

## **Towards a new European Disability Strategy for 2020 - 2030**

The current European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 (EDS) identified 8 main areas for action: Accessibility, Participation, Equality, Employment, Education and Training, Social Protection, Health, and External Action and aimed to make a barrier-free Europe.

The EDS will come to an end in the year 2020 and the European Commission is currently evaluating it. Despite several improvement and EU legislations such as the **European Accessibility Act**, **Cross-border Healthcare Directive** or the **Rail passenger rights**, persons with disabilities are still facing difficulties and discrimination in everyday life.

In light of this, the International Federation for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (IF) wishes to present its recommendations for the post-2020 EDS.

### **Why is it important to have an European Disability Strategy?**

Having an EDS means that there is a document setting and defining priorities and actions for disability policies at European and national level. This document can be used: to ensure and contribute to the full implementation of the CRPD at European and national level; for advocacy, to protect the rights and improve services for persons with disabilities including for persons living with Spina Bifida and/or Hydrocephalus (SBH); to remind to the European Commission its objectives for disability policies; and to combat discrimination, inequalities and stereotypes against persons with disabilities.

### **Our recommendations**

#### **The next EDS should:**

1. *Have its own budget.* In order to have a strong and ambitious strategy, having a budget will help in implementing disability policies.
2. *Ensure the full implementation of the UN CRPD.* Protecting and ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities is vital. The European Commission and the EU Member States should ensure that the future disability policies and legislations are aligned with the CRPD.
3. *Be linked to the European Pillar of Social Rights.* The Social Pillar defines 20 rights which are making the European Union more inclusive and fairer and a more social Europe. The implementation of the 20 rights should go hand in hand with the next EDS, especially with Principle 1. Education, training and life-long learning, a Principle 9. Work-life balance, Principle 16. Health care and Principle 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities.

4. *Ensure disaggregated data on persons with disabilities based on gender, age groups and types of disabilities.* In order to fight discrimination towards people with disabilities and to design disability policies, we need accurate facts on people with disabilities and especially on SBH.
5. *Pay attention to specific categories of persons.* The most vulnerable are always women with disabilities, children with disabilities, newborns with disabilities and ageing people with disabilities.
6. *Mainstream disability within the EU Institutions.* It is important to have a disability focal point in the main EU institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, Council and European Council). Moreover, the disability unit of the European Commission should be moved to the Secretariat-General. Hence, the disability unit will be reinforced in terms of financial and human resources and disability will be mainstreamed in all EU policies and legislations.
7. *Mainstream disability in all EU policies and legislations.* Disability should not only be linked to social inclusion but also to employment, education, access to healthcare, access to digital, access to sport, transport, mental health etc.
8. *Enhance the health dimension.* Access to affordable quality healthcare services is vital for people living with SBH. This could be improved by (1) training and informing healthcare professionals on SBH; (2) creating multidisciplinary care hospitals and/or clinics; (3) improving the Cross-border healthcare directive .
9. *Push to unblock the anti-discrimination directive.* One of the actions of the next EDS should be to unblock this directive. In 2008, the European Commission presented a directive to protect citizens outside the labour market from all kinds of discrimination such as: age, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief etc. However, this directive proposal is blocked by the Council since 2008, since Member States do not agree on this proposal.
10. *Be linked to the SDGs.* The next EDS should not only monitor and ensure that policies and legislations are aligned with the UN CRPD but also that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are achieved.
11. *Be linked to the European Semester,* hence the EDS objectives will be monitored annually through the European Semester process and the disability dimension will be enhanced within the European Semester.

IF hopes that the European Commission will soon launch the next EDS for 2020-2030 and commit to new disability policies and legislations. We need an ambitious and strong disability strategy to ensure that all persons with disabilities including people living with SBH can exercise their rights at European and national level.

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