



2017/2127(INI)

13.10.2017

OPINION

of the Committee on Culture and Education

for the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs

on the implementation of the European Disability Strategy
(2017/2127(INI))

Rapporteur: Julie Ward

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Culture and Education calls on the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Considers it essential to keep a rights-based approach when dealing with the issue of disability in all policy areas;
2. Calls on the Commission to provide better support to Member States' efforts to remove legal and organisational barriers and to ensure equal access for people with disabilities to inclusive education and training, including vocational education and training (VET) and adult learning, culture, tourism and sport; emphasises the importance of ensuring the availability, accessibility and affordability of individualised support services for people with disabilities;
3. Calls on the Member States to ensure that education and training are organised to include children and adults with physical or intellectual disabilities, providing counselling, assistance and individual teaching;
4. Urges the Member States to ensure access to quality and inclusive early childhood and primary education and social care, to put in place appropriate structures and effective measures for young children with disabilities and/or special educational needs (SEN) and to provide individual support in the best interests of the child, including for migrant children and children suffering from multiple discrimination, to respond to specific and diverse needs and to facilitate the successful inclusion of migrants and minorities in mainstream education;
5. Calls for the Member States to provide all necessary resources, including sufficient funding, for adequate assistance for pupils and students with disabilities as well as staff training in education and lifelong learning infrastructures;
6. Highlights that preparing teachers and trainers to work with children with disabilities and providing them with adequate support is essential; encourages the Member States to design inclusive education, training and continuous professional development for teachers and trainers, with inputs from a variety of stakeholders, particularly organisations representing people with disabilities and professionals with disabilities;
7. Regrets the gradual cuts in public funding for education as a result of the economic crisis in Europe; points out that education is a fundamental human right and a common good;
8. Calls, given the high number of early school leavers among young people with disabilities and/or SEN, for further exploration of the opportunities offered by lifelong learning and the provision of attractive alternatives; considers the promotion of lifelong learning programmes for disabled people to be a vital part of the European Disability Strategy;
9. Encourages the exchange of best practices on inclusive education and lifelong learning between teachers, staff, governing bodies, students and pupils with disabilities;
10. Recommends providing special advisers on site at universities, job centres and other

employment services and initiatives, to give advice to students with disabilities on career opportunities;

11. Calls on the Commission, together with the Member States, to set targets for education and training participation, poverty reduction and employment for people with disabilities and people with special needs, and to closely monitor and evaluate their situation at local, regional, national and EU level;
12. Expresses its concerns that, in spite of improvements, people with disabilities are still at high risk of unemployment and that less than 30 % have completed tertiary education or equivalent, compared to around 40 % for people without disabilities; calls, therefore, on the Member States and the Commission to pay special attention to the difficulties young people with disabilities and/or SEN encounter during their transition from secondary and university education and/or vocational training to employment and to make use, for this purpose, of all existing instruments and initiatives in the fields of employment, youth policy, culture, sports and education, such as the Youth Guarantee, Youth on the Move, the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); calls, moreover, for the relevant associations, the families of people with disabilities and the people with disabilities themselves to be involved in the entire decision-making process;
13. Calls for a broader provision of quality traineeships to be made available and accessible to young people with disabilities;
14. Points out, in relation to employment, that the provision of a personal assistant during working hours is, in many cases, the only option for persons with disabilities to work, to be part of the team and to avoid enforced home-based work; calls on the Member States to adopt and encourage any necessary measures to ensure the accessibility and inclusivity of workplaces;
15. Stresses that lower educational attainment, the phenomenon of early school leaving, the lack of adapted programmes, discrimination, the lack of skills and support for jobs, as well as the accessibility of workplaces continue to be the main obstacles to labour market inclusion;
16. Deplores the fact that the employment rate among women with disabilities is less than 50 %, a figure which highlights the dual discrimination that they face, making it difficult for them to play a full part in society;
17. Encourages EU public institutions and companies to implement diversity policies and the national Diversity Charters;
18. Considers it essential to promote effective access to mobility – including through the introduction in all Member States of the EU Disability Card, a mutual recognition system currently being developed by the EU in order to ensure equal access to certain specific benefits, mainly in the areas of culture, leisure, sport and transport – and to extracurricular activities, such as theatre, dance, music, art, to improve information for people with disabilities regarding mobility opportunities, to provide them with the necessary guidance and assistance and to address the difficulties they encounter, including through the proper training of staff in national agencies and hosting institutions;

19. Recalls that, in spite of efforts to make the Erasmus+ programmes and other mobility initiatives more inclusive, the lack of harmonisation among national social systems and of the portability of rights represent huge barriers to the mobility of people with disabilities; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to strengthen collaboration in this field with a view to facilitating the mobility of people with disabilities and to prevent discriminatory practices in selection processes for mobility schemes, such as setting a budget cap on hosting students with disabilities, notably through Erasmus+; recommends, in general, that the financial needs of young people with disabilities should be taken into account when drawing up the budgets for mobility programmes in order to avoid discrimination;
20. Welcomes the ongoing effort to include access provisions in Union programmes and initiatives and calls for further mainstreaming of accessibility requirements in Union cultural policies, including through the implementation of the Marrakech Treaty, the review of the Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) Directive, the European Capitals of Culture and Creative Europe; recalls, however, the need to have a global transversal approach on accessibility to all services through the adoption of the European Accessibility Act;
21. Takes the view that ongoing modernisation in the cultural and creative sectors can help to ensure the accessibility of services; calls on the Commission and the Member States, therefore, to ensure that the relevant organisations make their services accessible and to adopt measures to ensure more widespread access to culture for people with disabilities, not merely as spectators, but also as actors and protagonists able to act and intervene, with no discrimination whatsoever, in the cultural world;
22. Welcomes the commitment to raise social awareness of issues related to persons with disabilities; underlines, further, that the media can be a vital instrument in raising awareness, countering stigma and misinformation and changing societal misconceptions about people with disabilities and people with special needs; stresses, furthermore, that by increasing awareness and understanding of disability issues and of the diversity of persons with disabilities and their situations, the media can actively contribute to the effective and successful integration of persons with disabilities in all aspects of social life; stresses also the importance of educating citizens on issues related to people with hidden/invisible disabilities in order to protect such persons from abuse;
23. Underlines that young people with disabilities participate less in physical activity than their peers without disabilities and that schools play an important role in adopting a healthy lifestyle; stresses, therefore, the importance of fostering greater participation of young people with disabilities in physical activities; calls on the Member States to swiftly eliminate all existing barriers hindering the participation of people with disabilities or people with special needs in sports activities;
24. Welcomes the increase in support for access to sport for people with disabilities through the Erasmus+ programme and calls for appropriate support to be given to initiatives aimed at improving accessibility and participation in sport at all levels, also for people with temporary impairments;
25. Recalls the need to bridge the digital gap and to ensure that people with disabilities benefit fully from the Digital Union; stresses in this context the importance of improving the

digital skills and competences of persons with disabilities, notably through projects financed by the Erasmus+ programme, and calls on Member States to ensure the protection of vulnerable citizens – including persons with disabilities – online, through efficient measures against hate speech, cyberbullying and all forms of online discrimination and by providing more education in digital and media literacy as part of both non-formal and formal education; calls, in addition, on the Member States to make appropriate technological educational tools available free of charge to children with disabilities, to allow them to fully join in with educational and training activities;

26. Calls for the enhanced use of digital tools and digitalisation as a means of supporting the entry of people with disabilities into full-time employment in spheres such as the IT industry;
27. Calls on the Member States to transpose, without delay, Directive (EU) 2016/2102 on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies¹, to ensure that everyone is able to enjoy the right to information and democratic participation; calls for the EU institutions, in this context, to comply with the requirements and obligations laid down in the Directive with regard to the accessibility of EU websites and to step up their efforts to facilitate the use of sign language in the EU institutions' communication and functioning, in order to improve opportunities for interaction with citizens with disabilities;
28. Affirms, in the context of the European Pillar of Social Rights, the need to ensure the participation of civil society and representatives of people with disabilities in civic dialogue, in addition to the social partners;
29. Considers that education for active citizenship should address the prospects of persons with disabilities who face disproportionately more barriers, including physical ones, in relation to access to civic participation; recalls that all citizens have a right to vote and calls on the Member States to take the necessary action to ensure this right is respected when it comes to people with disabilities;
30. Notes with concern that refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities face multiple challenges, such as the lack of access to assistance and to education and insufficient access to assistive technology, which could make communication and integration easier; calls, therefore, on the Commission, together with the Member States and in cooperation with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities among refugees and asylum seekers and encourages the Member States to ensure equal access to education for all, notably through specific programmes and measures for immigrants and refugees with disabilities, as well as to exchange good practices on innovative and successful programmes for refugees with disabilities, particularly in the areas of inclusive and special needs education, vocational training and skills development;
31. Highlights the key role of carers and, in particular, family members, who often fulfil the care and assistance needs of the disabled person in almost their entirety; stresses the urgent need for EU and national policies and subsequent legislative initiatives to support the family, taking into account that in almost all cases mothers carry the burden of

¹ OJ L 327, 2.12.2016, p. 1.

disability management and are forced to reduce or suspend their professional activity in order to assist their disabled family member, particularly in relation to the young and the elderly; calls on the Member States to adopt relevant and suitable actions to support families and carers and to develop a set of regulatory instruments and services enabling parents or relatives of children with disabilities to benefit from leave and/or time off work to enable them to balance their work with their care duties;

32. Stresses that in order to ensure that EU legislation is progressively harmonised with the measures laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the directive on the European Accessibility Act will need to be adopted more swiftly and all Member States asked to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to implement the recommendations of the UN Committee, with reference to Article 24, so that the EU can equip itself with the necessary resources to make inclusive, quality education more easily accessible;
33. Recalls the obligations of the CRPD, ratified by the European Union, as well as Articles 21 and 26 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which state that independence, integration and access to an inclusive education and training system, civic and cultural life, recreational activities and sport are guaranteed rights, and that any form of discrimination based on disability is prohibited; urges the Commission and the Member States to scale up their efforts to fully implement these obligations, namely by adopting legislative measures in compliance with those rights, or else risk failing to reach the 2020 targets set by the European Disability Strategy;
34. Believes that greater synergy is needed between the European Disability Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular with regard to education and training, which should be reinforced;
35. Calls for proper funding and support for monitoring progress as well as for the scrutiny of current and future Union legal acts in respect of CRPD obligations;
36. Highlights that, in order to better assess the implementation and the outcomes of the European disability strategy, improved data collection, statistics and monitoring are needed; regrets that, for example, among the EU SDG indicators, the one pertaining to education is not disaggregated by disability; underlines that the European Disability Strategy should aim at bridging the gap in the collection of data on the access to education of persons with disabilities; calls, therefore, on the Member States and the Commission to ensure an effective data collection system by means of clear indicators on the access to education of persons with disabilities, in particular data concerning high-dependency individuals; considers it useful also to include a gender perspective in programme design and to collect gender-disaggregated data on the situation of people with disabilities and on monitoring policies and actions in this field, as well as collecting intersectional data on vulnerable people and those facing multiple discrimination;
37. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to support an EU-level network and cooperation between national and European associations of people with disabilities with a view to promoting the exchange of experience and best practices.

**ANNEX: LIST OF ENTITIES OR PERSONS
FROM WHOM THE RAPPORTEUR HAS RECEIVED INPUT**

The following list is drawn up on a purely voluntary basis under the exclusive responsibility of the rapporteur. The rapporteur has received input from the following entities or persons in the preparation of the opinion, until the adoption thereof in committee:

Entity and/or person
European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
European Disability Forum

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	10.10.2017
Result of final vote	+: 26 -: 0 0: 1
Members present for the final vote	Isabella Adinolfi, Dominique Bilde, Andrea Bocskor, Nikolaos Chountis, Silvia Costa, Mircea Diaconu, Damian Drăghici, Angel Dzhambazki, María Teresa Giménez Barbat, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Curzio Maltese, Rupert Matthews, Morten Messerschmidt, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Michaela Šojdrová, Helga Trüpel, Sabine Verheyen, Julie Ward, Theodoros Zagorakis, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Krystyna Łybacka
Substitutes present for the final vote	Michel Reimon, Remo Sernagiotto
Substitutes under Rule 200(2) present for the final vote	Miltiadis Kyrkos, Jarosław Wałęsa, Patricija Šulin

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

26	+
ALDE	Mircea Diaconu, María Teresa Giménez Barbat
ECR	Angel Dzhambazki, Rupert Matthews, Morten Messerschmidt, Remo Sernagiotto
EFDD	Isabella Adinolfi
GUE/NGL	Nikolaos Chountis, Curzio Maltese
PPE	Andrea Bocskor, Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, Sabine Verheyen, Jarosław Wałęsa, Theodoros Zagorakis, Bogdan Andrzej Zdrojewski, Michaela Šojdrová, Patricija Šulin
S&D	Silvia Costa, Damian Drăghici, Miltiadis Kyrkos, Luigi Morgano, Momchil Nekov, Julie Ward, Krystyna Łybacka
Verts/ALE	Michel Reimon, Helga Trüpel

0	-

1	0
ENF	Dominique Bilde

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention