



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT THINK TANK – TOPICAL DIGEST

November 2023

Estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO) suggest that 15 % of the world's population live with some form of disability. This makes people with disabilities the world's largest minority. EU-wide, some 80 million EU citizens have a disability. Disability is complex and multi-dimensional: it denotes impairments, limitations on activity and restrictions on participation – a combination of medical and contextual factors. Some people are born with a disabling condition, others develop a disability through injury, chronic disease, or in older age. The EU's disability policy strives for full inclusion of persons with disabilities in society, by respecting the key principles of non-discrimination, self-determination and unconditional equal treatment. The EU's disability policy framework is set out in the European Disability Strategy, which serves to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), to which the EU and its Member States are party.

Analysis of the European Disability Card The Proposed Directive: Shortcomings, Strengths and Opportunities

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies, November 2023

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the Proposal for a Directive establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities, and outlines recommendations. This Proposal represents an important stepping stone to promote free movement of persons with disabilities. It is based on mutual recognition of disability status, but does not harmonise disability assessments. It would ensure that holders of the cards may avail of disability benefits in a range of services across the EU. However, the current text presents some shortcomings. This study was provided by the Policy Department for Economic, Scientific and Quality of Life Policies at the request of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs.

Targeted measures for persons with disabilities to cope with the cost-of-living crisis

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, November 2023

This study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the PETI Committee, discusses the impact of the ongoing cost-of-living and energy crises on the standard of living for persons with disabilities. Based on available evidence, it provides an overview on legislation, policy measures and schemes that support persons with disabilities and their families to cope with the rising cost of living at the EU level and in selected Member States.

European Disability Card – Pre-legislative synthesis of national, regional and local positions on the European Commission's initiative

Briefing by Claudio Collova and Marie Lecerf, European Parliamentary Research Service, September 2023

This briefing provides a pre-legislative synthesis of the positions of national, regional and local governmental organisations on the European Commission's forthcoming proposal on the European Disability Card. It forms part

of an EPRS series offering a summary of the pre-legislative state of play and advance consultation on a range of key European Commission priorities during its 5-year term in office. It seeks to present the current state of affairs, to examine how existing policy is working on the ground, and to identify best practice and ideas for the future on the part of governmental organisations at all levels of the European system of multi-level governance.

Standards for equality bodies: Discrimination under Article 19 TFEU grounds

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, European Parliamentary Research Service, July 2023

Several EU directives dealing with equality require EU Member States to establish equality bodies with a focus on assisting victims of discrimination and preventing and fighting discrimination on the grounds listed under the directives. However, their rules are too general and have no precise definition of these bodies' duties and manner of operation, thus leading to disparities among the Member States' bodies. Additionally, the work of some Member States' bodies has been hampered by lack of resources, insufficient independence or a narrow remit. In 2018, the European Commission adopted a recommendation on standards for equality bodies. Later, after assessing its implementation, it decided to shift to binding legislation. In a package of legislative measures on equality, in December 2022 it published a proposal setting standards for equality bodies fighting discrimination on several grounds. A second proposal, under the ordinary legislative procedure, focuses specifically on equality between men and women in the employment field. The proposal reinforces the equality bodies' independence, resources and mandate. While generally welcoming the proposal, stakeholders have suggested specific changes to its provisions.

Political participation of people with disabilities in the EU

Briefing by Marie Lecerf, European Parliamentary Research Service, May 2023

In order to nurture democratic societies in which all members can participate fully, the United Nations and the European Union are striving for full inclusion of people with disabilities. Through its Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the UN promotes the political participation of people with disabilities. Through its Charter of Fundamental Rights, the EU guarantees each and every citizen the right to vote and stand as a candidate in elections to the European Parliament and the right to vote and stand as a candidate in municipal elections. The European Commission's 2021-2030 strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities commits the EU and its Member States to making those rights a reality. With the 2024 European elections on the horizon, the European Parliament is renewing its commitment to ensuring the equal participation of people with disabilities in this major European political event.

Strengthening equality bodies throughout the EU

Briefing by Claudio Collova and Meenakshi Fernandes, European Parliamentary Research Service, December 2022

This briefing provides a pre-legislative synthesis of the positions of national, regional and local governmental organisations on the European Commission's initiative on equality bodies, which have been established in every EU Member State to tackle discrimination. It seeks to present the state of affairs, to examine how existing policy is working on the ground, and identify best practice and ideas for the future on the part of governmental organisations at all levels of the EU system of multilevel governance.

Understanding EU policies for people with disabilities

Briefing by Marie Lecerf, European Parliamentary Research Service, December 2022

The EU combats all forms of discrimination alongside and in support of its Member States. To improve the situation of disabled people, it has introduced a series of initiatives, programmes and strategies over a number of decades. A new 2021-2030 strategy, incorporating lessons learned from its predecessor, seeks to ensure that all persons with disabilities in the EU, regardless of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age or sexual orientation: enjoy their human rights; have equal access to participation in society and the economy; can decide where, how and with whom they live; can move freely in the EU regardless of their support needs; and no longer experience discrimination.

Disability assessment, mutual recognition and the EU Disability Card - Progress and opportunities

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, November 2022

This study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the Committee on Petitions (PETI), examines the progress made on mutual recognition of disability status, and the challenges this presents. There are different definitions and practices of disability

assessment, among the Member States and in different policy fields. Citizens' petitions raise concerns about this, and about the need for mutual recognition. Harmonising assessment is difficult but common entry points are possible. The EU Disability Card provides an administrative model for mutual recognition.

The implementation of the 2015 Concluding Observations of the CRPD Committee by the EU

Study by European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, December 2021

This study, commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the Committee on Petitions, examines the level of implementation of the 2015 Concluding Observations of the CRPD Committee by the EU, in the view of the next monitoring and reporting cycle. It reveals that while some recommendations have been followed up by the EU through its Disability strategies and legislative and policy action, important gaps remain, notably in those areas where the EU has limited competences, or political support is lacking.

Creating opportunities in sport for people with disabilities

Briefing by Ivana Katsarova, European Parliamentary Research Service, February 2021

According to a 2018 Eurobarometer survey, having a disability or illness is the third most frequently mentioned reason – by 14 % of respondents – for not practising sports more regularly. To remove such barriers and improve the participation of people with disabilities in sports, over 50 Erasmus+ projects have supported such activities since 2014. At national level, some EU countries, such as France, Ireland and the Netherlands, have adopted centralised approaches based on national strategies and funding initiatives. Others, including Belgium, Italy and Spain, favour strategies developed and implemented mainly at regional or local level.

Implementation of the Employment Equality Directive in light of the UN CRPD

Study by Irmgard Anglmayer, European Parliamentary Research Service, December 2020

This study, undertaken in support of an implementation report of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), places a particular focus on reasonable accommodation, positive action, sanctions and equality bodies, and also to employment-related data regarding persons with disabilities.

Employment and disability in the European Union

Briefing by Marie Leclercq, European Parliamentary Research Service, May 2020

Even if there has been an overall improvement in the employment situation of persons with disabilities in the EU (given the increase in employment rates), they still remain among the most disadvantaged groups as regards employment. This phenomenon considerably affects the EU's social integration ability and economic growth. Alongside and in support of Member States' policies, the EU has introduced a series of legal provisions, initiatives, actions and strategies to improve the employment situation of disabled people. This briefing provides an overview of EU actions.

Lowering hurdles to sport for persons with disabilities

Infographic by Ivana Katsarova and Lucille Killmayer, European Parliamentary Research Service, December 2020

This infographic provides an overview of statistics on persons with disabilities and points to the international and EU policy framework which aims to enable those with disabilities to participate on a par with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities. It also highlights the EU efforts to remove barriers facing people with disabilities and improve their participation in sports.

Access to cultural life for people with disabilities

Briefing by Magdalena Pasikowska-Schnass, European Parliamentary Research Service, December 2019

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities entered into force in 2011. It enshrined, among other rights, the right of people with disabilities to access cultural venues such as theatres, cinemas and museums, and to enjoy cultural materials, books, films and music in an accessible format. It also highlighted the right of people with disabilities to participate in cultural life as both amateur and professional artists. The European Union, party to the Convention, is committed to working on legislation, and implementing and promoting programmes and actions in favour of these rights. The EU disability strategy is a step in this direction.

European Accessibility Act

Briefing on Legislation in Progress by Marie Lecerf, European Parliamentary Research Service, July 2019

To ensure the full participation of people with disabilities in society, and to reduce the fragmentation of legislation governing access to products and services, the European Commission has adopted a proposal for a directive – often referred to as the European Accessibility Act. This Commission proposal, published in December 2015, has been adopted by the Parliament and the Council in March 2019. Member States have to transpose the measures of the directive into national law by 28 June 2022, and apply them from 28 June 2025. However, a transitional period will allow service providers that were already using them lawfully to continue to use products that do not meet the requirements of the directive up to 28 June 2030.

Further reading

The European Disability Strategy 2010-2020

Briefing by Irmgard Anglmayer, European Parliamentary Research Service, July 2017

European disability policy: From defining disability to adopting a strategy

In-depth analysis by Marie Lecerf, European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2017

What if technology helped society to become more inclusive?

At a glance by Philip Boucher, European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2016

The obligations of the EU public administration under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

In-depth analysis by Irmgard Anglmayer, European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2016

EU implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

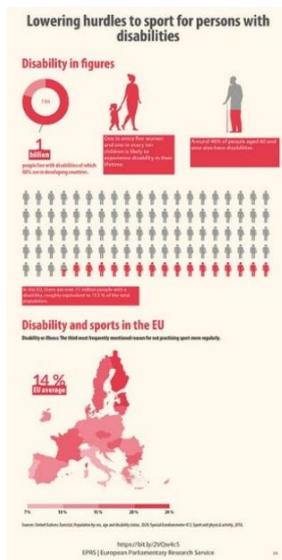
In-depth analysis by Irmgard Anglmayer, European Parliamentary Research Service, February 2016

Assistive technologies to support people with disabilities

Briefing by Nicole Scholz, European Parliamentary Research Service, June 2015

Graphics

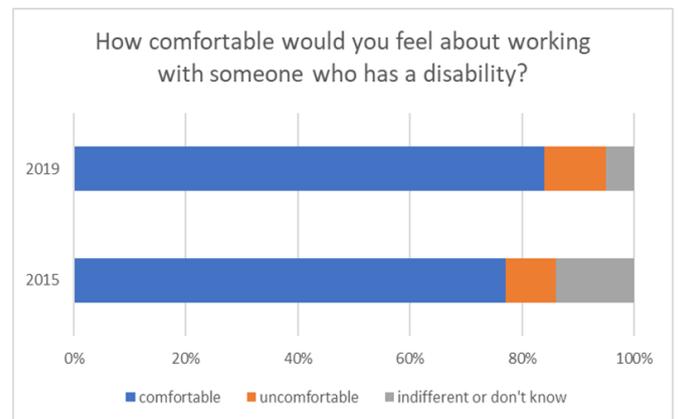
Lowering hurdles to sport for persons with disabilities (graphic available in 24 languages)



Source: Lowering hurdles to sport for persons with disabilities

Infographic by Ivana Katsarova and Lucille Killmayer, European Parliamentary Research Service, December 2020

Feeling at ease working with a person who has a disability (2015-2019)



Data source: Eurobarometer.

Source: Implementation of the Employment Equality Directive in light of the UN CRPD

Study by Irmgard Anglmayer, European Parliamentary Research Service, December 2020

