

The EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030

Achievements and perspectives



This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Petitions.

AUTHORS

Dr. Magdi BIRTHA, European Centre for Social Welfare Policy and Research.

ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBLE

Georgiana SANDU

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Ewelina MIAZGA

LINGUISTIC VERSIONS

Original: EN

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Policy departments provide in-house and external expertise to support EP committees and other parliamentary bodies in shaping legislation and exercising democratic scrutiny over EU internal policies.

To contact the Policy Department or to subscribe for updates, please write to:

Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs

European Parliament

B-1047 Brussels

Email: poldep-citizens@europarl.europa.eu

Manuscript completed in November 2024

© European Union, 2024

This document is available on the internet at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses>

DISCLAIMER AND COPYRIGHT

The opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament.

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy.

© Cover image used under licence from Adobe Stock.com

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
1. STATE OF PLAY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU DISABILITY STRATEGY 2021-2030	6
2. MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES	8
2.1. Situation and trends analysis	8
2.2. Information requested by the UN CRPD Committee from the European Union	11
2.3. Petitions received by the European Parliament	11
2.4. Cases in front of the European Ombudsman in relation to persons with disabilities	12
3. ROOM FOR FUTURE (FLAGSHIP) INITIATIVES IN THE EU DISABILITY STRATEGY POST-2024	13
ANNEX 1	15

INTRODUCTION

KEY FINDINGS

The **EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030** is the policy framework of the European Commission for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The strategy includes an ambitious set of actions and flagship initiatives until 2024 in various domains, linked to the UNCRPD. **Six of the seven flagship initiatives have already been implemented**, and the remaining one is expected to be published by early 2025. Most of the other policy actions included in the Strategy are also completed by 2024. Despite significant efforts to implement the UNCRPD across the EU, **persistent gaps remain between persons with and without disabilities**, for example when it comes to **poverty, access to jobs, inclusive education, housing, or healthcare services**.

As the European Commission is expected to propose new initiatives for the remaining time of the Strategy until 2030, the objective of the briefing is to give a **clear and simple overview on the current Strategy** for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, on its achievements so far and to put forward ideas for areas where new actions could be proposed. Based on available quantitative and qualitative evidence, including petitions to the European parliament **the briefing identifies nine key recommendations** to move forward with the implementation of the Strategy.

Monitoring the implementation of already existing legislation and policies must be a continuous effort in the coming years, through **better coordination among the UNCRPD monitoring frameworks** at national and EU level. EU funds continue to play an important role in realising the rights of persons with disabilities when implementing the Strategy, but **targeting and disability inclusive investments**, in line with UNCRPD principles should be enhanced. Furthermore, better **disability mainstreaming** is needed in more general EU initiatives, for instance in those aiming to tackle the impact of the energy and cost-of-living crises, as well as in the upcoming EU Anti-Poverty Strategy or the European Affordable Housing Plan.

In March 2021, the European Commission adopted the **European Disability Strategy 2021-2030** (hereafter 'the Strategy') with the aim of promoting equal opportunities and full inclusion for persons with disabilities in Europe, and around the world.¹ The Strategy is the policy framework for the European Commission to implement the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** (hereafter "UNCRPD", or "the Convention"). The UNCRPD is ratified by the EU and all its 27 Member States, and the implementation is in progress, albeit at different pace.² The Strategy is also part of the implementation of the **European Pillar of Social Rights**³, and in particular principle 17 on the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

This 10-year strategy is building on the results of the previous European Disability Strategy 2010-2020⁴, which thrived towards a barrier-free Europe and empowering persons with disabilities so they can enjoy their rights and participate fully in society and the economy. Despite the progress made until

¹ European Commission (2021). Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030. Retrieved from: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3e1e2228-7c97-11eb-9ac9-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.

² For further information, see: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1137>.

³ [Interinstitutional Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights \(2017/C 428/09\)](#).

⁴ European Commission (2010). European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe. Retrieved from: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/>.

2020, **persons with disabilities still face considerable barriers across Europe**, and have a higher risk of poverty and social exclusion. Thus, the Strategy 2021-2030 includes an ambitious set of actions and flagship initiatives in various domains linked to the UNCRPD. Policy areas covered in the Strategy include accessibility, employment, education, non-discrimination, and social protection. The objective of the Strategy 2021-2030 is to progress towards ensuring that **all persons with disabilities in Europe enjoy their human rights and can participate on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life**.

Flagship initiatives were identified until 2024, therefore with the new legislative term for the European Parliament and the commencement of the new Commission (2024-2029), it is timely to take stock of the achievements of the Strategy so far and to identify new initiatives that are necessary to improve the lives of persons with disabilities in Europe, and beyond, in line with the provisions of the UNCRPD.

This briefing is building on the most recent available data and information on the situation of persons with disabilities and presents key challenges that were highlighted by the UNCRPD Committee in their List of Issues to the EU, by citizens in petitions submitted to the European Parliament and in the complaints received by the European Ombudsman. Based on this assessment, there are several policy areas which are covered by the Strategy, but where more needs to be done, either because no flagship initiatives focused on those issues since 2021, or because despite the implemented policy initiatives, persistent gaps exist between persons with and without disabilities.

1. STATE OF PLAY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU DISABILITY STRATEGY 2021-2030

The Strategy includes **seven flagship initiatives**:

1. To launch a European resource centre **AccessibleEU** to increase coherence in accessibility policies and facilitate access to relevant knowledge.
2. To create a **European Disability Card** by the end of 2023 with a view to be recognised in all Member States.
3. To develop a **Guidance** recommending improvements **on independent living** and inclusion in the community.
4. To present, by 2024, a specific **framework for Social Services of Excellence** for persons with disabilities.
5. To present a **package to improve labour market outcomes** of persons with disabilities.
6. To establish the Disability Platform.
7. To adopt a **renewed HR strategy** that includes actions to promote diversity and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Six of these flagship initiatives ([AccessibleEU](#), [European Disability Card](#), [Guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community](#), [Disability Employment Package](#), [Disability Platform](#), renewed [European Commission HR Strategy](#)) have already been completed at the time of writing this briefing. Out of those, the Directive establishing the **European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities** is the **only legislation adopted under the Strategy** so far.⁵ The European Disability Card serves as a **proof of disability status** across all EU countries and grants cardholders equal access to special conditions and preferential treatments anywhere in the EU when using public transport, attending cultural events and visiting museums, leisure and sports centres, amusement parks. The improved European Parking Card with a common EU format will replace national cards to ensure that all people with a recognised disability have access to the preferential parking rights and facilities of the country they visit. By 5 June 2027, Member States shall adopt and publish the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the Directive. They shall apply those measures as from 5 June 2028.

In some areas, like accessibility, several pieces of EU legislation have been already adopted to enhance the participation of persons with disabilities in the past decade. Most importantly, the **European Accessibility Act** (EAA)⁶, which aims to improve the functioning of the internal market for selected accessible products and services (e.g. phones, computers, e-books, banking services etc.). Member States had to transpose the EAA by 2022, however, there are **open infringement proceedings against all Member States** either for not transposing before the deadline, or for not doing it despite warnings after the deadline, or for doing it partially or incorrectly. In July 2024, the European Commission decided to refer Bulgaria to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failing to incorporate the EAA into national law.⁷ This shows that there is a **need for coordinated action across the European**

⁵ Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities, see: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32024L2841>.

⁶ European Accessibility Act: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/>.

⁷ See: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_3801.

Commission to monitor the implementation of existing laws and policies in the Member States and their impact on the lives of persons with disabilities.

All other flagship initiatives of the Strategy are soft law that either provide guidance and support to Member States to implement the UNCRPD or facilitate the internal implementation of the Convention by EU institutions. For instance, the most recently published **Guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community** provides practical **recommendations to Member States on the use of EU funding** to accelerate the transition from institutional care to community-based services and make independent living for persons with disabilities a reality. The **remaining flagship initiative** (framework for Social Services of Excellence) is **expected to be published by early 2025**. Beyond the flagship initiatives, there are other commitments the European Commission made in the Strategy, most of them implemented by 2024.⁸ Furthermore, several **mutual learning events (peer reviews)** under the Open Method of Coordination took place in recent years, linked to key areas of the Strategy that helped Member States to exchange experiences and good practices (e.g. Peer review on '*Participation of persons with disabilities in the development of social services at local level*', 3-4 October 2024, Vienna (Austria)).

Table 1 provides a detailed overview on the policy areas covered in the Strategy with the connecting flagship initiatives, other actions outlined for the European Commission as well as calls for action for EU Member States. The table includes links to the completed initiatives, wherever it was possible to find information on the European Commission's website. Pending initiatives and initiatives where no information was available publicly are also marked. Links to other, more general EU law, or policy initiatives are also mentioned in the table to have a better overview of ongoing or planned actions and highlight the **need for disability mainstreaming**.⁹ It is beyond the scope of this briefing to provide an impact assessment of the implemented flagship initiatives, which should be carried out as part of a **comprehensive mid-term evaluation of the 2021-2030 Strategy**.

EU funds play an important role in realising the rights of persons with disabilities when implementing the Strategy. EU financial instruments under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027 (and beyond), the NextGeneration EU, the Recovery Plan, or the Technical Support Instrument for Member States are particularly relevant in this context. The European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) is the most important funding scheme available for Member States to co-finance actions aimed at fighting poverty and exclusion, combating discrimination and helping the most disadvantaged groups, including persons with disabilities to gain access to the labour market. While persons with disabilities continue to be beneficiaries of ESF+ funded programmes¹⁰, it is worth noting that there is **no special earmarking to address the needs of persons with disabilities** under ESF+. Furthermore, no data is available publicly that would show disaggregated by disability the amount of funds spent under ESF during the 2014-2020 period. As part of the implementation of the Strategy, in the post-2027 MFF regulation, **better disability targeting** should be considered, along with **maintaining the horizontal enabling condition on the implementation of the UN CRPD**.

⁸ The Web Accessibility Action Plan 2022-2025 was published by the European Commission, but access is now restricted, thus it is not available to the public: https://commission.europa.eu/resources-partners/europa-web-guide/design-content-and-development/accessibility_en.

⁹ Disclaimer: non-exhaustive list, author's own compilation of some relevant planned or ongoing policy initiatives.

¹⁰ During the 2014-2020 period, the number of persons with disabilities benefitting from ESF showed a steady increase and by 2021, 3.6 million participants with disabilities received help to improve their employment opportunities and develop the right skills for the labour market. Source: Exploring open data on ESF participants: <https://cohesiondata.ec.europa.eu/stories/s/2014-2020-ESF-and-YEI-participants/49qq-idz4/>.

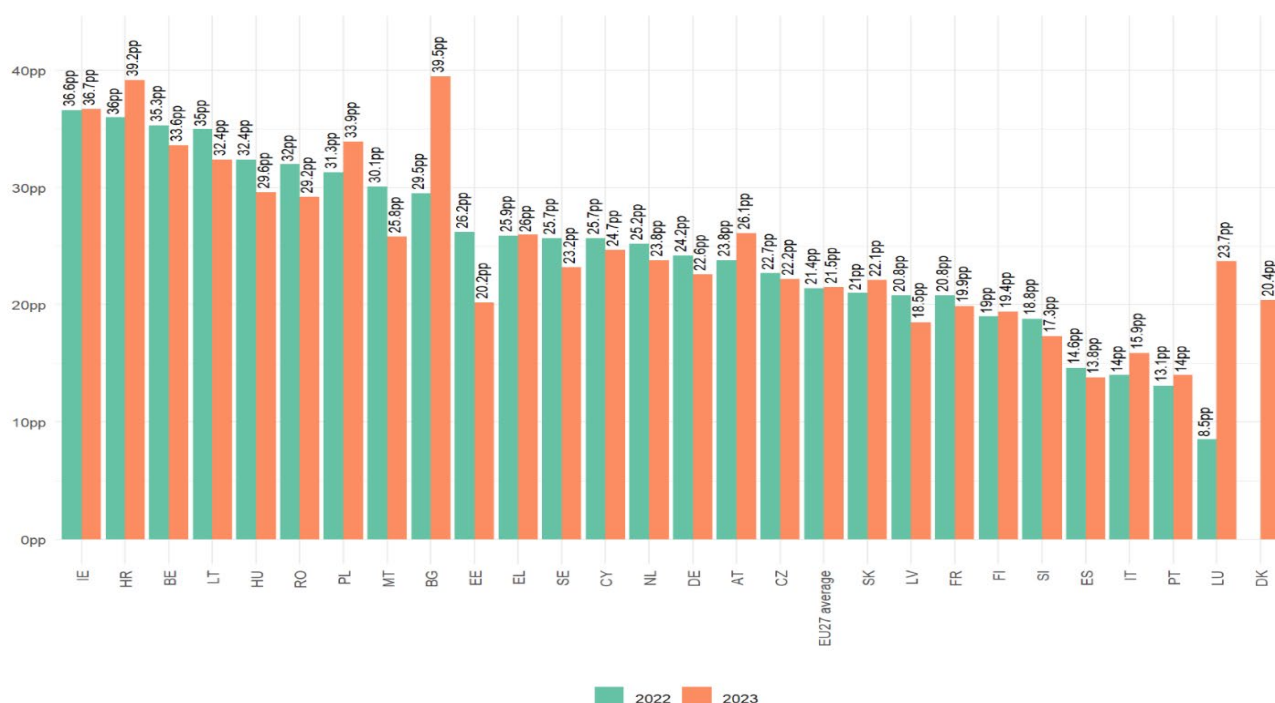
2. MAIN CHALLENGES FACED BY PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

This section provides a brief, non-exhaustive overview of the main challenges faced by persons with disabilities, relying on four main sources of information:

- Situation and trend analysis, building on EU data
- Information requested by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities from the EU in the List of Issues
- Petitions received by the European Parliament concerning the rights of persons with disabilities
- Complaints received by and own inquiries of the European Ombudsman.

2.1. Situation and trends analysis

EU data shows that in 2023, 26.8% of the EU population over the age of 16 had some form of disability. Across Europe, persons with disabilities still face considerable barriers when it comes to accessing jobs, healthcare services, attaining higher education, or having adequate standard of living. The main indicator for employment of persons with disabilities is the **disability employment gap** (prepared by Eurostat).¹¹ In **2023, the EU average was 21.5pp**, Bulgaria had the highest disability employment gap, replacing Ireland in the ranking. Spain closely followed by Portugal recorded the lowest disability employment gap in 2023, thus replacing Luxembourg which experienced a strong increase above the EU average in 2023 (Figure 1).



Source: Eurostat [tepsr_sp200], extracted on 2024-10-16

Figure 1: Disability employment gap (age 20-64) by Member State (2022 & 2023)

¹¹ Available [here](#).

Persons with disabilities in the EU had on average an unemployment rate of 15.1% in 2022 compared to 7.6% for persons without activity limitations (Figure 2). This is a decrease compared to 2020 (17.7%), thanks to the general improvement in unemployment rates.¹² However, the reduction is greater for persons without disabilities than for persons with disabilities. Women and men with disabilities report much higher levels of unemployment across the EU, compared to other persons. While the disability gap remains, the unemployment rates of women and men with disabilities are similar (around 15%).

In 2023, on average, **28.8% of persons with disabilities (age 16+) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion (AROPE), compared to 18% of persons without disabilities** (Figure 3). The AROPE rate increases severely by level of activity limitation and remains higher for women than men with a 20-percentage point disability gap. Persons with disabilities in the working age group (16–64 years) are more affected than persons with disabilities in the 65+ age group. The disability gap is also wider for the working age group. A strong variation in EU Member States' AROPE rates for persons with disabilities aged at least 65 years remains.

To reach the EU targets of reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million, having at least 78% of the population aged 20 to 64 in employment, and having at least 60% of all adults participating in training every year, it will be **necessary to increase the employment rate of persons with disabilities**, and thus, reduce the employment gap between persons with and without disabilities.¹³

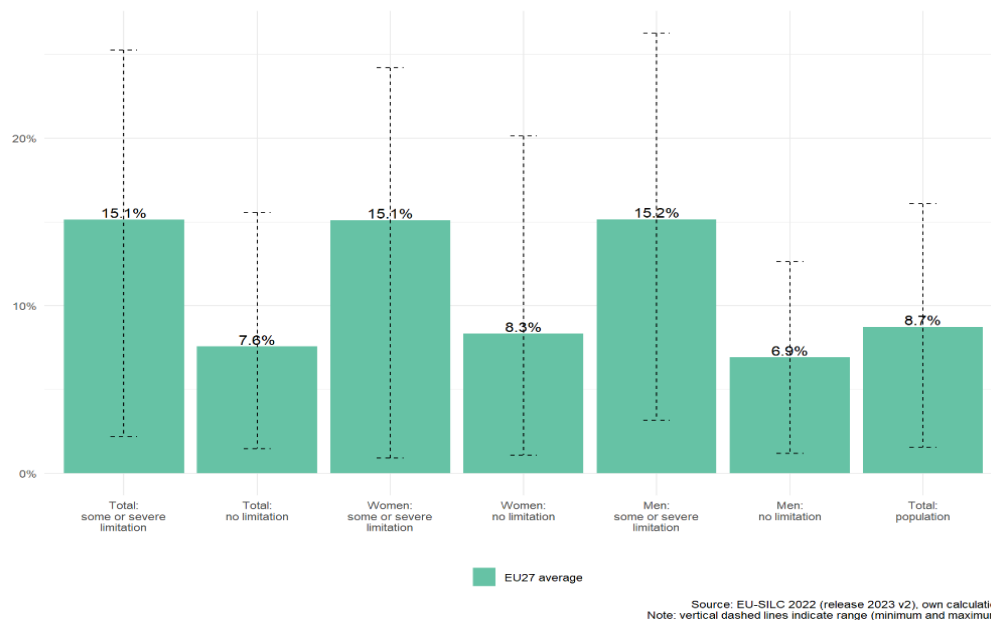


Figure 2: Unemployment rate (age 20-64) by activity limitation level and gender (2022) — EU27 average

source: European Semester 2024 mainstreaming disability equality synthesis report, prepared by the European Disability Expertise, upcoming, 2024.

¹² Grammenos, S., on behalf of the European Disability Expertise (EDE) (2024). European comparative data on persons with disabilities: Equal opportunities, fair working conditions, social protection and inclusion: Analysis and trends, Data 2022.

¹³ European Commission (2021). COVID-19 and people with disabilities in Europe: Assessing the impact of the crisis and informing disability-inclusive next steps, Synthesis report with input from the country experts of the European Disability Expertise (EDE).

Persons with disabilities experience **many different extra costs due to disability** which can place a financial burden on them and their families, leading to increased risk of living in poverty.¹⁴ These extra costs can be direct (e.g., assistive devices, home adaptations), indirect and opportunity costs and relate to general items, such as food or healthcare, or to disability-specific goods and services. The extra costs arising from disability have clear implications for the economic well-being, quality of life and social participation of persons with disabilities. In the context of the ongoing energy crisis, it is important to note that **persons with disabilities have higher energy needs than other households**, and that they use a higher share of energy on basic consumption such as food, gas, electricity, which are the main items driving the current inflation.

On average, **4.7% of persons with disabilities report unmet health care needs in 2022 and 5% in 2023**, compared to the 1.2% and 1.4% of persons without disabilities.¹⁵ This data is based on the EU-SILC variable of unmet needs for healthcare services due to financial reasons (too expensive), distance/transport (too far to travel) or timeliness (waiting list).¹⁶

In 2022, **the rate of early school leaves among persons with disabilities was 19.2%** for the age group 18-24 years and 19.9% for the age group 18-29 years. Independent of the age groups, the rate among persons with disability is significantly higher than among persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities have also on average lower rates of completed tertiary education in the EU than persons without disabilities.

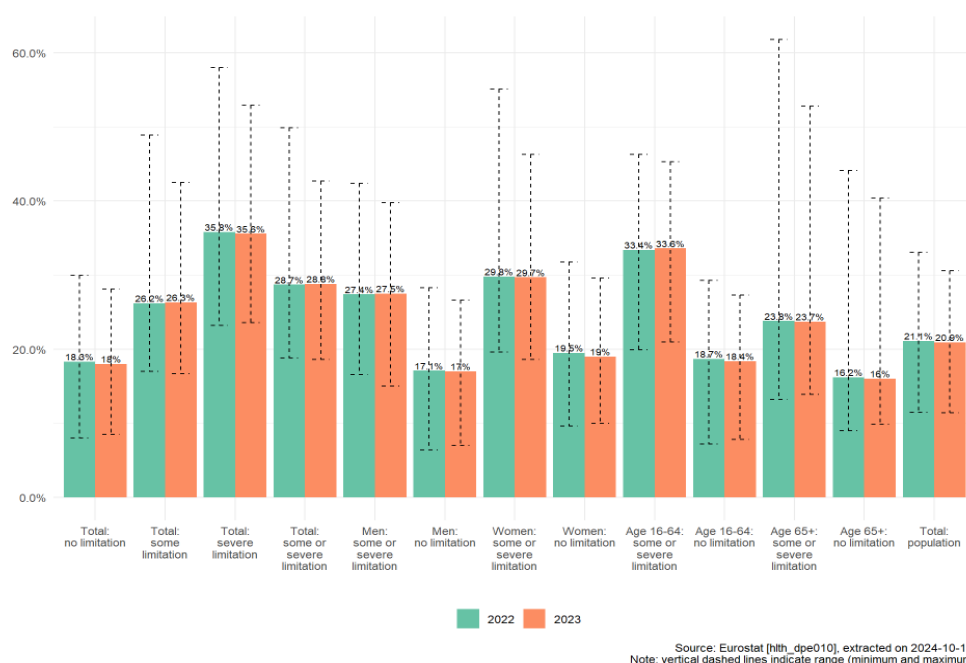


Figure 3: At risk of poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) (age 16+) by activity limitation, gender and age group - EU27 average (2022 & 2023)

source: European Semester 2024 mainstreaming disability equality synthesis report, prepared by the European Disability Expertise, upcoming, 2024.

¹⁴ BIRTHA, M., ZÓLYOMI, E., WOHLGEMUTH, F. and GJYLSHENI, S. (2023). Targeted measures for persons with disabilities to cope with the cost-of-living crisis. European Parliament Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs Directorate-General for Internal Policies PE 754.127.

¹⁵ The results need to be interpreted with caution due to the wide variation in Member States' estimates, especially for persons with disabilities.

¹⁶ See <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics> for further explanation of the indicator.

2.2. Information requested by the UN CRPD Committee from the European Union

The EU as a State Party to the UNCRPD¹⁷ had its first periodic review in front of the UNCRPD Committee in 2015 and received Concluding Observations from the Committee on their initial report, following the Constructive Dialogue with members of the Committee.¹⁸ In 2017, the European Union provided additional information to the UNCRPD Committee to follow-up the Concluding Observations.¹⁹ In 2022, the UNCRPD Committee adopted the **List of Issues prior to submission of the second and third periodic reports of the European Union**, which includes on the one hand follow-up questions on how the Concluding Observations were implemented by the EU and on the other hand requests information on some ongoing policy initiatives and their compliance with the Convention.²⁰ Among other issues, the Committee requested information on measures taken to:

- Conduct a cross-cutting comprehensive review of EU legislation to ensure full harmonization with the UNCRPD.
- Ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are mainstreamed in EU legislation and that directives related to persons with disabilities are transposed into national legislation.
- Ensure that budgetary allocations by the EU funds concerning persons with disabilities are in compliance with the rights of persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, the Committee requested information linked to specific rights under the Convention, for instance under Article 19, on the measures taken to immediately discontinue EU investments and actions that maintain institutionalisation of persons with disabilities, including children and women with disabilities.

2.3. Petitions received by the European Parliament

Petitions addressed to the Committee on Petitions **reveal persistent obstacles encountered by persons with disabilities**, in relation, *inter alia*, to accessibility, employment opportunities, poverty and social exclusion.²¹ Several petitions highlight access barriers to public spaces (e.g. installation of magnetic loop systems), or public transport. Petitions also mentioned more concrete issues linked to freedom of movement, such as the need for a European Disability Card for public transport, that would provide access to the same rights as to local persons with disabilities. When persons with disabilities travel to another EU Member State, liability limits in case of damage of their wheelchair during air transport may present a challenge. In the area of employment, working conditions of persons with disabilities is an important topic, along with overcoming the disability benefit trap. In the area of social protection, too complicated disability assessment procedures and delays with implementing social welfare reforms, like transitioning from institutional to community-based care were also included in petitions in recent years.

¹⁷ The European Union has ratified the UN CRPD in 2010.

¹⁸ Concluding observations on the initial report of the European Union : Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, CRPD/C/EU/CO/1.

¹⁹ Concluding observations on the initial report of the European Union Addendum Information received from the European Union on follow-up to the concluding observations, CRPD/C/EU/CO/1/Add.1.

²⁰ List of issues prior to submission of the second and third periodic reports of the European Union, CRPD/C/EU/QPR/2-3.

²¹ A selection of petitions can be found [here](#). Out of the 345 petitions listed under “disability issues”, 45 were available for support at the time of writing this briefing (about one-third of the listed petitions were not admissible).

2.4. Cases in front of the European Ombudsman in relation to persons with disabilities

Between 2014 and 2022, **two complaints were investigated by the European Ombudsman**, explicitly **related to EU funds and the rights of persons with disabilities** under Article 19 of the UNCRPD. In 2018, the European Ombudsman received a complaint from a Hungarian NGO (*case 417/2018/JN*), concerning the European Commission's response to serious human rights abuses that took place in a social care institution that received European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI funds).²² Allegedly, the situation in the social care home breached the EU Charter for Fundamental Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, the United Nations Convention against Torture, and the UNCRPD. The Ombudsman found it concerning that the European Commission's interpretation of whether funds can be used to renovate large-scale residential institutions was at odds with that of the UNCRPD Committee, especially of General Comment 5 on the implementation of Article 19 of the Convention.²³ A second complaint was submitted to the European Ombudsman from a European civil society organisation (*case 1233/2019/MMO*) claiming that the European Commission should have acted in cases where institutional care facilities for persons with disabilities were constructed in Hungary and Portugal using EU funds.²⁴ The Ombudsman concluded that the Commission had taken action to address many of the problems identified, thus no further inquiries were justified at that stage.

In 2021, the **European Ombudsman opened its own inquiry** (*case OI/2/2021/MHZ*) into **how the European Commission monitors ESI funds to ensure that they are used to promote the right of persons with disabilities** and older people to independent living.²⁵ In its decision, published in April 2022, the European Ombudsman found that the Commission could provide clearer guidance about the need to promote deinstitutionalisation in the context of the use of ESI funds and could take steps to improve the monitoring of ESI-funded activities. The recently published European Commission **Guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community of persons with disabilities in the context of EU funding** is fulfilling this recommendation. Furthermore, the Commission was advised to take a more proactive approach to enforcement, particularly where concerns are raised that ESI-funded activities are at odds with the obligation to promote deinstitutionalisation or concerning activities under the Recovery and Resilience Facility.²⁶

²² European Ombudsman (2019), Decision in case 417/2018/JN on how the European Commission dealt with concerns raised about alleged human rights abuses in a social care institution that had received EU funding. More information is available: https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/decision/en/119185#_ftn4.

²³ General comment No. 5 (2017) on living independently and being included in the community, CRPD/C/GC/5.

²⁴ European Ombudsman (2020), Decision in case 1233/2019/MMO on how the European Commission ensures that Member State governments spend European Structural and Investment Funds in line with the obligations stemming from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. More information is available: <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/decision/en/130886>.

²⁵ European Ombudsman (2021), Decision in case OI/2/2021/MHZ, on how the European Commission monitors EU Structural and Investment funds to ensure they are used to promote the right of persons with disabilities to independent living and inclusion in the community. More information is available: <https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/case/en/58464>.

²⁶ In case of a fundamental rights issue, the European Commission could use either financial correction or infringement against a Member State, but the latter would require proven systemic breach of fundamental rights. However, based on available information, neither infringement process, nor financial correction was initiated by the European Commission against a Member State in the 2014-2020 period for breaching fundamental rights during the use of EU funds.

3. ROOM FOR FUTURE (FLAGSHIP) INITIATIVES IN THE EU DISABILITY STRATEGY POST-2024

Based on the assessment of the flagship initiatives as well as other policy actions outlined in the EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030, and considering the persistent challenges observed and reported by persons with disabilities in recent years, there are **some obvious gaps where more EU action is needed** to improve the equal rights and participation of persons with disabilities post-2024.²⁷ Some of the policy areas covered in the Strategy have received less attention, thus new actions could be proposed to enhance for example **access to quality social services and life-long learning**, overcome the **disability benefit trap**, enjoy the **right to freedom of movement**, or better **meeting unmet needs in healthcare**. There were no flagship initiatives under the broader policy area of *Equal access and non-discrimination*, thus upcoming flagship initiatives could overcome that omission. While most of the policy actions mentioned in the Strategy have been implemented by 2024 (see *Table 1*), some are still pending, such as the **study evaluating the implementation of Article 30 CRPD**, or the **collection of good practices on supported decision-making**. It is important to carry out the missing actions until 2030.²⁸

Despite facing disproportionately higher rates of unemployment and poverty than persons without disabilities, persons with disabilities were not targeted, or only marginally impacted by **recent EU initiatives to tackle the impact of the multiple ongoing crises** (cost-of-living, energy crises). **Disability mainstreaming** in upcoming general EU policy initiatives, such as the EU Anti-Poverty Strategy or the European Affordable Housing Plan would be an important way to uphold the rights enshrined in the UNCRPD and implement the principles of the Strategy in a more holistic way. The following recommendations are made linked to key areas covered in the Strategy:

- Ensure the **full implementation of already existing legislation** that aim to foster the equal participation of persons with disabilities in society, such as the European Accessibility Act, through regular monitoring and using the European Commission's infringement procedures.
- The European Commission should **closely monitor the uptake, implementation and impact of non-legislative policy measures** in the Member States, such as the Disability Employment Package, to ensure disability equality gaps in employment, poverty and access to social protection, education and health are decreasing, also linking to the **European Semester process**. As mentioned in the Strategy, **developing disability indicators** and a clear roadmap for implementation would be necessary.
- **Establish a platform consisting of the existing national UNCRPD monitoring frameworks** under Article 33(2) and members of the **EU monitoring framework** to ensure better coordination and exchanges on the implementation of the Convention at different levels.
- Building on the achievements of the Youth Guarantee and the knowledge shared via the Disability Employment Package, **enhance persons with disabilities' access to mainstream education, training and employment opportunities**, including self-employment and entrepreneurship through a **comprehensive, well-funded EU programme** (e.g. to provide support with covering the cost of reasonable

²⁷ See also the proposals of the European Disability Forum: <https://www.edf-feph.org/updated-eu-disability>.

²⁸ Based on the desktop research conducted for the purposes of this briefing on publicly available documents.

accommodation at work) linked to the policy area “new skills for new jobs” of the Strategy.

- Develop a **roadmap on energy poverty of persons with disabilities**: Both at EU- and national-level more effort is required to identify and monitor the situation of persons with disabilities that are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the cost-of-living and energy crises. There is a need for collecting more systemically disability-inclusive disaggregated data, when measuring poverty, including energy poverty and policy outcomes.
- A **compendium of good practices on overcoming the disability benefit trap**: Following the recommendations of the study on *Social protection for people with disabilities in Europe*²⁹, collect information on policies and practices promoting the individualisation of social protection rights and successful models of provision (e.g. personal budgets), that allow persons with disabilities to have greater choice and control in the Member States.
- Ensure **mainstreaming disability and accessibility in the future European Affordable Housing Plan** so persons with disabilities can benefit from the programme in line with their right to live independently and being involved in the community.
- Conduct a **comprehensive analysis on the situation of persons with disabilities living in institutions** across Europe and develop a **Deinstitutionalisation Action Plan**, ahead of the adoption of the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework regulation with concrete measures (e.g. earmarking for persons with disabilities under ESF+).
- Carry out an **assessment of how EU funds contributed to the implementation of the UN CRPD in EU's external actions** through disability inclusive investments (both in international development and humanitarian aid).

²⁹ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&furtherNews=yes&newsId=10493>.

ANNEX 1

Table 1 State of play of the implementation of the EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030

Note: "completed" = actions where information is publicly available on the implementation, "pending/n.a." = actions where information is not publicly available on whether the action was implemented at the time of writing the briefing

Policy areas covered in the Strategy	Flagship initiative	Completion of flagship initiative	Other actions outlined for EC	Calls for action for Member States	Links to other relevant EU policy initiatives (ongoing & upcoming)
Accessibility	AccessibleEU	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the implementation of the public procurement Directives with guidance to MS and training to public procurers (2021) – pending/n.a. - Include accessibility in the reinforced EU digital government strategy (2021) – completed - Evaluate the application of the Web Accessibility Directive (2022) – completed - Review the passenger rights regulatory framework in transport by air, water, bus and coach (2021) – completed - Launch an Inventory of Assets on rail infrastructure (2022) – pending/n.a. - Review Regulation on the Union Guidelines for the Development of the trans-European transport network to strengthen the provision of accessibility (2021) – completed - Strengthen Sustainable Mobility Planning to better take into account the needs of persons with disabilities (2021) – completed 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Accessibility Act (Directive 2019/822) - Regulation (EU) 2022/612 on roaming on public mobile communications networks within the Union - Web Accessibility Directive (Directive (EU) 2016/2102) - Access City Award
Moving and residing freely	European Disability Card	+			
Fostering participation in			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the accessibility of the European elections – completed 		

the democratic process			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Candidate lists to reflect diversity as part of the Democracy Action Plan (2022) – completed - Establish a guide of good electoral practices addressing participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process (2023) – completed - Address the needs of persons with disabilities in the compendium on e-voting – completed - Support inclusive democratic participation through CERV programme – completed 		
Independent living and community-based services	Guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community	+		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement good practices of deinstitutionalisation in the area of mental health - Promote and secure financing for accessible and disability-inclusive social housing and address the challenges of homeless people with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - new European Affordable Housing Plan - Voluntary European Quality Framework for Social Services - European Care Strategy - European Child Guarantee - 2021-2027 shared management funds, Recovery and Resilience Plan
	Framework for Social Services of Excellence for Persons with Disabilities				
New skills for new jobs				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set targets for the participation of adults with disabilities in learning and ensure they are covered in national skills strategies - Adopt targeted measures to ensure inclusive and accessible VET programmes - Building on the Blueprint for sectoral cooperation on skills support the cooperation between stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Skills Agenda - Council Recommendation 2020/C 417/01 on vocational education and training - Youth Guarantee - Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027

Access to quality and sustainable jobs	Disability Employment Package	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publish an implementation report on the EU Employment Equality Directive – completed - Issue an Action Plan on Social Economy (2021) – completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Targets for increasing the employment rate of persons with disabilities and reducing employment rate gaps (2024) - Strengthen the capacities of employment services for persons with disabilities - Facilitate self-employment and entrepreneurship, including for persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directive 2000/78 Employment Equality Directive - Employment Guidelines linked to the European Semester
Consolidating social protection systems			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch a study on social protection and services for persons with disabilities (2022) – completed - Provide guidance to Member States to further reforms on social protection focusing on disability assessment frameworks – pending/n.a. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Define measures to tackle gaps in social protection for persons with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directive (EU) 2022/2041 on adequate minimum wages in the European Union
Improving access to justice			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Work with Member States to implement the 2000 Hague Convention on the international protection of vulnerable adults in line with the CRPD – study on the protection of vulnerable adults in cross-border situations – completed - Launch a study on procedural safeguards for vulnerable adults in criminal proceedings and strengthen the support and protection of vulnerable adults in line with the EU Victim's Rights Strategy (2020-2025) – completed - Provide guidance to Member States on access to justice for persons with disabilities in the EU – completed - Collect good practices on supported decision-making – pending/n.a. 		
Equal access to social protection, healthcare, education, housing				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enable the adoption of the Commission proposal for a horizontal equal treatment directive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU Anti-Poverty Strategy (upcoming) - new European Affordable Housing Plan

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support cooperation between the EU and national UN CRPD frameworks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Proposed Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive (pending since 2008)
Inclusive and accessible education			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issue a toolkit for inclusion in early childhood education ad care (2021) – completed - Support Member States to develop their teacher education systems – n.a. - Support increased efforts to implement the Action Plan Educational Support and Inclusive Education as member of the Board of Governors of the European Schools – n.a. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To support the development of inclusive schools - Ensure a CRPD compliant supported learning in inclusive mainstream settings - Support the implementation of Article 24 CRPD in European Schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Education Area - Digital Education Action Plan - Proposed Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive (pending since 2008)
Sustainable and equal access to healthcare			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing of validated health-related good practices through the Steering Group on Promotion and Prevention (SGPP) – n.a. - Support stakeholders to alleviate burden on mental health post-Covid 19 – n.a. - Address inequalities for persons with disabilities in accessing cancer prevention, early detection and care through actions in Europe's beating cancer plan – n.a. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improve access to healthcare for persons with disabilities to the entire healthcare portfolio - Develop support strategies for patients with disabilities related to rare diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - European Health Union - EU4Health Work Programme 2022 study on access to healthcare for persons with disabilities
Access to art, culture, recreation, sport, tourism			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Launch a study evaluating the implementation of Article 30 CRPD – pending/n.a. - Partner with the International Paralympic Committee – completed - Further promote the development of accessible tourism via the Capital of Smart Tourism award – n.a. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promote and encourage arts of persons with disabilities and make them visible in exhibitions and make more museums accessible 	
Safety and protection			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide a guidance to Member States and practitioners on improving support for victims of violence who are persons with disabilities (2024) – pending/n.a. - Invite the Fundamental Rights Agency to examine the situation of persons with disabilities living in institutions in relation to violence, abuse and torture – n.a. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implement CEAS acquis considering the specific needs of vulnerable applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection - Facilitate training of protection officers and interpreters dealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027

				with asylum claims by persons with disabilities	
Promoting the Rights of persons with disabilities globally			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update the Toolbox on the "Rights Based Approach, encompassing all human rights for EU development cooperation" (2021) – completed - Ensure that EU delegations play a more active role in supporting the UN CRPD implementation – n.a. - Track systematically disability inclusive investments using the OECD DAC disability marker for a targeted monitoring of EU funding – n.a. - Provide technical assistance to partner countries – n.a. - Organise regular structured dialogues during UN CRPD Conference of State Parties and enhance cooperation focus on accessibility and employment – completed 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EU's Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 - EU Gender Action Plan III 2021-2025
Efficiently delivering the Strategy	Disability Platform	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reinforce the Better Regulation toolbox to enhance disability inclusiveness – completed - Ensure including disability in impact assessments – n.a. - Designate disability coordinators in EU institutions – n.a. - Organise high-level meetings between EP, Council, EC, EEAS – n.a. - Arrange annual exchange with the EESC and CoR – n.a. - Establish dialogue on disability with existing networks of local and regional authorities – n.a. - Explore funding opportunities via CERV to engage with citizens with disabilities – completed - Support Member States to use EU funds in compliance with CRPD – completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take into account the needs of persons with disabilities in all policies - Adopt ambitious national strategies to foster the implementation of the UN CRPD - Ensure partnership during the design and implementation of EU funds - Encourage CRPD focal points to support the relevant enabling conditions throughout programming 	
Leading by example	Renewed HR strategy	+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure the continuous removal of barriers by all services for staff and public with disabilities – n.a. - Strengthen reporting by management of all Commission services, including reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities – n.a. 	-	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action Plan on web accessibility to be promoted in all EU institutions (2021) – pending/unpublished - Improve accessibility across audiovisual communications and graphic design services (2023) – n.a. - Ensure accessibility for all newly occupied buildings of the European Commission – n.a. - Ensure accessibility of venues where Commission events are organised – n.a. - By 2030, all Commission buildings follow accessibility standards – n.a. - Examine the functioning of the EU framework to monitor the CRPD (2022) – pending/n.a. - Organise an annual dialogue between Commission and EU framework – n.a. - Develop a monitoring framework for the Disability Strategy (2021) – n.a. - Develop disability indicators with a clear roadmap for implementation (2023) – pending/n.a. - Prepare a progress report of the Strategy (2024) – pending/n.a. - Develop a strategy for data collection – pending/n.a. 		
--	--	--	--	--

PE 767.095

IP/C/PETI/2024-057

Print ISBN 978-92-848-2442-7 | doi:10.2861/8528079 | QA-01-24-083-EN-C

PDF ISBN 978-92-848-2441-0 | doi:10.2861/7373840 | QA-01-24-083-EN-N