



*Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
The Chair*

26.5.2021

Ms Dolors Montserrat
Chair
Committee on Petitions
Brussels

Subject: Opinion on the protection of persons with disabilities through petitions: lessons learnt (2020/2209(INI))

Dear Madam Chair,

Under the procedure referred to above, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality has decided to submit an opinion to your committee. At its meeting of 16 March 2021, the committee coordinators decided to send the opinion in the form of a letter.

At the meeting of 25 May 2021¹, the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality considered the matter and it decided to call on the Committee on Petitions, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution.

Yours sincerely,

Evelyn Regner

¹ The following were present for the final vote: Isabella Adinolfi, Simona Baldassarre, Robert Biedroń (Vice-Chair), Vilija Blinkevičiūtė, Annika Bruna, Rosa Estaràs Ferragut, Frances Fitzgerald, Cindy Franssen, Helène Fritzon, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Elena Kountoura, Alice Kuhnke, Predrag Fred Matić, Karen Melchior, Andželika Anna Możdżanowska, Pina Picierno, Sirpa Pietikäinen, Samira Rafaela, Evelyn Regner (Chair), Diana Riba i Giner, Eugenia Rodríguez Palop (Vice-Chair), María Soraya Rodríguez Ramos, Christine Schneider, Sylwia Spurek (Vice-Chair), Jessica Stegrud, Irène Tolleret, Isabella Tovaglieri, Ernest Urtasun, Hilde Vautmans, Elissavet Vozemberg-Vrionidi (Vice-Chair), Margarita de la Pisa Carrión and Elżbieta Katarzyna Łukacijewska.

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality calls on the Committee on Petitions, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

- A. whereas 46 million women and girls in the European Union are living with disabilities²;
- B. whereas women and girls with disabilities experience multiple intersectional discrimination and challenges arising from the intersection of gender and disability with sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, country of origin, class, migration status, age, or racial or ethnic origin; whereas women with disabilities from minority backgrounds are more likely to experience triple discrimination on account of their vulnerable situation; whereas discrimination creates obstacles to their participation in all areas of life, including socio-economic disadvantages, social isolation, gender-based violence, forced sterilisation and abortion, lack of access to community services, culture, sports and leisure, low-quality housing, institutionalisation and inadequate healthcare; whereas these obstacles diminish the probability of fully participating in, actively engaging in and contributing to society, including in education and the labour market;
- C. whereas in the European Union 20.6 % of women with disabilities are in full-time employment compared with 28.5 % of men with disabilities³; whereas figures show that, on average, 29.5 % of women with disabilities in the EU are at risk of falling victim to poverty and social exclusion, compared with 27.5 % of men with disabilities⁴;
- D. whereas the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities notes that women and girls with disabilities are at greater risk of violence both within and outside the home; whereas some Member States have not yet ratified the Istanbul Convention; whereas extending the areas of crime to encompass specific forms of gender-based violence in accordance with Article 83(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) will provide greater protection for women and girls with disabilities;

Protecting the rights of women with disabilities

1. Welcomes the Disability Strategy 2021-2030 and its references to the specific challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities; calls for the intersection of gender and disability to be mainstreamed in all EU policies, programmes, initiatives, and in Member States' national action plans; calls for optimising the use of the existing and future EU funding instruments to promote accessibility and non-discrimination;
2. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the full development,

² European Parliament resolution of 29 November 2018 on the situation of women with disabilities, OJ C 363, 28.10.2020, p. 164.

³ Gender Equality Index 2020.

⁴ European Parliament resolution of 18 June 2020 on the European Disability Strategy post-2020, Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0156.

advancement and empowerment of women with disabilities and to promote their participation in public decision-making; points out that adequate measures should be put in place to ensure that their perspectives are fully taken into account and that, together with disability-specific consultative bodies, the participation of organisations representing women with disabilities is promoted;

3. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to urgently address the gender-based violence that women and girls with disabilities face to a disproportionate degree via the Istanbul Convention and by extending the areas of crime to encompass specific forms of gender-based violence in accordance with Article 83(1) of the TFEU; calls on the Commission to use this as a legal basis to propose binding measures and a holistic EU framework directive to prevent and combat all forms of gender-based violence; calls on the Commission to ensure that the needs of women with disabilities are included in initiatives that provide support to victims through the Gender Equality Strategy and the Victims' Rights Strategy, and to ensure that support for victims is designed in accordance with the principle of accessibility;
4. Regrets the gender-based discrimination that women and girls with both physical and cognitive disabilities experience within the medical sector; considers that women and girls with disabilities must have full and equal access to medical treatments that meet their particular needs, via disability-specific healthcare and mainstream services; calls on the Member States to ensure further education of medical professionals with regard to the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities, and to ensure that women and girls with disabilities receive all appropriate information to enable them to freely take decisions regarding their health;
5. Calls for universal respect for, and access to, sexual and reproductive health and rights; regrets the backlash against women's sexual and reproductive health and rights in some countries, which is particularly harmful for women and girls with disabilities, who face additional obstacles in accessing healthcare; emphasises the importance of Member States taking all necessary measures to combat forced sterilisation; urges the Member States to ensure public investment to guarantee full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls with disabilities; regrets that sexuality education is often denied to girls with disabilities; urges the Member States to ensure comprehensive and inclusive education on sexuality and relationships;
6. Calls on the Member States to guarantee an accessible, non-stereotyped education system, with inclusive education measures, which prepare women and girls with disabilities for the labour market, with a specific focus on digital capabilities and lifelong learning, and to guarantee that women and girls with disabilities can choose their areas of study, to enable them to pursue jobs that they want to do and in which they can use their full potential, and in which they are not limited by inaccessibility, prejudice or stereotypes; acknowledges the link between education and subsequent employment; stresses the need for full access to education in order to combat the employment gap;
7. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to address the employment gap faced by women with disabilities, notably by tackling gender stereotypes, strengthening their participation in the digital economy, increasing their representation in education,

training and employment in STEM subjects and occupations, and combating deterrents to work such as sexual harassment; calls on the Commission and the Member States to take concrete measures to ensure that women with disabilities participate in decision-making and receive equal pay for equal work via binding pay transparency measures, to combat their high risk of in-work poverty and to adjust labour regulations such as flexible working arrangements and parental leave to their specific needs; calls on the Commission and the Member States to support social economy business models and initiatives aimed at improving social and labour inclusion of women with disabilities through the Action Plan on Social Economy;

8. Notes that more data and information collection are crucial for understanding the situation that women and girls with disabilities face; calls for relevant, accurate and disaggregated gender-sensitive and disabilities-sensitive data to account for the challenges faced by women with disabilities, particularly in the labour market.