



European Economic and Social Committee | Comité économique et social européen

PERIOD **ACTIVITY REPORT**
2018-2020 **STUDY GROUP ON**
DISABILITY RIGHTS

**DIRECTORATE C – LEGISLATIVE
WORK**

PRESIDENT: MARIE ZVOLSKA

Introduction

Short presentation of activities and priorities.

Following the EU's ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and its Optional Protocol in 2010, the EESC committed¹ to setting up a structure to monitor the implementation of the Convention. The Study Group on Disability Rights started its activities in 2015, with the following objectives:

- To ensure practical implementation of the UNCRPD both within and outside the EESC;
- To facilitate EU policy guidance in key areas highlighted by the UNCRPD Committee;
- To facilitate participation by providing a forum for debate and structured participation for disability organisations (DPOs), civil society organisations and other stakeholders in the implementation of the UNCRPD.

To attain these goals, during the present mandate (2018-2021), the SG DIS organised public hearings with DPOs and civil society organisations to discuss various topics related to disability rights. The group also carried out several fact-finding missions to look more closely at the state of implementation of the Convention. Representatives from EU institutions, government authorities, DPOs and other civil society organisations participated in these activities.

A delegation of the SG DIS also took part and each year organised a side event in the Conference of States Parties (COSP) to the UN CRPD, and in the conference organised by the European Commission for the European Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Marie Zvolška

President of the Study Group on Disability Rights

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¹ [EESC opinion SOC/464](#)

Activities and main findings

Description of activities, key challenges and achievements/results

In the present half term, the group has continued contributing to the implementation of the UNCRPD both inside and outside the EESC and to the review of EU policies and legislation. It has done so through its hearings and fact-finding missions, as well as by organising or taking part in awareness-raising activities addressed to EESC staff and members.

The group's contribution to the EU reporting exercise to the UNCRPD committee is the object of another report that contains the EESC's contribution per policy area.

The SG DIS has also facilitated participation of DPOs by providing a forum for debate on the implementation of the UNCRPD and by meeting them both in Brussels and during fact-finding missions.

The topics discussed covered the employment of PWD, the use of EU funds to promote the inclusion of PWD, how to better communicate about disability in the media, how to improve the participation of PWD in European Parliament elections, the development of social services directed to support De-institutionalisation, inclusive education and the living conditions of PWD in rural areas.

Whenever possible, the topic studied during a fact finding mission has been subsequently further discussed in a hearing.

The Group has also actively contributed to the shaping of future EU policy on disability with two own-initiative opinions: one on the EU Disability Agenda for the period 2020-2030 and one on the real rights of PWD to vote in European Parliament elections.

The work done by the EESC on disability is highly recognised by other EU institutions (EP and EC), and civil society organisations, in particular DPOs. The Group works closely with the European Disability Forum, which takes part in all the events since the preparation phase. The reports of the missions are regularly sent to the European Commission Focal Point, to the EP's relevant committees and, since the current half-term, also published online.

The SG DIS has continued developing synergies with other EESC structures as well. A joint hearing with the Labour Market Observatory on the employment of persons with disabilities took place in November 2019. Moreover, disability rights are included in the non-discrimination strand of activities of the group on Fundamental Rights and the Rule of law (FRRL).

Key recommendations:

- ▶ Set up Disability Focal Points (DFP) in all DGs and EU institutions, with a central one in the Secretariat-General of the Commission
- ▶ Set up an inter-institutional mechanism with the EP, the Council and the Commission
- ▶ Increase the resources available for the EU Framework
- ▶ Produce a Declaration of Competences revising the declaration of exclusive EU competences and concluding the Optional Protocol to the CRPD
- ▶ Establish a European Access Board to monitor the implementation of EU accessibility legislation
- ▶ Mainstream the principles of the Social Pillar into the Disability Strategy, in particular for implementing Principle 17 on the inclusion of PWD
- ▶ Mainstream disability into all EU economic, social, external and environmental policies, specifically into the Gender Equality Strategy, the Youth Guarantee, the Green Deal, the Child Guarantee and the Green Paper on Ageing
- ▶ Ensure that the EU budget is used solely to finance actions that are compliant with the principles of the UNCRPD
- ▶ Improve data collection on PWD by EUROSTAT
- ▶ Include clear and tangible benchmarks and measurable indicators, particularly regarding women and girls with disabilities, young and older PWD, as well as refugees and migrants and LGBTI PWD
- ▶ Use the European Semester to encourage Member States to develop their own national disability strategies and address the implementation of the CRPD in the National Reform Programmes
- ▶ Strongly take on board disability rights and the Convention in social dialogue at EU and national level and during the negotiation of collective agreements by the social partners, in full consultation with and with the involvement of DPOs
- ▶ Ensure the full and active involvement of DPOs and civil society organisations in the drafting, implementation and governance of the Strategy and of every policy addressing PWD

Appendix I – List of meetings and events

	< Oct 2018	2018	2019	> April 2020	Total
Study Group/PSG/Observatory meetings					
Meetings in Brussels	0	1	3	0	4
Meetings outside Brussels	0	0	0	0	0
Extraordinary meetings	0	0	0	0	0
Fact-finding missions	0	2	3	0	5
Conferences and hearings organised by the SG/PSG/Observatory	0	1	3	0	4
Participation of members in events, meetings					
In Brussels	0	1	5	0	6
Outside Brussels	0	0	2	1	3