Towards equal rights for people with disabilities

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The European Parliament adopted by 526 votes to 10, with 83 abstentions, a resolution 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. 50.8 % of persons with disabilities are in employment, as compared to 75 % without disabilities.

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.

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.

Member States are invited to include specific targets with a defined time frame in their deinstitutionalisation strategies and adequately finance them. The relevant EU funds should aim to promote inclusive, accessible environments, services, practices and devices, following a universal design approach and favouring deinstitutionalisation.

Equality and non-discrimination: urgent need for a horizontal anti-discrimination directive

Members believe that the EU should **mainstream a disability perspective** into all its policies, programmes and strategies. They called on the Commission to **update the proposed EU directive on equal treatment**, based on Parliament's position, by also tackling intersectional discrimination and explicitly prohibiting all discrimination. The Council Presidency should prioritise this directive and discuss it at the highest political level. The resolution stressed the need for concrete measures to promote the adoption of the directive and, if not adopted, alternative legislative measures to combat discrimination.

Parliament also denounced the fact that some people with disabilities are more likely to be victims of some form of discrimination and violence, including women and girls, children, the elderly, the homeless, prisoners, migrants and refugees, racialised persons and people from ethnic background such as the Roma, as well as LGBTIQ+ people. The Commission and the Member States are invited to address the specific issues of these people.

Equal recognition before the law

Parliament 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 called on the Commission to speed up its work to ensure recognition of the status of disabled people when travelling in the EU and to guarantee the free movement of disabled people in all Member States. They 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.

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.

Promoting inclusive employment

Persons with disabilities' integration into the labour market is not only essential for social inclusion and equal opportunities, but also offers significant economic opportunities for persons with disabilities' financial independence and benefits the wider economy.

Parliament asked the **European Labour Authority** to work with national labour inspectorates to ensure that existing legislation is implemented. It recommended that labour inspectors monitor public and private sector employers to ensure that the employment rights of people with disabilities are respected.

The Commission is invited to (i) start as soon as possible the revision of the Employment Equality Directive, in particular with regard to harmonised minimum standards for **reasonable accommodation** for workers with disabilities, (ii) ensure that Member States respect the principles of equal treatment and equal pay for work of equal value between all workers.

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