Approach, encompassing all human rights for EU development cooperation”** to address all inequalities, including discrimination against persons with disabilities, in external actions;
- ensure that the **EU delegations** play a more active role in fostering the ratification and implementation of the UNCRPD;
- systematically use the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) disability marker to **track disability inclusive investments** for a targeted monitoring of EU funding.

Priority area 6: Efficiently Delivering the Strategy

The Commission will in 2021 establish the *Disability Platform* (UN Focal Points, NGOs) replacing the existing High Level Group on Disability. It will support the implementation of this Strategy as well as of national disability strategies. It could be used as a forum to exchange on the UN's assessments of Member States' implementation of the UNCRPD.

The Commission will further:

- call on all EU institutions and bodies, agencies, and delegations to designate **disability coordinators** for their institutions and for their disability strategies;
- support Member States to **use EU Funds** in compliance with the UNCRPD and respecting accessibility.

The Commission calls on Member States to

- adopt **ambitious national strategies** to foster the implementation of the UNCRPD and of this Strategy at all levels.

Priority area 7: Leading by example

The Commission will adopt a *renewed HR strategy* that will include actions to promote diversity and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The Commission will also ensure the continuous removal and prevention of barriers by **all services**, and strengthen **reporting by management on diversity**.

It will adopt an Action Plan on web accessibility, improve accessibility of its buildings and communications.

Priority area 8. Awareness, governance and measuring progress

The Commission will

- closely follow the progress of accession by Member States to the **Optional Protocol** and re-examine the EU's ratification of the UNCRPD Optional Protocol in that light;
- examine the **functioning of the EU framework** and propose actions;
- develop a **monitoring framework** for the objectives and actions of this strategy (-> **dashboard** part of Disability Platform webpage);
- develop **new disability indicators**, a **strategy for data collection** and steer Member States accordingly.

Thank you for your attention!