

Open letter to European Commissioner for Equality Hadja Lahbib: keep up the momentum on disability rights!

To:

Commissioner Hadja Lahbib, European Commissioner for Equality; Preparedness and Crisis Management;

Dear Commissioner,

On behalf of the European Disability movement, we would like to congratulate you on your appointment and affirm our support and cooperation in advancing disability rights in the EU.

As you know, there are over 100 million persons with disabilities living in the EU, and significant challenges remain to guarantee our rights and inclusion in society:

- 28.4% of persons with disabilities remain at risk of poverty and social exclusion, compared to 17.8% of those without disabilities.
- Only 50.6% of men and 45.9% of women with disabilities are employed, often in part-time or low-paid jobs.
- 1.4 million persons with disabilities in the EU are confined to segregating institutions.
- Only 29.4% attain a tertiary degree compared to 43.8% without disabilities.

In addition, many barriers in the physical and digital world still prevent many persons with disabilities from enjoying full and effective participation on an equal basis with others. And many persons with disabilities continue to experience discrimination.

The last mandate, under the leadership of the first-ever Commissioner for Equality, saw good progress in asserting our rights, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by the EU and all Member States. This was assured by the adoption of the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, especially through a list of specific flagship initiatives and actions after meaningfully consulting representative organisations of persons with disabilities. This Strategy led to important achievements, such as the adoption of the European Disability Card and Parking Card.

Given that the Strategy lacks flagship initiatives after this year, it is our highest priority that you swiftly adopt a new set of actions for the Strategy, actions that should be achieved during your mandate.

Therefore, on the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we call on you to firmly commit to advancing disability rights by confirming that the **European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 will be updated with new flagship initiatives and actions.**

The actions should be in line with the [priorities of the European disability movement](#), including establishing a European Agency for Accessibility, creating the Disability

Employment and Skills Guarantee, promoting legislation on the affordability and availability of assistive technologies and ensuring the full inclusion and perspective of women and girls with disabilities, as well as the perspective of persons with disabilities with other intersectional identities.

The actions should also lead to incorporating the disability perspective in all equality strategies and action plans under your responsibility, such as the Roadmap for Gender Equality, the future Gender Equality Strategy, the LGBTI Equality Strategy, and the Anti-Racism Strategy. The Strategy should further guarantee that all regulations and guidance related to the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework adhere to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

We also call on you to ensure that all plans and actions relating to crisis management and preparedness are disability-inclusive.

The European Commission needs to guarantee that financial resources and expertise are allocated to continue the progress made last term, specifically by:

- Appointing experts on disability policies in your cabinet and in the cabinet of the Vice-President for People, Skills and Preparedness.
- Strengthening the role and responsibilities, expertise and resources of the Equality Taskforce within the Secretary General of the European Commission, as well as of the equality coordinators across the Commission services. The Taskforce should also become more visible and transparent to the public and closely cooperate with civil society organisations working on equality policies.
- Ensure that the College of Commissioners also has the resources necessary to ensure that disability rights are mainstreamed in all policies and legislation.
- Guarantee a high level of disability rights expertise in the Commission's focal point for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Adequately fund organisations of persons with disabilities at the European and national levels and ensure their close involvement in all relevant actions.

We are committed to supporting you in your work towards a real Union of Equality. Therefore, in the spirit of close cooperation and of the motto of our movement "nothing about us without us", we, the representatives of the European disability movement, would like to request a meeting with you to effectively chart the path ahead on disability rights.

We wish you success in your position and look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Signatories

European and international organisations

[European Disability Forum](#)

[Action Européen des Handicapés](#)

[Alzheimer Europe](#)

[ARFIE \(Association for Research and Training on Integration in Europe\)Autism Europe](#)

[Association International Aphasie](#)

[Association for Supported Employment Europe](#)

[Autism Europe](#)

[Brain Injured People and Families – European Confederation](#)

[CEFEC - Social Firms Europe](#)

[Cerebral Palsy in the European Union Association](#)

[COFACE Families Europe](#)

[Design for All Europe - EIDD](#)

[Disabled Peoples' International Europe](#)

[DYSNET-Dysmelia Network](#)

[European Alliance of Neuromuscular Disorders Associations](#)

[European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities](#)

[European Blind Union](#)

[Euro-ataxia](#)

[EURO-CIU](#)

[European Council of Autistic People](#)

[European Deaf Students' Union](#)

[European Deafblind Network](#)

[European Deafblind Union](#)

[European Down Syndrome Association](#)

[European Dyslexia Association](#)

[European Federation of Hard of Hearing People](#)

[European Guide Dog Federation](#)

[European ME Alliance](#)

[European Multiple Sclerosis Association](#)

[European Network on Independent Living](#)

[European Network of \(ex\) Users and Survivors of Psychiatry](#)

[European Ostomy Association](#)

[European Platform for Rehabilitation](#)

[EURORDIS – Rare Diseases Europe](#)

[European Spinal Cord Injury Federation](#)

[European Union of the Deaf](#)

[European Union of the Deaf Youth](#)

[FEDEPA - European Federation of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children](#)

[Inclusion Europe](#)

[International Federation of Persons with Physical Disabilities - FIMITIC](#)

[International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus](#)

[Light for the World](#)

[Mental Health Europe](#)

[Sightsavers](#)

National organisations

Belgium

[Belgian Disability Forum](#)

[Gelijke Rechten voor Iedere Persoon met een handicap - GRIP](#)

Austria

[Austrian Disability Council - Österreichische Behindertenrat](#)

[Hilfsgemeinschaft der Blinden und Sehschwachen Österreichs](#)

[ILCO Dachverband Österreich](#)

Bulgaria

[National Council of People with Disabilities in Bulgaria](#)

[Union of the Disabled People in Bulgaria](#)

[Alzheimer Bulgaria Association](#)

Croatia

[Croatian Union of Associations of Persons with Disabilities - SOIH](#)

Cyprus

[Cyprus Confederation of Organisations of the Disabled - KYSOA](#)

Denmark

[Disabled Peoples Organisation Denmark - Danske Handicaporganisationer](#)

[Dansk Blindesamfund](#)

[Danish Ostomy Association](#)

Estonia

[Estonian Chamber of Disabled People - EPIKODA](#)

Finland

[Finnish Disability Forum](#)

[Threshold Association](#)

[Åland Islands Disability Rights Federation](#) (autonomous region)

[Finnilco](#)

France

[Conseil Français des Personnes Handicapées pour les affaires Européennes et internationales \(France\)](#)

[France Alzheimer et maladies apparentées](#)

[Fondation paralysie cérébrale](#)

[Association Française de l'Ataxie de Friedreich](#)

Germany

[Deutscher Behindertenrat](#)

Greece

[National Confederation of Disabled People in Greece- ESAMEA](#)

[Hellenic Friedreich's Ataxia Association](#)

Hungary

[FEZT - National Council of Associations of Persons](#)

[with Disabilities](#)

Ireland

[Disability Federation of Ireland](#)

[Irish Wheelchair Association](#)

Italy

[Italian Disability Forum](#)

[CBM Italia](#)

Latvia

[Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations – SUSTENTO](#)

Lithuania

[Lithuanian Disability Forum](#)

[Dementia Lithuania](#)

Luxembourg

[Info-Handicap \(Luxembourg\)](#)

Malta

[Malta Federation of Organisations Persons with Disability \(MFOPD\)](#)

[Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability - Malta](#)

[Malta Dementia Society](#)

Poland

[Polish Disability Forum - PFON](#)

[Fundacja „APROBATA”](#)

[Polish Alzheimer's Association](#)

Portugal

[Portuguese National Confederation of Organisations of Disabled People - CNOD](#)

[Portuguese Association of Hereditary Ataxias](#)

Romania

[Romanian National Disability Council - Consiliul Național al Dizabilității din România](#)

[Bucovina Institute Association](#)

Slovenia

[Slovenian National Disability Council](#)

Slovakia

[Slovak Disability Forum \(SFOZP\)](#)

Spain

[Spanish Committee of Representatives of Persons with Disabilities - CERMI](#)

[Fundación Alzheimer España](#)

Sweden

[The Swedish Disability Rights Federation - Funktionsrätt Sveriges](#)

[Dementia Association in Sweden](#)

[Newcomers with Disabilities in Sweden](#)

The Netherlands

[leder\(in\) - Dutch umbrella organisations of persons with disabilities and chronic diseases](#)

Armenia

[Alzheimer's Care Armenia](#)

Kosovo

[Kosovo Disability Forum](#)

Moldova

[Association Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities](#)

[Obștească Centrul pentru Drepturile Persoanelor cu Dizabilități - CDPD](#)

North Macedonia

[Alzheimer's Disease and Neuroscience-Skopje, North Macedonia](#)

Norway

[Disabled Youth Norway](#)

Serbia

[Serbian Society for Alzheimer's Disease](#)

Ukraine

[National Assembly of People with Disabilities of Ukraine](#)

United Kingdom

[Ileostomy and Internal Pouch Association](#)

[Ostomy Life](#)

[AT Society](#)





Sightsavers



СЪЮЗ НА
ИНВАЛИДИТЕ
В БЪЛГАРИЯ



ZAJEDNICA SAVEZA OSOBA S INVALIDITETOM HRVATSKE - SOIH
CROATIAN UNION OF ASSOCIATIONS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES - SOIH



EESTI PUUETEGA INIMESTE KODA
THE ESTONIAN CHAMBER OF DISABLED PEOPLE

VAMMAISFOORUMI
Vammaisjärjestöjen yhteinen ääni



