No barriers: empowering people living with a disability

The European Parliament is hosting an event on 6 December to discuss how to ensure people with a disability can fully participate in society.

4th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities

The Parliament, together with the European Disability Forum, is organising the 4th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities on Wednesday 6 December.

Parliament President Antonio Tajani said: "Our commitment to improve the lives of people with disabilities is founded in our values as Europeans, including our attachment to freedom, equality and the inclusion of all individuals in society. These values have to be translated into concrete actions, to enable every person to live an independent life, and to make sure that our society empowers everyone."

The event brings together more than 600 activists and delegates from organisations representing people with disabilities from across Europe, MEPs and representatives of other EU institutions. Participants will discuss among how people with a disability can participate in public and political life, including their right to vote, the European Disability Strategy 2020-2030 and the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The event will be opened by Tajani and Yannis Vardakastanis, the president of the European Disability Forum.
Starting at 10.00 CET, the event can be followed live online. Check out the programme for details.

Challenges

Nearly one in six people aged 15 or above in the EU lives with some kind of disability and this is expected to increase due to Europe’s ageing population. The poverty rate for people with a disability is 70% higher than the average as they face additional expenses, lower incomes and a reduced chance of finding a job.

The European Disability Strategy aims to improve their situation by promoting accessibility, participation and equality in all areas of life, higher employment rates and inclusive education as well as social protection and necessary health services.

On Thursday 30 November MEPs adopted an own initiative report by Belgian ECR member Helga Stevens, evaluating the implementation of the European Disability Strategy for 2010-2020.

"Disability affects all areas of society, but a lot of people don't realise that," said Stevens. It's not limited to a social issue."

Strategy to empower people with a disability

Adopted in 2010, the European Disability Strategy is the EU’s main instrument for implementing the UN's convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, which is a legally-binding human rights treaty. The idea is to ensure that people living with a disability are able to fully enjoy their rights.

For the EU this means that all existing and future legislation must be in line with what has been set out in the convention.
Parliament recommendations

The report on the strategy MEPs adopted on 30 November stresses that people with a disability are entitled to equal treatment and autonomy, but more measures are needed to ensure this. It also calls for the swift adoption of further legislation such as the European Accessibility Act.

In addition the report recommends mandatory requirements on the accessibility of public spaces and minimum percentages for hiring people with a disability in public and private sectors. In additions measures are needed to make education inclusive, including the full accessibility of EU initiatives such as Erasmus+, while the emergency number 112 should also be fully accessible. It also draws attention to the situation of women and children living with a disability in the report.

Find out more
Press release on the plenary vote (30 November 2017)
Briefing on the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020
At a glance: implementation of the European Disability Strategy
Procedural steps