

## Implementation of the European disability strategy

Almost one in six people in the EU aged 15 and over live with some kind of disability. As the population ages, this number is expected to rise significantly. In February 2017, the European Commission published a progress report on the implementation of the European disability strategy 2010-2020. Parliament is due to discuss an own-initiative report on the strategy's implementation during its November II plenary session.

### Background: United Nations Convention and European disability strategy

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([CRPD](#)) is a legally binding international treaty adopted in 2006, and signed by the EU in 2007. According to the CRPD, 'persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'. The EU and most Member States have now ratified the CRPD. The main instrument supporting its implementation by the EU is the [European disability strategy 2010-2020](#). Its overall aim is to **empower** people with disabilities so that they can enjoy their full rights and participate in society on an equal basis with others. The strategy reflects the CRPD's core elements around eight areas for action: accessibility; participation; equality; employment; education and training; social protection; health; and external action. For each area, [key actions](#) are identified that need to be underpinned by four general instruments: awareness-raising; financial support; statistics and data; and specific mechanisms required by the CRPD.

### European Commission progress report on the implementation of the strategy

The strategy was up for mid-term review at the end of 2013. The Commission published its [progress report](#) on the first five years' [implementation](#), in February 2017. The report argues that progress has been achieved in all eight areas for action, albeit to varying extents. At the same time, it recognises that people with disabilities 'remain consistently disadvantaged in terms of employment, education and social inclusion'. According to the report, major progress was achieved in the area of accessibility, inter alia with the 2015 proposal for a [European Accessibility Act](#). The report concludes that 'disability concerns have been mainstreamed in a wealth of EU level actions, policies and laws'. It affirms that the objectives set out in the eight areas remain valid, as well as the instruments underpinning them, and that all relevant actions will be continued in 2017-2020.

### European Parliament position

In its 2011 [resolution](#) on the European disability strategy, Parliament pleaded, among other things, for people with disabilities to be involved in all measures and decisions that affect them, and regretted the absence of an integrated gender perspective in the strategy. In 2016, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the implementation of the CRPD, with special regard to the UN's [concluding observations](#) on the state of implementation of obligations under the CRPD. The resolution prompted EU institutions to ensure that all existing and future legislation fully adheres to CRPD recommendations. Moreover, several parliamentary questions have addressed the delay in the Commission's mid-term review. On 19 October 2017, the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) adopted an own-initiative [report](#) on the implementation of the strategy, by rapporteur Helga Stevens (ECR, Belgium). The report stresses, in particular, the need to mainstream equality, gender and non-discrimination, as well as the rights of children with disabilities, into all areas of a future strategy, and it urges the Commission and the Member States to reach out to the most vulnerable, such as homeless persons. The report is due to be voted during the November II plenary.

Own-initiative report: [2017/2127\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: EMPL; Rapporteur: Helga Stevens (ECR, Belgium).

