# The protection of persons with disabilities through petitions: lessons learnt

2020/2209(INI) - 04/08/2021 - Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading

The Committee on Petitions adopted an own-initiative report by Alex AGIUS SALIBA (S&D, MT) on the protection of people with disabilities, through petitions: lessons learnt.

There are currently around **87 million people with disabilities in the EU**. Just over ten years ago, the European Union acceded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the Convention entered into force in the EU on 23 January 2011.

Through its petition procedure, Parliament's Petitions Committee has a direct role to play in protecting the rights of people with disabilities in the EU. Petitions received by Parliament demonstrate the barriers faced by people with disabilities in various areas, such as access to public transport and the built environment, the use of sign languages, funding or access to education.

Given the petitions received on disability issues, the main findings of the report are as follows:

***Governance and implementation***

The report highlighted the need to raise awareness at all levels of the **rights of people with disabilities enshrined in the CRPD** to protect their rights and dignity, and to promote the exchange of good practice between Member States. It encouraged the consultation and participation of disabled people's organisations at every stage leading to the adoption of measures, so that these measures do not undermine the fundamental rights of disabled people.

Members called on all Member States that have not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRPD to do so without further delay, to designate responsible authorities to act as contact points and to establish coordination mechanisms at all administrative levels for its implementation and monitoring.

The Commission is invited to present a comprehensive and cross-cutting review of EU legislation and funding programmes to ensure full compliance with the CRPD.

***Free movement***

Members welcomed the Commission's plan to present, by the end of 2023, a proposal for a **European disability card** recognised in all Member States. Such a card should be compulsory in all Member States to enable people with disabilities to exercise their right to free movement in a barrier-free Europe. The report warmly welcomed the adoption of enhanced rail passenger rights for people with disabilities and reduced mobility. It encouraged Member States to provide, as soon as possible, shorter pre-notification periods for disabled people who need assistance when travelling.

***Accessibility***

Members called on the Commission and the Member States to ensure that cognitive, sensory and physical accessibility of EU initiatives on the digitalisation of the labour market.

They called on the Commission to use the EU accessibility legislation to adopt a **robust European framework** for an accessible and inclusive environment with fully accessible **public places and services**,

including financial and administrative services, public transport and communication services and the built environment. Full accessibility must be guaranteed in all European public places.

***Combating discrimination***

The report highlighted the Commission's objective to cooperate with Member States to widen the scope of **mutual recognition of disability status** in areas such as labour mobility or social benefits related to the conditions of service provision.

Pointing out that **minors** with mental or intellectual disabilities are 3.7 times more likely to be victims of all forms of violence than non-disabled children, Members called for the creation of a European framework for the protection of persons with disabilities from any sort of violence. The report encouraged the Commission to work with the European Court of Justice to develop communication and accessibility strategies to ensure that people with disabilities are able to **access the EU justice system** without suffering any form of discrimination.

Concerned about the high unemployment rates among people with disabilities, Members called on Member States to promote and ensure a legislative and policy framework for the participation of people with disabilities, and in particular women with disabilities, in the labour market.

***Public procurement***

The report recalled that public procurement should respect the fundamental rights of beneficiaries. It is stressed that Member States are obliged to comply with the GDPR when implementing public procurement legislation.

***Inclusive education***

Inclusive education policies implemented in Member States are welcomed, however, the report called on Member States to further increase their education systems' capacity to provide **high-quality and accessible education** to all learners by promoting specific measures and personalised support, such as accessible and tailored curricula and learning materials, accessible ICTs and appropriate digital education.

The Commission is invited to strengthen the role of the Child Guarantee by considering an award scheme for the **most accessible schools**, to ensure equal treatment of children with disabilities.