

**DECLARATION ADOPTED DURING THE INFORMAL MEETING OF THE EU
MEMBER STATES' MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
14 MARCH 2019, PARIS, FRANCE**

The Participants

gathered at the informal meeting of the EU Member state's ministers responsible for persons with disabilities, organized by the French Minister of European and foreign affairs and the State Secretariat for Persons with disabilities in co-operation with the Romanian EU Council Presidency and the European Commission,

with the objective to exchange views about the new challenges and opportunities for the protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in Europe, including their right to Employment, Education, Health and Social protection:

- Reaffirm the 2006 United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a landmark convention affirming the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities.
- Take note of the outcomes of the United Nations' High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, in 2016 and the following years, and reaffirm their commitment to effectively implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, ensuring that "no one is left behind";
- Reaffirm their commitment for the full implementation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 adopted by the European Commission in November 2010, with the declared aim to empower people with disabilities so that they can enjoy their full rights as EU citizens and participate in society on an equal basis to others, in a barrier-free Europe.
- Welcome the provisional agreement on 8 november 2018 between the European Parliament and the Council on the Commission's proposal for a European Accessibility Act as well as its adoption by the European Parliament on March 13th, and look forward to its final adoption by the Council.
- Encouraged by the increasing interest of the international community in the promotion and protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, take due note of the notable shift of the international discourse on disability, from a predominantly medically-based perspective to the a rights-based approach, centered on the person.
- Draw on the lessons learned from the current EU strategy, and also take various stakeholders' views into account: persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, national experts from public administrations and academia, as well as service providers;
- Are however aware that persons with disabilities continue to face challenges in enjoying their rights, including in key areas such as employment, education and training, health and social protection; and realize the need to take action to ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate fully in society, to develop their full potential and be able to contribute to their communities on equal basis with others.

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- Recognise the importance to take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children and in all actions concerning children consider the best interest of the child.
- Note with interest the successful development of the “Duo Day” initiative, launched in Ireland in 2008 and taken over by several countries, which consists in composing a two-person team between a person with disability and an employee for a day, and could help change the perception of disability in a working environment.

To foster the enjoyment of all rights by persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others and to improve their quality of life and independence, the Participants therefore :

- Reaffirm their commitment to remove barriers that persons with disabilities face in everyday life and to make sure that they enjoy their rights and can fully participate in society along the fundamental principles shared by international and European texts: full participation, equality and human dignity.
- Agree to keep exchanging information on research, policies and strategies on awareness raising and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, acknowledging the evolution of new technologies and their potential in such a case;
- Provide persons with complex communication requirements with appropriate support, with a view to enable them to develop and convey their directions, decisions, choices and/or preferences and have them acknowledged and respected; to that end, increase the understanding of such requirements by structuring an appropriate European research network so as to promote the development and dissemination of innovative intervention strategies.
- Endeavour to build on the values enshrined in the Treaties, the experience of the preceding EU disability policy framework as well as the Europe 2020 strategy and the European Pillar of Social Rights, and to mainstream disability issues within the EU policy framework and at the national level.
- Further stress that persons with disabilities and their representative organisations should be involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of policies and action programme, both at the EU and national level; in particular when reflecting on the design of the post-2020 framework and of the future European Disability Strategy.
- Invite all stakeholders, including - inter alia national Rights Institutions, UN and EU agencies, international organizations, the private sector, service providers, civil society and experts, to strengthen the dialogue on affirming protection of the rights of persons with disability at regional and national level in order to share experiences, intensify collaboration and identify challenges and obstacles that still need to be addressed by the international community to enable persons with disabilities to fully enjoy their rights.