# Towards equal rights for people with disabilities

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The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by Anne-Sophie PELLETIER (GUE/NGL, FR) entitled ‘Towards equal rights for persons with disabilities’.

According to the available data, there are approximately 87 million persons having some form of disability in the EU, including over 24 million persons with severe disabilities. More than 1 million children and adults with disabilities below the age of 65 and more than 2 million adults aged 65 and older live in institutions.

***Living independently and being included in the community***

Members recalled, as laid down in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), that persons with disabilities have the right to live independently and receive appropriate community-based services. This right can only be fully guaranteed if policies and legislation that offer alternatives to institutions are developed at national, regional and local levels, and are guided by European standards. The EU is called on to mainstream a disability perspective in all its policies, programmes and strategies.

In this regard, the Commission and the Member States are called on to phase out institutional care settings for persons with disabilities as soon as possible and to bring about a shift from institutional and other segregated settings to a system enabling social participation. Stereotypes, ableism and misconceptions that prevent persons with disabilities from living independently must be eradicated and their contributions to society must be promoted. Moreover, access to the labour market is essential to enable persons with disabilities to live an independent life and participate fully in society.

***Equal recognition before the law***

The report considered that urgent measures should be taken to abolish the restrictions on legal capacity that hinder the rights of persons with disabilities enshrined in the Treaties. Member States should implement dedicated programmes that will allow for a shift from depriving persons with psychosocial disabilities of their legal capacity towards supported decision-making schemes.

Members urged the Commission and the Member States to involve persons with disabilities in all their diversity and of all backgrounds in EU decision-making and considered that leadership persons with disabilities should be further promoted through greater investment in organisations of persons with disabilities in order to facilitate their meaningful participation and increase their influence in decision-making.

***EU Disability Card***

Members strongly believe that the EU Disability Card should be based on binding an EU legislative act that should cover a range of different areas beyond culture, leisure and sport. The Disability Card should also, by default, be usable for national, regional and local public services such as transport, have a dedicated EU website and accessible online database available in all EU languages.

***Educational and healthcare***

Members called on the Commission and the Member States to take measures to facilitate access to and the enjoyment of inclusive, quality education for all learners with disabilities, including e-learning and lifelong learning. They emphasised the importance of ensuring equal access to education in classrooms for pupils and students, including early childhood education, regardless of whether they have a disability.

Members also deplored the lack of investment by some Member States in facilities for persons with disabilities who need specific treatment by specialists, in some cases forcing these persons, especially young people of school age, to leave their families in order to access suitable facilities in other Member States.

The Commission and the Member States are urged to take swift action to ensure that persons with disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities, are provided with the same range, quality and standards of free or affordable healthcare and programmes that are provided to other persons, including access to sexual and reproductive health services.

The report called on the Member States to include in their relevant EU funds the improvement of neuropsychiatric services for children and young people, who suffered most as a result of the measures adopted during the pandemic, which led to increased social hardship, poverty and psychological suffering, with dramatic consequences.

***Promoting inclusive employment***

Members encourage the Commission and the Member States to:

- take effective and concrete measures to promote equality, diversity and horizontal inclusion for persons with disabilities and their families in all parts of society;

- fully implement and mainstream the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) across all legislative, policy and funding measures, in particular as regards persons with disabilities' social and labour market inclusion;

- assess the key trends for the future of work from a disability perspective to identify and launch specific actions to make the labour market more inclusive and reduce the digital divide.

Lastly, the committee called on the Commission to develop and promote a European legal framework for inclusive enterprises with the aim of creating permanent employment for people with disabilities.