**Minutes**

**Meeting of the EU Framework to promote, protect and monitor the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)**

**23 February 2024, 16:00-17:30 CEST**

*(hybrid meeting)*

*Location: room FRS-03A001 (3rd floor), European Ombudsman, Rue Froissart 87, Brussels) and online*

1. **Welcome and Opening**

Attendees: European Ombudsman (EO), EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), European Parliament (EP), European Disability Forum (EDF).

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

 The agenda was approved.

1. **Decision on the chair & secretariat of the Framework**

The Framework decided that the EDF acts as chair and FRA as secretariat of the Framework for 2024, in line with the [Work Programme 2023-2024](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/work-programme-2023-24-eu-framework-un-crpd.pdf).

1. **Update on relevant activities and exchange of views on CRPD implementation.**

EO:

The EO recently  [issued a decision](https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/decision/en/181763) concerning the European Personnel Selection Office (EPSO). The case concerned a candidate with disabilities’ request for reasonable accommodation in the context of an EU staff selection procedure.EPSO and the complainant had agreed certain reasonable accommodation measure to be there during the tests but when the complainant went to the test centre, none of the measures was in place.In addition, by the time EPSO rescheduled the complainant’s test, the position for which he was competing had been filled. The EO found maladministration and asked EPSO to put in place safeguards to ensure that any agreed reasonable accommodation measures are actually in place during the tests. The EO noted that reasonable accommodation must be in place irrespective of the fact that EPSO had not been testing the candidates themselves, but through a contractor. The Ombudsman also asked EPSO to apologise to the affected candidate for the inconvenience and oversight that led to their missed opportunity.

On a different matter, the EO wrote [a letter to the European Commission](https://eur04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ombudsman.europa.eu%2Fen%2Fopening-summary%2Fen%2F182170&data=05%7C02%7CArina.LUPU%40fra.europa.eu%7Ccc6b2d54fb00425768c708dc36a849d2%7C1554387a5fa2411faf7934ef7ad3cf7b%7C0%7C0%7C638445343622187594%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=If7Y5dDiVJHZnU0yfoWpTzIamD4fOXMSRo1GMYAeRZA%3D&reserved=0) to ask how the Commission ensures that the revised rules governing the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme (JSIS) for EU staff guarantee comprehensive coverage for disability-related health needs. The letter is a follow up to a previous [own initiative](https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/lt/decision/en/112191) of the Ombudsman. . Amongst other things, in the letter the EO sought updates on actions undertaken by the Commission and the relevant data it has regarding applications submitted by persons with disabilities, as this type of statistics was not available at the time of the own initiative.

European parliament:

Concerning the administration of EU institutions, the EP reported that the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme (JSIS) had created a special unit to addressing the needs of the staff with disabilities or carers of PwD once the relevant claim had been introduced. This unit plays a significant role in directly managing and facilitating requests from persons with disabilities and carers within all institutions. One key aspect of their support includes facilitating reimbursements for related expenses incurred by the staff with disabilities and carers of PwD and their dependants.

Staff members with disabilities often require accommodations or adjustments based on medical recommendations. In such cases, the Unit is equipped to provide information and guidance on how to proceed, ensuring that the necessary steps are taken to accommodate the specific needs of the individual. The Unit also operates with a policy of not offering guidance in situations where there is no prescription available from the doctor.

The EP noted the success of the EP’s [First Disability Rights Week](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/european-parliament-s-first-disability-r/product-details/20231121EOT08001#:~:text=2023%2008%3A00-,European%20Parliament%27s%20first%20Disability%20Rights%20Week%20%2D%20from,Nov%20to%204%20Dec%202023&text=The%20European%20Parliament%20is%20committed,be%20fully%20integrated%20into%20society.) organised in 2023 where 9 committees, including EMPL, PETI, FEMM, ITRE, TRAN, AGRI, IMCO, DEVE and DROI Committees actively participated in. This event will be repeated in 2024, possibly between 2 and 9 December 2024.

The EP informed the Framework that the proposal for a [European Disability Card](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/HIS/?uri=CELEX:52023PC0512) had been approved by unanimous vote in the EP. This achievement underscores the collaborative efforts and consensus reached among the participating committees. The proposal to extend the European Disability Card and Parking Cards to third-country nationals has been adopted by EMPL and LIBE Committees and should not present any further problems. Two As Council’s capacities to provide for translation in this mandate are exhausted, a *corrigendum* procedure will be used and the “raw” legislative texts of both directives adopted in April II plenary. The texts will need to be approved under the Hungarian Presidency and again by the EP in the new mandate, which presents a mere consent, exercise as modifications to the texts cannot be introduced anymore.

The EP further noted that the forthcoming plenary sessions would address the [Equality Bodies Directives](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/tackling-discrimination/equality-bodies_en). The consensus is that both directives will be adopted during this session, marking a significant step forward in addressing and combating discrimination and supporting PwD claiming their rights in administrative procedures or courts..

The EP PETI Committee noted that the Policy Department C organised in November 2023, upon the request of the Committee, a workshop featuring two panels that delved into crucial topics concerning individuals with disabilities. The first panel explored the situation of the persons with disabilities in the face of recent crises (COVID-19 pandemic, energy crisis and rising inflation). Dr. Magdi Birtha presented the study commissioned on this The second panel focused on Inclusive Communication and discussed the European institutions' efforts to ensure effective communication with and about persons with disabilities, both internally and in their relations with citizens.

After the workshop, the PETI Committee discussed three petitions during its committee meeting, with a focus on: a request to the European Parliament to allow for the tabling of petitions in national sign languages used in the EU ([Petition No 1056/2016](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/1056%252F2016/html/Petition-No-1056%252F2016-Mark-Wheatley-%2528British%2529%252C-on-behalf-of-European-Union-of-the-Deaf%252C-requesting-the-European-Parliament-allow-for-the-tabling-of-petitions-in-national-sign-languages-used-in-the-EU)); alleged discrimination against persons with disabilities in Romania ([Petition No 1105/2022](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/1105%252F2022/html/Petition-No%25C2%25A01105%252F2022-by-M.R.-%2528Romanian%2529-on-alleged-discrimination-against-people-with-disabilities-in-Romania)) and accessibility of public transport for wheelchair users in Belgium ([Petition No 0569/2023](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/0569%252F2023/html/Petition-No-0569%252F2023-by-Alexandros-Vasilakis-%2528Greek%2529-on-the-accessibility-of-public-transport-for-wheelchair-users-in-Belgium)).

Another workshop is scheduled to take place during the Disability Week (possibly in December 2024).

Between September 2023 and mid-February 2024, PETI received four petitions, addressing matters related to disability rights, namely on the following topics:

* [Petition No 0923/2023](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/0923%252F2023/html/Petition-No%25C2%25A00923%252F2023-by-B.-J.-%2528Polish%2529-on-disability-allowances-in-Poland) by B. J. (Polish) on disability allowances in Poland;
* [Petition No 0956/2023](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/0956%252F2023/html/Petition-No-0956%252F2023-by-Ant%25C3%25B3nio-Pedro-Gonzalez-%2528Portuguese%2529-on-the-length-of-the-medical-boards-in-assessing-disability-claims-in-Portugal) by António Pedro Gonzalez (Portuguese) on the length of the medical boards in assessing disability claims in Portugal;
* [Petition No 0950/2023](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/0950%252F2023/html/Petition-No-0950%252F2023-by-Luciano-Battaglini-%2528Italian%2529-on-the-proposal-for-an-EU-regulation-for-granting-legal-aid-to-people-with-disabilities) by Luciano Battaglini (Italian) on the proposal for an EU regulation for granting legal aid to people with disabilities;
* [Petition No 0972/2023](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/0972%252F2023/html/Petition-No-0972%252F2023-by-U.-K.-%2528German%2529-on-the-acceptance-of-German-EU-disability-cards-by-Slovak-and-Czech-authorities) by U. K. (German) on the acceptance of German EU disability cards by Slovak and Czech authorities;
* [Petition No 1142/2023](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/1142%252F2023/html/Petition-No-1142%252F2023-by-Deepak-Rajani-%2528German%2529-on-uniform-criteria-on-disability-for-EU-disability-cards-and-extending-the-proposed-directive) by Deepak Rajani (German) on uniform criteria on disability for EU disability cards and extending the proposed directive;
* [Petition No 1209/2023](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/1209%252F2023/html/Petition-No-1209%252F2023-by-Luc%25C3%25ADa-Posse-Casal-%2528Spanish%2529-on-Spain%25E2%2580%2599s-compliance-with-the-UN-Convention-on-the-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities) by Lucía Posse Casal (Spanish) on Spain’s compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
* [Petition No 1308/2023](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/petitions/en/petition/content/1308%252F2023/html/Petition-No-1308%252F2023-by-Jordi-Botet-%2528Spanish%2529-on-braille-writing-on-identification-cards-of-police-officers) by Jordi Botet (Spanish) on braille writing on identification cards of police officers.

FRA:

FRA concluded the data collection phase for the upcoming report on the political participation of people with disabilities. Currently, the draft is subject to internal review. The report covers the period 2019-2023, providing an overview of the political landscape and the extent of participation among people with disabilities during this timeframe. FRA is also a considering creating an Easy-to-Read version of this report.

In December 2023, FRA published the [EU Funds Report](https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2024/fra-eu-funds-report-presented-european-parliament#:~:text=The%20report%20describes%20ways%20that,bodies%20and%20improving%20complaints%20mechanisms.), marking a significant milestone in addressing crucial issues in the EU. This document was launched at the EP and the EEA and Norway Grants Conference, where its findings were shared with key stakeholders. It will soon to be launched for EP LIBE, as well as other committees. One of the important issues highlighted in the report is the significant role of disability in shaping EU policies and practices. By placing an emphasis on this key issue, the report advocates for inclusive and accessible measures within the EU funds framework.

EDF:

The EDF noted that Slovenia had recently amended its national law to grant people with disabilities the right to vote in national elections. In Greece, there has been a development related to accessibility in voting. While it is possible to vote by post in the EU elections and referendums, this possibility is currently limited during the national elections. There are discussions at EU level on the adoption of the Mobile Citizens Directive, which might take place during the Belgian presidency. This directive is settled to bring about positive changes in terms of inclusivity and accessibility in the electoral process. It provides a set of guidelines and best practices aimed at ensuring that voting procedures are inclusive and accessible to all citizens.

EDF reported on the significant developments on the [Directive on Combating Violence Against Women](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_24_649) (gender-based violence) the [AI Act](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A52021PC0206) (incorporation of accessibility requirements).

EDF is focusing on the [Protection of Adults Regulation](https://commission.europa.eu/document/6ff766ad-aca6-4b27-a3cd-b7a9afe8857d_en) to ensure that a comprehensive framework is adopted. The [Due Diligence directive](https://commission.europa.eu/business-economy-euro/doing-business-eu/corporate-sustainability-due-diligence_en), the [revision of the Victims' Rights Directive,](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_23_3725) and [amendments to the Passenger Rights Regulation](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_23_6111) are also in progress. The discussions on the [Equal Treatment Directive](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX%3A32006L0054%3AEN%3AHTML) are advancing, with Poland and Germany committing to ending their blocking stance and collaborating on the transposition. The EDF will publish a report on legal capacity in May. Furthermore, the EDF 2025 Human Rights report will delve into air passenger rights. EDF prepared a manifesto for the European Parliament elections which underscores the commitment to address pressing issues, including a third manifesto specifically tailored for women and girls with disabilities.

1. **The CRPD Committee review of the European Union**

The EU CRPD Framework discussed the previous CRPD Committee review of the EU. They agreed that they will prepare a common written input for the CRPD Committee. They will further contact the CRPD Committee to get an invitation to the dialogue between the Committee and the EU in March 2025 as well as a private, closed meeting with the CRPD Committee (para. 23(h) and (i) of the Committee’s [Rules of Procedure](https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crpd/rules-procedure-and-working-methods)).

1. **Discussion on upcoming meetings with the Council, and the European Commission**

EU CRPD Framework members discussed the priorities of the Framework for 2024. Some members expressed the view that it would be better to first meet the European Commission, as no meeting had been held with them in 2023. The issues to be discussed with the European Commission include the EU Disability Strategy, the selection of the EU candidate for the CRPD Committee, and the overall EU review process. Others voiced concerns as to the necessity and purpose of a meeting with the Council of the EU. The members agreed to meet the European Commission as matter of priority. Before that, a meeting will be held to brainstorm the Framework’s strategy, to assess the current situation, and to discuss future collaboration in the following months. For this purpose, FRA tentatively proposed a meeting on 12 April at 10:00. FRA will further propose dates for the meeting with the European Commission.

1. **AOB**

EDF noted that [Eurostat](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat) launched a new [thematic page on disability](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/disability/overview) and a [Disability Database](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/disability/database), an easy-to-find webpage with all comparable EU data on persons with disabilities.