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P9_TA(2021)0414

The protection of persons with disabilities through petitions: lessons learnt

European Parliament resolution of 7 October 2021 on the protection of persons with disabilities through petitions: lessons learnt (Petitions Nos 2582/2013, 2551/2014, 0074/2015, 0098/2015, 1140/2015, 1305/2015, 1394/2015, 0172/2016, 0857/2016, 1056/2016, 1147/2016, 0535/2017, 1077/2017, 0356/2018, 0367/2018, 0371/2018, 0530/2018, 0724/2018, 0808/2018, 0959/2018, 0756/2019, 0758/2019, 0954/2019, 1124/2019, 1170/2019, 1262/2019, 0294/2020, 0470/2020, 0527/2020, 0608/2020, 0768/2020, 0988/2020, 1052/2020, 1139/2020, 1205/2020, 1299/2020, 0103/2021 and others) (2020/2209(INI))

(2022/C 132/11)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the petitions received on disability issues as outlined in the title of this resolution and to the previous deliberations of the Committee on Petitions on these petitions,
- having regard to Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union,
- having regard to Articles 19, 48, 67(4), 153, 165, 168 and 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),
- having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the Charter), in particular Articles 3, 21, 24, 26, 34, 35, 41 and 47 thereof,
- having regard to the European Pillar of Social Rights, in particular principles 1, 3, 10 and 17 thereof,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and its entry into force on 21 January 2011 in accordance with Council Decision 2010/48/EC of 26 November 2009 concerning the conclusion, by the European Community, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the General Comments on the CRPD as the authoritative guidance on its implementation,
- having regard to the Code of Conduct between the Council, the Member States and the Commission setting out internal arrangements for the implementation by and representation of the European Union relating to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) of 2 October 2015 on the initial report of the European Union,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- having regard to the European Ombudsman's strategic inquiry on how the European Commission ensures that persons with disabilities can access its websites,
- having regard to the Council measure establishing the revised EU-level framework required by Article 33.2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,

⁽¹⁾ OJ L 23, 27.1.2010, p. 35.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 340, 15.12.2010, p. 11.

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- having regard to the European Ombudsman's strategic inquiry into how the European Commission monitors EU Funds used to promote the right of persons with disabilities and older persons in independent living,
- having regard to the Fundamental Rights Report 2020 of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights,
- having regard to the European Economic and Social Committee opinion of 11 December 2019 entitled 'Shaping the EU agenda for disability rights 2020-2030',
- having regard to the European Institute for Gender Equality's Gender Equality Index 2020,
- having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1371/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on rail passengers' rights and obligations ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/882 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 April 2019 on the accessibility requirements for products and services ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 October 2016 on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2018/1972 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 December 2018 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU ⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation ⁽⁸⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 3 March 2021 entitled 'Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030' (COM(2021)0101),
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (COM(2008)0426, 'the anti-discrimination directive') and Parliament's position of 2 April 2009 thereon ⁽⁹⁾,
- having regard to the Council recommendation of 4 June 1998 on a parking card for people with disabilities ⁽¹⁰⁾,
- having regard to Council recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee ⁽¹¹⁾,
- having regard to the Commission staff working document of 27 November 2020 entitled 'Evaluation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020' (SWD(2020)0291),

⁽³⁾ OJ L 315, 3.12.2007, p. 14.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 151, 7.6.2019, p. 70.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ L 327, 2.12.2016, p. 1.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ L 321, 17.12.2018, p. 36.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

⁽⁹⁾ OJ C 137 E, 27.5.2010, p. 68.

⁽¹⁰⁾ OJ L 167, 12.6.1998, p. 25.

⁽¹¹⁾ OJ L 223, 22.6.2021, p. 14.

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- having regard to its resolution of 17 April 2020 on EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences ⁽¹²⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 18 June 2020 on the European disability strategy post-2020 ⁽¹³⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 July 2020 on the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families in the COVID-19 crisis ⁽¹⁴⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 29 April 2021 on the European Child Guarantee ⁽¹⁵⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 10 March 2021 on the implementation of Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation in light of the UNCRPD ⁽¹⁶⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 29 November 2018 on the situation of women with disabilities ⁽¹⁷⁾,
 - having regard to its study of 3 November 2016 entitled 'European structural and investment funds and people with disabilities in the European Union',
 - having regard to its study of 15 September 2017 entitled 'Inclusive education for learners with disabilities',
 - having regard to its study of 9 October 2015 entitled 'The protection role of the Committee on Petitions in the context of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' and its updates of 2016, 2017 and 2018,
 - having regard to its in-depth analysis of 15 August 2016 entitled 'The European Accessibility Act',
 - having regard to its study of 8 May 2018 entitled 'Transport and tourism for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility',
 - having regard to its study of 15 July 2020 entitled 'The Post-2020 European disability strategy',
 - having regard to Rule 54 and Rule 227(3) of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the opinions of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs and the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs,
 - having regard to the letter from the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Petitions (A9-0261/2021),
- A. whereas approximately 1 % of all petitions received each year by the Committee on Petitions relate to various disability issues;
- B. whereas there are approximately 87 million persons with disabilities in the EU ⁽¹⁸⁾;

⁽¹²⁾ OJ C 316, 6.8.2021, p. 2.

⁽¹³⁾ OJ C 362, 8.9.2021, p. 8.

⁽¹⁴⁾ OJ C 371, 15.9.2021, p. 6.

⁽¹⁵⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0161.

⁽¹⁶⁾ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0075.

⁽¹⁷⁾ OJ C 363, 28.10.2020, p. 164.

⁽¹⁸⁾ Opening remarks by Commissioner Dalli of 3 March 2021 on the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.

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- C. whereas 37 % of people in the EU aged 15 and over have (moderate or severe) physical or sensory limitations ⁽¹⁹⁾;
- D. whereas petitions on disability issues reveal the difficulties encountered by persons with disabilities and the fact that they face discrimination and obstacles in everyday life and that they do not enjoy the fundamental freedoms and rights laid down in the CRPD, such as access to public transport and the built environment, use of sign languages, financing and equal access to education and vocational training;
- E. whereas it is generally acknowledged that persons with disabilities continue to face multiple obstacles and discrimination in everyday life which prevent them from enjoying the fundamental freedoms and rights laid down in the applicable EU and UN legislative frameworks; whereas these include the mutual recognition of disability status between Member States — the lack of which hinders freedom of movement within the EU for persons with disabilities — access to public transport, physical, sensory and cognitive accessibility of the built environment, goods, services and programmes, use of sign languages and all other means and types of accessible communication and information, financing of and equal access to education and vocational training, access to the labour market, access to personal assistance and community inclusion, and equality in opportunity and treatment in employment and occupation;
- F. whereas all persons with disabilities have equal rights on an equal basis with others in all fields of life and are entitled to inalienable dignity, equal treatment, independent living, autonomy and full participation in society, and to expect that their contribution to the social, political and economic progress of the EU is respected and valued;
- G. whereas information stemming from petitions submitted to Parliament by persons with disabilities or on disability issues can serve as a source of information concerning gaps in the implementation of the CRPD at both national and EU level, and can help to frame legislation in all policy areas;
- H. whereas the Committee on Petitions plays a ‘protection role’ to ensure EU compliance with the CRPD within policymaking and legislative actions at EU level; whereas the Committee on Petitions has been asked to draw up an EU framework together with the European Ombudsman, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, and the European Disability Forum, as adopted by the Council at its 3513th meeting held on 16 January 2017;
- I. whereas the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs has underlined the significance of petitions pertaining to the rights of persons with disabilities in the light of Parliament’s role and responsibilities set out in the EU framework for monitoring the implementation of the CRPD;
- J. whereas through its role, the Committee on Petitions has a special duty to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in the EU, with the exercise of their fundamental freedoms and rights being guaranteed by EU law and the CRPD; whereas the information available on these rights is insufficient and not accessible enough;
- K. whereas the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs highly appreciates the crucial role of the Committee on Petitions as a bridge between the people in the EU, Parliament and the other EU institutions and an important instrument for getting citizens involved in participatory democracy; whereas the right to petition Parliament is one of the fundamental rights of every individual and organisation based in the EU and is an indispensable direct source of factual information;
- L. whereas the right to petition and the petition process should be more visible and accessible to all individuals and organisations in the EU, including persons with disabilities; whereas the Committee on Petitions should ensure better visibility and sufficient information in this respect through targeted information and awareness-raising campaigns, with a special focus on vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities; whereas Parliament has not yet developed an index of effectiveness for its petition system nor has it collected statistical data on the processing of petitions;

⁽¹⁹⁾ Eurostat, ‘Functional and activity limitations statistics’, data extracted in December 2020.

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- M. whereas the CRPD is the first international human rights treaty to be ratified by the EU and all its Member States;
- N. whereas the Optional Protocol to the CRPD has not been ratified by the EU and five Member States;
- O. whereas a Union of Equality for all, and in all of its senses, is one of the priorities in the political guidelines of the current Commission;
- P. whereas petitions have repeatedly highlighted the limitations in terms of access to education for persons with disabilities, which lead to lower participation in educational activities than the population average and, as a consequence, to a risk of social and economic exclusion; whereas one person with disabilities out of four leaves the education system prematurely ⁽²⁰⁾;
- Q. whereas the creation of the role of Commissioner for Equality played an instrumental role in establishing the new strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 (European Disability Strategy 2021-2030);
- R. whereas in its resolutions, Parliament has repeatedly urged the Member States to implement appropriate policies to ensure that persons with disabilities can fully enjoy their social, political and economic rights;
- S. whereas the Member States have the responsibility to ensure that everyone in the EU has the right to an effective remedy before an independent and impartial tribunal previously established by law, and that everyone has the opportunity to be advised, defended and represented;
- T. whereas 24 Member States have comprehensively reported on the progress they have made in the implementation of the CRPD, with accessibility as one of the core principles of the convention, following inquiries sent to the Permanent Representations of all Member States by the Committee on Petitions on petition 0535/2017;
- U. whereas the proposed anti-discrimination directive, which would provide greater protection against discrimination of all kinds through a horizontal approach, still remains blocked in the Council, and whereas this has been the case for over a decade;
- V. whereas accessibility is a precondition for exercising all other rights provided for in the CRPD on an equal basis with others; whereas the Commission has proposed several actions to monitor the implementation of existing legislation on accessibility, as well as new measures to create a barrier-free EU;
- W. whereas initiatives at EU level such as the Access City Award promote the adaptation of public spaces to the needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities; whereas the competition has rewarded cities that make commitments at the level of political decision-making to be inclusive for persons with disabilities and respectful of their rights, are responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities and hold a social dialogue with organisations for persons with disabilities and the elderly; whereas the adaptation of public spaces will not only help to combat social exclusion, but will also contribute to economic growth;
- X. whereas several petitions illustrate the problems of and the need to improve access for persons with disabilities to the built environment, transport, information and communication technologies and systems (ICT), and other facilities and services provided to the public;
- Y. whereas it is indispensable for the EU institutions' to ensure their websites have the necessary technical specifications in order to be accessible to persons with disabilities, so that persons with disabilities can receive correct and direct information on all issues that concern them as citizens, with the aim of increasing the accessibility of documents, videos and websites and promoting alternative means of communication;

⁽²⁰⁾ Eurostat, 'Archive: Disability statistics — access to education and training', accessed on 29 July 2021.

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- Z. whereas an inter-service working group on sign language was established in Parliament in order to implement measures to fulfil the request in petition 1056/2016 to allow for the tabling of petitions in national sign languages used in the European Union;
- AA. whereas measures taken by governments during the exceptional major health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic should always respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals and should not discriminate against citizens with disabilities;
- AB. whereas several petitions prove that the COVID-19 pandemic has aggravated the situation of persons with disabilities, including violations of persons with disabilities' most basic human rights, such as access to healthcare, to protective measures against the spread of the disease and to education;
- AC. whereas Parliament must guarantee that the COVID-19 measures are in line with the Charter and the UN Convention on the Rights for Persons with Disabilities;
- AD. whereas due to the difficult situation during the COVID-19 crisis, institutions for persons with disabilities and older people, such as day centres or schools, have been temporarily closed on occasion; whereas in this emergency situation, the care of persons with intellectual disabilities has fallen to their family members; whereas persons with disabilities living in institutions that have remained open have been highly affected during the pandemic due to their dependence on physical contact with carers and support staff, a lack of staff, a lack of personal protective equipment and disinfectant products and, as a consequence, high rates of illness and increased numbers of deaths;
- AE. whereas confinement measures have a particularly negative impact on persons with disabilities;
- AF. whereas petitions have repeatedly highlighted the fact that employment opportunities for people with disabilities are limited; whereas the average gap between the employment rates of people with and without disabilities in the EU is 25 % ⁽²¹⁾;
- AG. whereas employment and occupation levels for persons with disabilities are low, standing at 50,6 % compared to 74,8 % for those without disabilities; whereas, in addition, the pandemic and social and economic crisis have increased inequalities between persons with disabilities and those without disabilities;
- AH. whereas work in segregated institutions does not facilitate the integration of persons with disabilities into the open labour market;
- AI. whereas nearly one in four EU citizens surveyed reported some degree of functional limitations due to health conditions ⁽²²⁾;
- AJ. whereas social protection and employment rights, the use of the European structural and investment funds in compliance with EU regulations and the CRPD and other issues falling within the competence of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs are among the most common disability equality concerns voiced in the petitions received by Parliament;

⁽²¹⁾ Annexes of 17 December 2019 to the proposal for a joint employment report from the Commission and the Council accompanying the communication from the Commission on the Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2020 (COM(2019)0653), p. 89.

⁽²²⁾ Eurostat, 'Functional and activity limitations statistics', accessed on 6 July 2021.

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- AK. whereas the Committee on Petitions receives a large number of petitions relating to Council Directive 2000/78/EC which concern the failure to implement the principle of equal treatment with regard to access to inclusive education, employment, vocational training, promotion and the working conditions of persons with disabilities; whereas the Member States and the EU have ratified the CRPD, whose Article 24 stipulates that signatories must ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access lifelong learning, adult education, vocational training, general tertiary and secondary education and free and compulsory primary education;
- AL. whereas access to quality employment, education and training, healthcare, social protection, including across borders, adequate housing, support for independent living and equal opportunities to participate in leisure activities and community life are essential to the quality of life of persons with disabilities;
- AM. whereas the recently presented European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 is a welcome step toward addressing the issues faced by persons with disabilities, but whereas these people still face obstacles and discrimination; whereas in 2019, 28,4 % of the EU population with disabilities (aged 16 or over) was at risk of social exclusion or poverty ⁽²³⁾; whereas the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 will have to address this state of affairs;
- AN. whereas principle 17 of the European Pillar of Social Rights states that persons with disabilities 'have the right to income support that ensures they can live in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs';
- AO. whereas sheltered workshops should aim to ensure inclusion, rehabilitation and transition to the open labour market, but are often segregated environments in which workers with disabilities do not have employee status or enjoy labour rights, which clearly constitutes a violation of the CRPD; whereas inclusive models of supported employment can, if they are rights-based and recognised as employment, respect the rights of persons with disabilities and serve inclusion in and transition to the open labour market;
- AP. whereas the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic poses a serious threat to European economies and the preservation of jobs; whereas people from disadvantaged groups, in particular persons with disabilities, have been particularly affected by the pandemic; whereas COVID-19 prevention measures have presented both opportunities and challenges for persons with disabilities when it comes to labour market accessibility and inclusiveness;
- AQ. whereas the EU, through the NextGenerationEU temporary recovery instrument, must support a disability-inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery; whereas civil society and voluntary organisations working in the disability sector have demonstrated their paramount importance and resilience yet again during the COVID-19 crisis;
- AR. whereas COVID-19 prevention measures have created new barriers for persons with disabilities and have exacerbated existing exclusion in all areas of the world of work; whereas persons with disabilities are more likely to lose work and have difficulties finding employment again; whereas COVID-19 has had a negative impact on accessibility and the inclusiveness of the organisation of work and work arrangements, as well as the employment and the working conditions of persons with disabilities, and has exposed many persons with disabilities to the negative effects of teleworking;
- AS. whereas in 2019, almost 18 million children in the EU (22,2 % of the child population) lived in a household at risk of poverty or social exclusion; whereas children with disabilities experience specific disadvantages that make them particularly vulnerable; whereas this underscores the importance of guaranteeing, for children in need, free and effective access to high-quality early childhood education and care, education and school-based activities, at least one healthy meal each school day and healthcare, as well as effective access to healthy nutrition and adequate housing, as stipulated in the Council recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee;

⁽²³⁾ Eurostat, 'Disability: higher risk of poverty or social exclusion', accessed on 6 July 2021.

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- AT. whereas all EU Members States have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, making it binding for them, and whereas Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union establishes the objective for the EU to ensure children's rights are protected; whereas the Charter guarantees the protection of the rights of the child by the EU institutions and by Member States when they implement EU law; whereas Parliament adopted its resolution on the European Child Guarantee with a strong majority, demanding that access to inclusive education from early childhood to adolescence be ensured for all children, including for Romani children, children with disabilities, stateless and migrant children and those living in humanitarian emergency settings;
- AU. whereas work-related discrimination against persons with disabilities is related to a lack of inclusive education and vocational training, as well as the segregation and discrimination present in the fields of housing and healthcare, and the inaccessibility of transport and other services and products;
- AV. whereas in its resolution on equal treatment in employment and occupation in light of the UNCRPD, Parliament revealed the shortcomings of Council Directive 2000/78/EC;
- AW. whereas Directive (EU) 2019/1158 requires Member States to assess whether the conditions of access to and the detailed arrangements for parental, carers' and workers leave should be adapted to the specific needs of parents in particularly disadvantaged situations, such as parents with disabilities, adoptive, single or separated parents of children with disabilities or a long-term illness, or parents in difficult circumstances;
- AX. whereas persons with disabilities face numerous hurdles in their everyday lives, *inter alia* when trying to obtain personal assistance, be included in the community, find adequate and affordable accessible housing and obtain affordable healthcare and person-centred social and healthcare;
- AY. whereas unemployment and a lack of quality and sustainable jobs for persons with disabilities are the main factors contributing to a high risk of poverty, social exclusion and homelessness among persons with disabilities;
- AZ. whereas in 2017, a third of adults in the EU with disabilities lived in households whose financial resources were not sufficient to cover the usual necessary expenses; whereas in 2019, almost two thirds of the EU population with an activity limitation would have been at risk of poverty without social benefits, allowances or a pension ⁽²⁴⁾;
- BA. whereas persons with disabilities are a diverse group and are often subject to intersectional discrimination, the cumulative effects of which have a tangible impact on employment;
- BB. whereas the progress in deinstitutionalisation is uneven across the Member States and whereas despite the introduction of relevant policies and the allocation of substantial funding in the EU, there are still one million people living in institutions; whereas several petitions on the misuse of EU funds for the deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities have been submitted; whereas in February 2021, the European Ombudsman opened an own-initiative inquiry into the role of the Commission in ensuring that Member States use EU funds with a view to promoting independent living for persons with disabilities and older persons and transitioning away from residential care institutions; whereas Member States must speed up the process of deinstitutionalisation and the Commission must carefully monitor their progress;
- BC. whereas the collection of EU statistics on populations overlooks the nature of a person's disabilities, as well as the number of persons with disabilities living in residential care, hampering compliance with Article 31 of the CRPD;
- BD. whereas the catalogue of allowances and rights deriving from disability status varies from one Member State to another, as do the entities which define and recognise these rights;

⁽²⁴⁾ Eurostat, 'European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions' accessed on 2 July 2021.

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- BE. whereas the number of persons with disabilities and persons in need of care and long-term care is expected to grow dramatically in the EU due, among other factors, to demographic challenges and the increase in chronic health conditions; whereas most long-term care is currently provided by informal, usually unpaid and predominantly female carers; whereas policies for tackling demographic challenges and responding to growing care and long-term needs should be designed in such a manner that they do not lead to increased pressure on informal carers;
- BF. whereas disabilities are often the result of an occupational injury or are acquired through a chronic condition related to occupational disease and exposure to health hazards;
- BG. whereas commitment to better inclusion and the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities should be reflected in all policy fields, including in the European Semester process;
- BH. whereas the EU and the Member States should adopt all appropriate measures for the implementation of the rights laid down in the CRPD, and modify or withdraw current measures that constitute discrimination against persons with disabilities; whereas the EU and the Member States should protect and promote the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities in all policies and programmes;
- BI. whereas 46 million women and girls in the European Union are living with disabilities ⁽²⁵⁾;
- BJ. 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;
- BK. whereas in the European Union, 20,6 % of women with disabilities are in full-time employment compared with 28,5 % of men with disabilities ⁽²⁶⁾; 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 disabilities ⁽²⁷⁾;
- BL. whereas the CRPD 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 Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention); whereas extending areas of crime to encompass specific forms of gender-based violence in accordance with Article 83(1) of the TFEU will provide greater protection for women and girls with disabilities;

Governance and implementation

1. Stresses the need to raise awareness at all levels of the rights of persons with disabilities enshrined in the CRPD in order to protect their rights and dignity, and to promote fruitful cooperation and the exchange of good practices between Member States; highlights the need for commonly accepted definitions of disability, deinstitutionalisation, living in the community, independent living and inclusive education; encourages the Member States to strengthen coordination mechanisms;

⁽²⁵⁾ European Parliament resolution on the situation of women with disabilities.

⁽²⁶⁾ Gender Equality Index 2020.

⁽²⁷⁾ European Parliament resolution on the European Disability Strategy post-2020.

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2. Stresses that Member States should step up their efforts to provide support for persons with disabilities in the following priority areas: health, education, accessibility, employment and working conditions, independent living, coordination, living conditions, social protection and awareness-raising;
3. Calls on all Member States that have not yet ratified the Optional Protocol to the CRPD to do so without further delay, and for the EU to fully ratify it; calls on the Council to take the necessary steps to ensure the accession of the EU to the Optional Protocol;
4. Considers the Optional Protocol to be an indivisible part of the CRPD; points to the fact that the Optional Protocol provides citizens with a forum to communicate alleged violations of the provisions of the convention by a State Party, and allows the CRPD Committee to initiate confidential inquiries when they receive information indicating that a State Party has committed a grave or systematic violation;
5. Calls on the Commission to conduct a comprehensive and cross-cutting review of EU legislation and funding programmes with a view to complying fully with the CRPD by constructively involving disability organisations and the members of the EU framework for monitoring the implementation of the CRPD;
6. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to take into account the diversity and heterogeneity of persons with disabilities when designing and implementing policies and measures;
7. Takes note of the progress made by the Member States in effectively implementing and monitoring the CRPD and in adapting accessibility measures to comply with the standards of the CRPD; calls on the Member States to designate, without further delay, responsible authorities to serve as focal points, and to establish coordinating mechanisms at all administrative levels, in accordance with Article 33 of the CRPD, for its implementation and monitoring; stresses that the Member States should ensure that a significant number of persons with disabilities are involved in the work of these authorities;
8. Supports the Commission's proposal to establish a disability platform in order to strengthen governance of cooperation at EU level in this area and of the implementation of the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 and national disability strategies;
9. Points out that the new EU disability platform should be aligned with the guidelines set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights;
10. Calls on the Member States to carry out national disability awareness-raising campaigns promoting the CRPD and the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 that are accessible for all and involve persons with disabilities and the family members and organisations that represent them; calls on the Member States to adopt ambitious timelines for the implementation of the strategy; calls on the Commission to develop a set of detailed indicators in the forthcoming delegated act on the revised social scoreboard to measure the progress toward the goals and objectives of the strategy and to ensure compliance by all those involved with the commitments outlined in these documents;
11. Acknowledges the Commission's call for all EU institutions, bodies, agencies and delegations to designate 'disability coordinators'; reiterates its call for focal points to be established in all EU institutions and agencies, including Parliament and the Council, with the central focal point within the Commission's General Secretariat and supported by an appropriate interinstitutional mechanism; calls on the EU institutions to prioritise the appointment of persons with disabilities to the role of disability coordinators;
12. Welcomes the plans of the Commission to examine the functioning of the EU framework for monitoring the implementation of the CRPD in 2022 and propose actions on this basis; calls on the Commission to strengthen the EU framework and its independence, above all by ensuring greater involvement and participation of experts, non-governmental organisations, social partners and particularly persons with disabilities, without discrimination based on the type of disability or any other personal circumstance; underlines the need for the EU framework to be based on detailed, up-to-date, quality disaggregated data according to the nature of a person's disability, building on the work of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics;

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13. Calls on the EU institutions and the Member States to reaffirm their commitment to realising inclusive equality for persons with disabilities and to fully implement the CRPD, including its Article 27 on work and employment;
14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to set clear objectives to improve the living and working conditions of persons with disabilities, while respecting the principles of accessibility and non-discrimination and investing in equal opportunities and the participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of life;
15. Points out that the Committee on Petitions plays a specific protection role in ensuring that the EU complies with the CRPD when developing policies and taking legislative action; notes that in the context of that responsibility, the committee handles petitions on disability issues, organises debates, thematic workshops and public hearings on the subject, drafts resolutions and reports and carries out field visits;
16. Stresses that in order to have effective access to justice through petitions to Parliament, persons with disabilities should have access to the support and assistance they need to draft and submit petitions that fulfil the admissibility criteria; calls for better visibility of the petitions mechanism through more awareness-raising, as well as the involvement and participation of persons with disabilities or their representatives in the consideration of petitions;
17. Urges the Member States to develop national action plans that address the shortcomings in access to public safety-related information, distance and online learning, personal assistance, care and support services for people with disabilities;
18. Invites the Committee on Petitions to collect and provide statistical data on the processing of petitions and stresses the need for the committee to ensure it can provide interpretation in sign language, as should all committees of the European Parliament, in order to ensure access to information and participation;
19. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to better acknowledge the importance of accessible and quality support services and systems for independent living; stresses the need to promote strategies and standards for personalised quality support for dependent persons with disabilities and their carers, including improved social protection and various forms of support for informal carers; calls on the Commission to present a strategic EU care agenda as a further step forward in qualitatively empowering the healthcare sector in the EU, including personal and household service workers; reiterates that the care agenda also needs to reflect the situation of the 100 million informal carers in the EU, who provide 80 % of long-term care but whose work mostly goes unrecognised;
20. Recommends that the Committee on Petitions prepare an annual report on problems highlighted in petitions related to persons with disabilities and make recommendations;
21. Calls on the Commission to structurally integrate the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 into the European Semester process as the latter should be used to inspire Member State policies and approaches, to strengthen the inclusiveness of society and to support the employment and social protection of people with disabilities; calls on the Commission to carry out an annual review of disability mainstreaming under the European Semester process;
22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to establish a common definition of disability in line with the concluding observations of the CRPD Committee on the initial report of the European Union adopted in 2015, and to ensure mutual recognition of disability status across the Member States, so as to ensure the free movement of persons with disabilities and the proper exercise and recognition of their EU citizenship rights;
23. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the EU and the Member States fully comply with all relevant EU and UN obligations on the rights of persons with disabilities, in particular the CRPD and the CRPD Committee's general comments to the convention, and with the relevant EU measures and funding rules, and to provide support to them and their families and carers and enable exchanges of best practices in this area;

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24. Stresses the need for more and regular awareness training for justice and law enforcement staff on crisis intervention and management and conflict de-escalation when interacting with persons with specific disabilities;

Data protection

25. Calls on the Commission to ensure that the Member States correctly implement Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation — GDPR) ⁽²⁸⁾, and to take the necessary measures in order to protect the sensitive data of persons with disabilities;

26. Stresses that any processing of personal data must fully comply with the GDPR; underlines that pursuant to the GDPR, the processing of genetic or biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a natural person and of data concerning health (sensitive personal data) is prohibited unless it is expressly allowed by the GDPR;

Participation

27. Stresses the need to consult and actively involve organisations of persons with disabilities in each stage of planning, adoption, implementation and monitoring of all types of measures so that these measures ensure the promotion of their fundamental rights; welcomes the Commission's commitment to adequately involve organisations of persons with disabilities at all stages of the implementation of the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030;

28. Recalls the importance of consulting and involving persons with disabilities and the organisations that represent them when adopting measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as recovery and vaccination plans, and in any future crisis;

29. Highlights that the full and effective participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of life and society is crucial for the exercise of their fundamental rights;

30. Recalls that many people with disabilities are still segregated from community life and do not have control over their daily lives, in particular those living in residential institutions, as the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted and intensified the challenges faced by the latter; urges the Member States to mainstream support services in order to ensure people with disabilities enjoy the equal right to live independently and be included in the community;

31. Urges the Member States to ensure that persons with disabilities are involved in the policymaking process without any constraints; notes that the CRPD requires full political participation, which means that persons with disabilities must be able to participate in elections and decision-making processes on an equal basis with others; calls on the Commission to ensure that the Member States provide facilitated naturalisation or specific exemptions from naturalisation exams for persons with disabilities to guarantee their access to citizenship;

32. Recalls the high number of EU citizens deprived of their right to participate in elections, including European Parliament elections, because of their disabilities or mental health problems; thus calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the real right of persons with disabilities to vote in European Parliament elections;

Free movement

33. Welcomes the Commission's plan to present a proposal, by the end of 2023, for the creation of an EU disability card to be recognised in all Member States, with a view to scaling up the pilot projects for the EU disability card and the EU parking card for persons with disabilities; is of the opinion that the EU disability card, which should be mandatory in all Member States, will be an important instrument to help persons with disabilities to exercise their right to free movement in a barrier-free EU;

34. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to be ambitious regarding the scope of the entitlements card users will have and ensure proper implementation by all the Member States by way of binding EU legislation if necessary;

⁽²⁸⁾ OJ L 119, 4.5.2016, p. 1.

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35. Notes that in some Member States where a disability card has already been introduced, there have been reports of misuse, sometimes leading to negative consequences for people who are truly eligible; therefore stresses the need to raise awareness at all levels and take measures to prevent misuse of the new EU disability card;

36. Calls on the Commission to exempt persons with disabilities and their families and helpers from the payment of tolls across the EU to support their movement, especially when they need to make multiple journeys for medical treatment and their wellbeing;

37. Calls on the Commission to further strengthen the legislative framework for the participation of persons with disabilities in tourism; notes that 25 % of the EU electorate have some degree of impairment or disability ⁽²⁹⁾ and that the EU total gross turnover contribution of accessible tourism for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility amounted to about EUR 786 billion in 2012 ⁽³⁰⁾;

38. Warmly welcomes the adoption of stronger rail passenger rights for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility, especially the phasing out of the current exemptions for Member States and the reduction of the period of advance notice to be given by persons with disabilities or reduced mobility who require assistance; calls on the Member States to arrange, as soon as possible, shorter pre-notification periods for persons with disabilities who require assistance with travel, in order to allow persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility to more readily exercise their free movement rights as well as to define accessibility time frames; calls for the swift implementation of the rules laid down in the recast of Regulation (EC) No 1371/2007 in all Member States; calls on the Commission to consider making a proposal relating to the rights of passengers with disabilities in urban and rural transport, to bridge the gaps that still exist; calls for the adoption of an equally effective maritime transport package;

39. Calls on the Commission to support the Member States to ensure the necessary conditions at local, regional and national level to allow persons with disabilities to enjoy their rights to free movement, self-determination and personal choices on an equal basis with others, to live independently and to be included in the community, as laid down in Article 19 of the CRPD; calls on the Member States to improve the accessibility of information provided by public administrations by using open and accessible formats;

Accessibility

40. Notes the Commission's proposal for the creation of the 'AccessibleEU' resource centre by 2022; calls on the Commission to create an EU agency on accessibility (EU Access Board) that would be in charge of developing technical specifications on accessibility in support of specific EU policies and legislation, carrying out consultations with rights-holders, stakeholders and non-governmental organisations, helping Member States and EU institutions to implement accessibility in a harmonised way for the benefit of the single market, and raising awareness of the importance of accessibility for equal societies;

41. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the cognitive, sensory and physical accessibility of EU initiatives on the digitalisation of the labour market;

42. Regrets the fact that access to the built environment and physical accessibility were not included within the scope of the European Accessibility Act; calls on the Commission to use the European Accessibility Act as a basis for adopting a robust EU framework for an accessible and inclusive environment with fully accessible public spaces, services, including public transport, communication, administrative and financial services, and the built environment; welcomes the Commission's 'Access City Award' initiative;

43. Welcomes the results of the European Access City competition; calls on the Member States to introduce similar competitions at national level;

⁽²⁹⁾ Parliament study of 1 October 2018 entitled '2018 Update of the Study on the protection role of the Committee on Petitions in the context of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'.

⁽³⁰⁾ Commission presentation of 10 January 2014 entitled 'Economic impact and travel patterns of accessible tourism in Europe: Presentation of the key study findings'.

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44. Points out that petitioners' most common concerns regarding the equality of persons with disabilities centre around accessibility and social protection, along with employment rights and the right to live independently in the community; calls, therefore, on the Member States to fully implement and continuously monitor all accessibility-related legislation, including Directive (EU) 2019/882 (the European Accessibility Act) in order to effectively and definitively remove and prevent barriers for workers with disabilities, and to improve and ensure the availability of accessible services and the suitability of the conditions under which these services are provided; calls, in this context, on the Member States to consider, when transposing the European Accessibility Act into national legislation, the interconnectivity between the accessibility of services and the accessibility of the built environment;

45. Stresses that full accessibility must be guaranteed in all public places in Europe; regrets that the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030 is nowadays being disregarded in many respects, and in particular that there are too many public buildings with architectural barriers, which constitutes an odious form of discrimination; calls on the Commission to mainstream accessibility into all policy areas and calls on the Member States to fully implement existing legislation;

46. Regrets that in some Member States inaccessible emergency numbers have meant that some persons with disabilities have been unable to communicate with essential support and emergency services; urges, therefore, Member States to carefully implement Directive (EU) 2018/1972 establishing the European Electronic Communications Code;

47. Calls on the Member States to ensure the swift and efficient implementation at all levels of Directive (EU) 2016/2102 on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites and mobile applications, in order to guarantee that persons with disabilities are able to access all information they require in an accessible format, including national sign languages; welcomes the Commission's initiative for an action plan on web accessibility for all EU institutions, bodies and agencies with a view to ensuring the compliance of EU websites, and the documents published on these websites and online platforms, with European accessibility standards, which need to be broadened; urges all EU institutions, bodies and agencies to comply with the European accessibility standards in 2022 at the latest;

48. Urges Member States to transpose into national legislation the long overdue Audiovisual Media Services Directive and, in line with Article 7 thereof, to provide accessible audiovisual media services to persons with disabilities;

49. Urges the EU institutions to improve the level and quality of accessibility in all of their buildings and remove the existing barriers to their websites, debates and documentation, i.e. to make the information produced accessible by, for example, providing translation into the sign languages of the different Member States and producing documents in Braille and in easy-to-read language;

50. Highlights the importance of swiftly addressing accessibility concerns in all relevant policies and instruments, including concerns about public procurement rules and the accessibility of petitions to Parliament;

51. Urges the relevant Parliament services to continue their efforts and finalise the project on the inter-service working group on sign language in the shortest possible time frame in order to meet the requests of petition 1056/2016 to allow for the tabling of petitions in international and national sign languages used in the EU and thereby make the fundamental right to petition more accessible for sign language users;

52. Highlights the need to provide sign language interpretation services and easy-to-read language translations for committee meetings, plenary meetings and all other Parliament meetings, in order to make them accessible for persons with disabilities;

Combating discrimination

53. Notes that there is no mutual recognition of disability status between Member States; calls on the Member States to work together in a spirit of mutual trust to recognise the status assigned in another Member State; emphasises the Commission's goal of working with Member States to expand the scope of the mutual recognition of disability status in areas such as labour mobility and the benefits related to the conditions of service provision; highlights the need to extend the benefits of the EU disability card so that mutually recognised health access benefits are also included; underlines, in this

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context, the importance of swift action in terms of implementation of the European Disability Card; reiterates the need for mutual understanding of deinstitutionalisation, its implementation and independent living in the community, with a view to better aligning the Member States' strategies and the EU funds with the CRPD;

54. Recognises the many areas in which the European Disability Card could be applied, in terms of both access to many services without being discriminated against and safety in times of danger and emergency; points out that the card would ensure that a person with a disability would be immediately recognised by the police forces involved;

55. Regrets that, according to the WHO, children and adults with disabilities are at higher risk of violence than their non-disabled peers; highlights that minors in particular 'are 3,7 times more likely than non-disabled children to be victims of any sort of violence, 3,6 times more likely to be victims of physical violence, and 2,9 times more likely to be victims of sexual violence'; underlines that 'children with mental or intellectual impairments appear to be among the most vulnerable, with 4,6 times the risk of sexual violence than their non-disabled peers'; urges, therefore, for the creation of a European framework for the protection of persons with disabilities from any sort of violence;

56. Stresses the urgent need for EU legislation aimed at protecting citizens against all forms of discrimination in the EU and considers this to be primordial for the correct implementation of CRPD policies; urges the Member States to adopt the EU horizontal anti-discrimination directive tabled by the Commission in 2008; calls on the Commission to present an alternative solution in order to move forward in tackling discrimination across the EU, in all areas of life, as soon as possible;

57. Strongly condemns all medical discrimination against persons with disabilities; recalls that the relevant measures adopted by the Member States must comply with the CRPD and must ensure equal and non-discriminatory access to healthcare and social services; stresses that the response to future health crises (from preparedness to treatment) must ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind; urges, in this regard, the relevant authorities to offer persons with disabilities the same medical treatment as any other person, including intensive medical care; recalls the importance for health public services to always play a main role in the protection of persons with disabilities;

58. Reiterates its call on the Commission to work with the Court of Justice of the European Union on communication and accessibility strategies in order to ensure that persons with disabilities have the ability to access the EU justice system without facing any form of discrimination; calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue empowerment programmes for persons with disabilities to enable them to recognise and report cases of discrimination against them;

59. Condemns all forms of discrimination against persons with disabilities in the workplace; calls on the Member States and the Commission to implement policies aimed at preventing cases of harassment based on disability; calls, in addition, on the Member States to implement policies, in cooperation with employers, to prevent cyberbullying of persons with disabilities in the workplace;

60. Stresses that imprisonment of persons whose disability is incompatible with detention must be prevented and that alternatives to prison sentences should be provided; calls on the Member States to ensure that the fundamental principles of equality of treatment, non-discrimination, reasonable accommodation and accessibility are respected for detainees with disabilities;

61. Calls on the Member States to exchange information and good practices, especially with regard to the transition from institutional care to independent living, the provision of accessible and affordable housing for persons with disabilities and inclusion in the community;

62. Highlights that reasonable accommodation, accessibility and universal design are crucial for combating discrimination against persons with disabilities; underlines the importance of effective non-discriminatory access involving the identification and removal of obstacles and barriers that hamper the access of persons with disabilities to the goods,

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services and facilities available to the general public; stresses that effective, non-discriminatory access for persons with disabilities should be provided, wherever possible, under the same terms and conditions as for persons without disabilities, and that the use of assistive devices by persons with disabilities should be facilitated where necessary, including aids to mobility and access, and such as recognised guide dogs and other assistance dogs ⁽³¹⁾; recalls that accessibility standards should be adopted in consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, since their expertise is essential for the identification of accessibility barriers; highlights that reasonable accommodation, accessibility and universal design are crucial to combating discrimination against persons with disabilities;

63. Emphasises the vital role of family members who care for people with disabilities and who often fulfil their needs for care and assistance; underlines, therefore, the need for EU and national policies and strategies to provide strong support to family members and carers; considers it vital to provide them with European mutual recognition in their role as care providers;

64. Highlights the importance of the entitlement of persons with disabilities to exercise their fundamental rights on an equal basis; stresses the need to recognise that persons with disabilities enjoy legal capacity on an equal basis with others in all aspects of life, in line with Article 12 of the CRPD; calls on the Member States to take appropriate and timely measures to provide effective, fair and inclusive access to the justice system and law enforcement for persons with all kinds of disabilities at all stages of the process; emphasises that facilities and services must be accessible in order to ensure equal access, without discrimination, to justice and the entire legal process;

65. Highlights the need for financial aids so that persons with disabilities may hire or employ helpers or financially support family members, given that their care services have a cost, both in terms of time and financially, and that this is absolutely necessary for the support of persons with disabilities and for their family helpers;

66. Highlights that persons with disabilities are socially marginalised and excluded from employment and economic and social life; regrets that persons with disabilities, particularly those with high support needs, are often at high risk of being institutionalised, while the current financial support by Member States is not enough, especially regarding community based, person-centred support that would protect the rights of persons with disabilities ⁽³²⁾;

67. Stresses that Article 19 of the CRPD sets out the right to live independently and be included in the community; calls on the Member States to ensure a process that provides for a shift in living arrangements for persons with disabilities, from institutional settings to a system enabling social participation and in which services are provided in the community according to individual will and preference; calls on the Member States to include specific targets with clear deadlines in their deinstitutionalisation strategies and to adequately finance the implementation of these strategies;

68. Regrets the fact that persons with disabilities and their support networks were excluded from the priority groups under the EU's vaccination strategy; urges the Member States to offer persons with disabilities and their support networks priority access to vaccination; insists, in this regard, that receipt of a COVID-19 vaccination be based on the free and informed consent of persons with disabilities and that the autonomy and legal capacity of all persons with disabilities, including persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities and autistic persons, must not be undermined by measures that are deemed to be for the public good or in the best interests of the person;

69. Calls for EU and national investigations into the disproportionate COVID-19 infection and death rates in nursing and care homes and in the context of residential services for older people and persons with disabilities and other social services, with a view to understanding the causes, identifying those responsible and taking the necessary measures to prevent such cases in the future;

⁽³¹⁾ Petition Nos 1140/2015, 0857/2016, 0535/2017 and 1140/2015, and 0988/2020.

⁽³²⁾ <https://www.edf-feph.org/independent-living-and-de-institutionalisation-policy/>

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70. Calls for sites where vaccinations are delivered to be physically accessible and provide live guidance and assistance for those who need it; calls for free or low-cost targeted accessible transport programmes wherever necessary;

Employment and social affairs

71. Is concerned about the high unemployment rates of persons with disabilities, especially among women with disabilities, compared to other groups in the EU; calls on the Member States to promote and ensure a legislative and policy framework for the participation of persons with disabilities and especially women with disabilities in the labour market, including those with hidden disabilities, chronic illnesses or learning disabilities;

72. Calls on the Member States to take an intersectional approach, especially in their policies and measures, to creating inclusive employment; regrets that multiple and intersectional discrimination is insufficiently addressed in the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030; calls, therefore, on the Commission to place special emphasis on intersectionality in the implementation of the strategy and to set clear, measurable and ambitious targets relating to workplace diversity that reflect the heterogeneity of persons with disabilities, in order to address multiple and intersectional discrimination; stresses the importance of monitoring the efficiency of the strategy with the involvement of persons with disabilities and the organisations that represent them;

73. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to promote and support social enterprises focusing on the employment of persons with disabilities, as they are a lever to boost the creation of decent jobs;

74. Encourages the Member States to give persons with significant and severe disabilities early access to public pension schemes to combat the risk of poverty and social exclusion in old age;

75. Calls on the Member States to address the underdevelopment and underfunding of public employment services with a view to improving the employment rate of persons with disabilities; urges the Member States to strengthen the links between public employment services and recruitment agencies;

76. Highlights the positive role played by CRPD-compliant sheltered workplaces in the transition of persons with disabilities to the open labour market;

77. Urges the Member States to support rights-based, inclusive and decent individual placement and support ('supported employment') models as a means for persons with disabilities, where possible, to make the transition to the open labour market;

78. Calls on the Commission to start revising the Employment Equality Directive as soon as possible with a view to fully harmonising it with the provisions of the CRPD and implementing a participatory process aimed at ensuring the direct and full involvement of organisations that represent persons with disabilities;

79. Points out that hiring support systems should not reduce the wages of persons with disabilities, particularly through public co-funding; points out that the hiring of persons with disabilities must be based on the employment framework applied to other workers, in terms of pay and working time arrangements, with that framework being adapted to their needs; takes the view that persons with disabilities cannot be included in the open labour market without a general framework for employment regulation, and the promotion of both wage and collective bargaining;

80. Highlights the need for financial assistance to enable persons with disabilities to hire or employ specially qualified helpers;

81. Urges the Member States to ensure adequate coordination of social security for persons with disabilities, including by ensuring that they continue to receive disability support covering extra costs relating to their disabilities, even when entering the labour market or when crossing a certain income threshold, in order to support their integration into the labour market and to help ensure their dignity and equality; believes that this should be done through amendments to Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 and by consulting organisations that represent persons with disabilities;

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82. Calls on the Member States to exchange information and good practices, especially with regard to the transition from institutional care to independent living, the provision of accessible and affordable housing for persons with disabilities and inclusion in the community;

83. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to step up their efforts to tackle the persisting disability employment gap and to foster access for persons with disabilities to quality and sustainable jobs; welcomes, in this regard, the Commission's proposal in the European Pillar of Social Rights action plan to include the disability employment gap in the revised social scoreboard;

84. Calls for the full implementation by the Member States of Council Directive 2000/78/EC; urges the Member States to develop employment prospects for persons with disabilities by improving their implementation of the directive, particularly Article 5 on reasonable accommodation, and by investing EU funds and Recovery and Resilience Facility funding in training and job creation for persons with disabilities;

85. Highlights that job-matching, vocational profiling, concurrent employment and training, in-work induction and training support and career development opportunities play an important role in helping persons with disabilities to secure and retain paid employment;

86. Calls on the Member States to ensure that labour markets and work environments are open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities, to support employment services, to raise awareness of inclusive employment practices, to put in place adequate incentives and support measures for companies, in particular micro, small and medium-sized enterprises that recruit and train persons with disabilities, and to ensure that general self-employment schemes are accessible to and supportive of persons with disabilities;

87. Calls on the Member States to encourage workplace adaptations and take action to improve occupational health and safety; calls on the Commission to pay special attention to workers with disabilities in the upcoming EU strategic framework on health and safety at work and to set ambitious goals;

88. Urges the EU institutions and Member States to introduce workplace quotas for persons with disabilities in order to foster an inclusive workplace;

Public procurement and EU funds

89. Recalls that public procurement procedures in the Member States must be carried out and completed in a way that is fully respectful of the fundamental rights of the beneficiaries, including persons with disabilities; points out that Member States must comply with the CRPD when implementing public procurement legislation, in particular in connection with the choice of means of communications, technical specifications, award criteria and contract performance conditions;

90. Recalls that a good structure of public services, especially in health and education, is essential to ensure the equal treatment of persons with disabilities, regardless of their economic condition; calls on the Member States to use the EU funds to improve these services and related infrastructures, according to the spirit of the REACT EU and Next Generation EU initiatives;

91. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to include in the final content of the partnership agreements on the European Structural and Investment Funds and in these funds' programmes objectives and approaches that improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities, while respecting the principles of accessibility and non-discrimination, and investing in equal opportunities and the participation of persons with disabilities in all areas of life, including in supporting the transition from institutional to community-based living; asks the Commission to monitor closely the use of EU funds in line with the CRPD; stresses the need for a gradual convergence of the definitions of accessibility, participation and community-based living as a means of enhancing cohesion among Member States;

92. Calls on the Member States to take advantage of the opportunities provided by relevant EU funds for job creation and training for persons with disabilities, to guarantee and support full accessibility of public spaces and infrastructure and to ensure that EU-funded actions reach persons with disabilities; regrets the fact that the EU funds continue to be used in a number of Member States to build new segregated settings for persons with disabilities;

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93. Underlines the necessity to adequately fund the equipment that persons with disabilities need, to ensure that they can avail of the best available technology and equipment for their everyday life, their employment and their social participation;
94. Points out that EU funds should never be used to finance inaccessible products, services or infrastructure;
95. Invites the Commission and the Member States to ensure that rural development programmes and strategies include specific outreach measures for persons with disabilities living in rural areas and to involve them in the design and implementation of said programmes and strategies;

Digitalisation

96. Calls on the Member States to explore the opportunities and potential brought by digitalisation and digital solutions and recognise the value of assistive and adaptive technologies for persons with disabilities, with due regard to protection of personal data and ethical concerns; recalls that the potential of the use of digital tools and assistive technologies depends on the opportunities persons with disabilities have to develop their digital skills; stresses that the development of necessary digital skills and knowledge of AI can provide a labour market foothold for vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities;
97. Points out that the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the entire population should be able to benefit from digital transformation, without any discrimination or exclusion; emphasises the importance of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for mobility, communication and access to public services; calls, therefore, on the Member States to actively promote the participation of persons with disabilities by providing the appropriate means for ensuring their access to online public services;
98. Calls on the EU institutions to ensure the highest accessibility standards in their infrastructures, services and digital services, to make every effort to publish their documents related to legislative procedures in a user-friendly and accessible way, and to ensure that persons with disabilities can properly and fully access their websites and contact forms; encourages the Member States to develop programmes which aim to include persons with disabilities in society through sport, the arts, culture and leisure activities, and which promote their participation in the political process without any constraints;

Research

99. Calls on the Commission to conduct further research into the impact and health-related effects of emerging technologies on persons with disabilities, such as the case of LED lights on photosensitive persons;
100. Recalls that in order to develop appropriate and effective policies and find solutions tailored to the needs of all persons with disabilities in the EU, there is a need for comparable and reliable EU data; calls, therefore, on the Commission and the Member States to intensify their efforts for a common framework for European statistics on individuals and households to collect reliable data on the participation of persons with disabilities in the various levels and types of education and labour and in social life;
101. Stresses the need to invest in innovation and research regarding the employment and entrepreneurship of persons with disabilities to support their financial survival and their participation in economic and social life;
102. Stresses the need to step up research and innovation in the field of accessible technology in order to strengthen the inclusiveness of labour markets for persons with disabilities; emphasises the importance of ICTs for mobility, communication and access to public services for persons with disabilities;

Education

103. Welcomes the fact that Member States are willing to implement inclusive educational policies; calls on the Member States to further increase their education systems' capacity to provide high-quality accessible education for all learners by promoting specific measures and personalised support, such as accessible and tailored curricula and learning materials, accessible ICTs and appropriate digital education calls on the Commission to strengthen the role of the Child Guarantee, giving consideration to an accessible school award scheme, in ensuring the equal treatment of children with disabilities; calls

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on the Commission and the Member States to invest in training professionals regarding the needs of persons with disabilities; reiterates that the implementation and allocation of the relevant EU funding programmes should contribute to the transition towards inclusive education; stresses that persons with disabilities should be guaranteed access to education, including during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and that Member States should tackle all forms of discrimination and exclusion in this area; stresses the need to increase the participation of young people with disabilities in training, while taking into account their needs, which would provide them with better access to the labour market; notes the benefits for children from linguistic minorities and with special educational needs of learning in their mother tongue during early years education in cases where it is difficult for them to use language and communicate; calls on the Member States to ensure access to minority language education for children with special educational needs;

104. Points out that inclusive education and vocational training programmes are two of the key prerequisites for a more inclusive labour market; calls on the Commission to ensure that the upcoming EU approach to micro-credentials for lifelong learning and employability is accessible and inclusive and reflects on how to improve the realisation of the right to work of persons with disabilities; calls on the Member States to take advantage of the opportunities that the improved Youth Guarantee provides for employment, education, traineeships or apprenticeships for young persons with disabilities, to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities and to introduce tailor-made policies;

105. Stresses the importance of early, individualised and comprehensive support for children with disabilities, their parents and carers; calls on the Member States to pay special attention to children with disabilities and special educational needs;

106. Draws attention to the importance of early childhood intervention and to the fact that children with disabilities must participate and be included in society from the very early stages of their lives; points out the need to increase the funding opportunities for inclusive education, when and where possible and advisable, both for the promotion of inclusive education's impact on children with or without disabilities as well as for the funding of research in inclusive education; considers it necessary to encourage the use of new technologies, including ICT, mobility support devices, ancillary devices and technologies that are suitable for people with disabilities; stresses that education is central to individual development, and that accessible learning environments for persons with disabilities offer them the possibility to fully contribute to all aspects of society;

107. Stresses that people with disabilities must be fully integrated into the labour market through the promotion of inclusive education and flexible forms of employment that can meet their needs (such as teleworking or smart working) and through the full involvement of associations for people with disabilities in developing inclusive strategies;

108. Points out that persons with disabilities often have high levels of skills and qualifications that are undervalued; notes that this prevents them from realising their potential and deprives society of the social and economic value of their inclusion;

109. Strongly believes that Member States should provide adequate support to children with disabilities to enable public education to become the backbone of the individualised pedagogical paradigm;

110. Recognises the value of school and sport as crucial in the growth and development of children with disabilities, especially those with autism; regrets that, during the pandemic, distance learning has deprived them of these fundamental activities; hopes that their education will be prioritised in the reopening policies in the Member States;

111. Proposes the creation of projects to raise awareness of the needs of persons with disabilities, by positively using the power of cultural tools, such as through the promotion of cultural events, as part of a broader educational strategy to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities;

112. Calls on the Member States to comply with the guidelines issued by the Commission in its communication on achieving a European Education Area by 2025 in relation to the duty of governments to promote mainstreaming in all education and training sectors, in accordance with the UN commitments under the CRPD; calls for the incorporation of an inclusive arrangements system in national, European and regional education policies to facilitate the educational mainstreaming of students with disabilities, in order to avoid any type of discrimination;

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Protecting the rights of women with disabilities

113. Welcomes the European 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;

114. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the full development, 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;

115. 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;

116. 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;

117. 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;

118. 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;

119. 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

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economy business models and initiatives aimed at improving the social and labour inclusion of women with disabilities through the action plan on the social economy;

120. 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 disability-sensitive data to account for the challenges faced by women with disabilities, particularly in the labour market;

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121. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, the Committee of the Regions, the European Economic and Social Committee and the United Nations.
