

High-level meeting
of the EU Framework to promote, protect and monitor
the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
4 March 2015, 14:00 – 15:00
Venue: the European Parliament, room ASP 1 G 1

Participants:

European Parliament (EP): MEP **Ádám KÓSA**, MEP **Helga STEVENS**, MEP **Soledad Cabezón Ruiz**, **Monika MAKAY** (EMPL Secretariat), **Orsolya Zara** (Assistant to MEP **Kósa**), **Annika Pabsch** (Assistant to MEP **STEVENS**), **Nicolas STRAUCH** (LIBE Secretariat) and **Georgiana Sandu** (PETI Secretariat).

European Ombudsman (EO): **Aidan O'Sullivan** (Head of Cabinet) and **Astrid Eichstädt** (Disability and Fundamental Rights officer).

European Commission (EC): **Michel SERVOZ** (Director General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion), **Maria Luisa Cabral** (Head of Unit for the Rights of persons with disabilities), **Inmaculada Placencia Porrero** (Deputy Head of Unit for the Rights of persons with disabilities), **Annelisa Cotone** (Policy officer) and **Luca Merotta** (Trainee).

Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU (FRA): **Morten Kjaerum** (Director) and **Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos** (Head of Equality and Citizens' Rights Department).

European Disability Forum (EDF): **Gunta Anca** (Vice-President), **Catherine Naughton** (Director), **An-Sofie Leenknecht** (Human rights officer), **Etienne Coche** (Parliamentary officer).

Agenda

1. Opening by EDF Vice President Ms **Gunta Anca**, Chair of the EU Framework
2. Promoting, protecting and monitoring the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the EU: Renewed commitment of the Framework's members
3. Endorsement of the work programme of the EU Framework for 2015/2016, including actions to support the EU's review process by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its follow-up

Minutes

1. Opening by Ms Gunta Anca, Vice President of the European Disability Forum and Chair of the EU Framework

The Chair welcomed the participants and handed over the moderation of the meeting to **Catherine Naughton**, Director of the European Disability Forum.

2. Promoting, protecting and monitoring the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the EU: Renewed commitment of the Framework's members

The members of the Framework reaffirmed their commitment to take all necessary measures within their respective mandates and responsibilities to promote, protect and monitor the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the EU.

Members highlighted their specific contributions to the Framework's mission.

MEP **Ádám Kósa** informed the group that in the coming months the EP will set up an inter-committee coordination working group made up of Members from each Committee concerned and chaired by the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs. This working group will review/screen documents and activities to address possible disability-related issues and promote a coordinated approach.

MEP **Helga Stevens** referred to the EP's annual report on the Situation of Fundamental Rights in the EU where the situation of persons with disabilities is explicitly mentioned. She informed the group that the next report is foreseen to be adopted in LIBE end of May 2015 and in the Plenary in July 2015. She also referred to the importance of adopting the Commission proposal for a Directive on equal treatment.

MEP **Soledad Cabezón Ruiz** highlighted the important role of the Petitions Committee in safeguarding citizens' rights via extra judicial solutions. She reminded that PETI receives an average of thirty petitions per year on the rights of people with disabilities, including on issues like access to goods and services and employment.

Aidan O'Sullivan (EO) stressed that the EO aims to ensure that its services, including the public documents register, the EO reports, recommendations and the website, are fully accessible to people with disabilities. He mentioned a complaint on the accessibility of the Europass CV template and the positive resolution of this case with Cedefop. He also mentioned the importance of simplifying language to make information more accessible. The EO aims to become more proactive, for instance by means of own initiative inquiries, like the one launched in 2014 on the EU cohesion policy, and to follow up more closely on its recommendations to make sure they are properly implemented. He referred to the consultation of the work plan with stakeholders.

Michel Servoz (EC) stressed the importance for the EU Framework's members to show greater ownership and achieve more visibility and impact, namely in view of the examination of the EU by the UN Committee on the rights of persons with disabilities in summer 2015.

He reiterated the Commission's commitment to taking action in order to promote the rights of persons with disabilities, as highlighted in the 2015 Commission work programme. The commitment to promoting social fairness and combating discrimination is part of the Commission agenda to create jobs, growth and democratic change. **Michel Servoz** outlined

the Commission's contribution to the promotion, protection and monitoring of the Convention, which are distinct from its role as focal point.

Morten Kjaerum (FRA) emphasised the importance of mainstreaming the respect for fundamental rights in all activities of EU institutions. He mentioned the contribution of FRA to the monitoring of the Convention through the collection and analysis of data as well as the development of benchmarks and indicators (like the recent project on political participation). He also referred to the need for legal analysis of EU legislation to check compliance with the Convention. He explained how FRA is addressing disability through diversity audits.

Gunta Anca (EDF) stressed the importance of a renewed commitment for the Framework in order to enhance its visibility, capacity and efficacy for the future. Ms Anca reaffirmed that EDF will continue to take up its responsibilities and functions in the Framework and will contribute to the mission of the EU Framework through awareness-raising and capacity building, building the capacity of its national members, examining existing and new proposals for EU legislation and policies for compliance with the Convention, and third party interventions before Courts. EDF cooperates very closely with its national and European members in its work in the Framework, in which it represents 80 million Europeans with disabilities.

3. Endorsement of the work programme of the EU Framework for 2015/2016, including actions to support the EU's review process by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its follow-up

Members endorsed the work programme for 2015/2016. This includes an active participation in the review of the EU by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015 and the follow-up to this process, with the means provided by their respective mandates.

Each member took the floor to highlight specific contributions to this work programme.

MEP Kósa, on behalf of the EP, mentioned recent activities to monitor the application of EU law through implementation reports, human rights reports, oral questions, studies and implementation assessments.

Some examples in the remit of the EMPL Committee are:

- Study on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons (complementary impact assessment of the proposed horizontal Directive on Equal Treatment) - Published in January 2014
- Oral questions by the acting EMPL Chair to the Commission in plenary sessions on the Implementation of the Employment Equality Directive also addressing CRPD and reasonable accommodation in November 2014

- Study on Reasonable Accommodation and Sheltered Workshops for People with Disabilities: Costs and Returns - published in January 2015
- Planned activity in 2015: Implementation report on the Employment Equality Directive

He informed the group that the re-established EP Disability Intergroup will continue its activity in the current legislative term: it will disseminate information and raise awareness on CRPD within the institutions and towards civil society.

Aidan O'Sullivan (EO) informed the group that the EO aims to enhance the sustainability of their contribution to the Framework and have requested an extra post for this in the 2016 budget. As specific input to the EU framework, he also mentioned that the EO coordinates and acts as the secretariat to the European Network of Ombudsmen consisting of over 95 offices in 36 European countries. Some of the members have been appointed as monitoring bodies for the UN Convention. The EO is committed to actively participating in the review process of the EU by the UN Committee in 2015, in particular by replying to the list of issues.

Michel Servoz (EC) confirmed that in spring 2015 the webpage of the EU Framework will be launched on Europa to give visibility to its work and make the EU Framework accessible to citizens. He thanked all the members for their cooperation in preparing the page. Michel Servoz also highlighted the importance of improving cooperation and communication with national monitoring mechanisms for the UN Convention, who are the first layer of protection for citizens for the rights deriving from the UN Convention and from EU law. He confirmed that the Commission will organise a meeting of the EU Framework in April 2015, with the national monitoring mechanisms participating in the frame of a joint Framework activity. Both actions, initiated by the Commission, are in fact joint actions of the EU Framework.

Morten Kjaerum (FRA) informed the group about the work that is being done with the network of EU agencies which FRA is currently chairing. In February 2015 the network issued a joint statement on ensuring respect for fundamental rights in their work, including the rights of persons with disabilities. He also pointed out that FRA will contribute to developing synergies with data collection bodies, and will actively contribute to the dialogue process with the UN.

Gunta Anca (EDF) emphasised that the concluding observations of the UN Committee, due to be adopted in September 2015, should guide the work of the EU Framework in the coming years. She informed about the publication of EDF's alternative report and the proposals and recommendations. She also stressed the importance of formalising the cooperation with national monitoring mechanisms and to provide them with information and guidance on the implementation of the Convention.