**Minutes**

**Meeting of the EU Framework to promote, protect and monitor**

**the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)**

**8 February 2023, 10:00-12:00**

*(hybrid meeting)*

*Location: room – 01A060 (first floor), European Ombudsman office, 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**

It was decided that the EO acts as chair for 2023 and FRA acts as secretariat for 2023 and 2024.

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

**Implementation**

The EP reported that the EP has set up in 2015 a CRPD network to implement and mainstream the rights of people with disabilities in the EP on political level. This CRPD Network is an inter-committee working group involving 13 different committees[[1]](#footnote-2), including LIBE and PETI. K. Langensiepen, MEP, reported that the EMPL Committee who is in charge of this CRPD Network, suggested several actions to revamp the CRPD Network, namely that she, as CRPD Network Chair, would be renamed Disability Rights Coordinator in the EP and a Disability Rights Week would be organised. The Disability Rights Coordinator would also ask to participate in the EP’s Bureau High-Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity, which is in charge of turning the EP, i.e., workplace, buildings, websites etc. accessible and inclusive. She also reported about the Accessible EU centre and the work on the directive “Combatting violence against women and domestic violence” which includes a lot of amendments including persons with disabilities.

The PETI Committee is focusing on a study on the cost of living for persons with disabilities and on the creation of targeted measures. The EMPL Committee will prepare a study on the disability card.

EDF noted that they continue to work on advocacy, soft policy, and on several legislative files (political participation, mobile EU citizens, the new Directive on electoral law, the Directive on combating violence against women, the directive on minimum standards for equality bodies, the Artificial Intelligence Act, the green deal and accessibility, the Due Diligence Directive, the rail transport regulation). As to political participation, they work with the permanent representatives of Member States, and they keep on supporting the EP’s efforts for a new European law on this matter. They understand that the Council is not likely to support this proposal.

EDF is further working on the Directive on combatting violence against women, notably on the topic of forced sterilization. They are working along with Equinet on minimum standards for equality bodies and on artificial intelligence and the AI Act which is currently being discussed in the EP. According to EDF, accessibility as a fundamental right should be considered when using AI.

On the green deal, the EDF is working on energy performance of the Building Directive. In the Commission proposal, the CRPD was included in the new Due Diligence Directive which includes cooperation beyond Europe. However, the Council removed this part of the proposal and other fundamental rights references, and the EDF is trying to re-include them in the proposal. Concerning the Disability Strategy, the EDF is working on the employment package and notably on a guideline on independent living. On passenger rights, they are working on denial of boarding, lack of accessibility, lack of quality etc. with a focus on enforcement and compensation. Concerning the proposal on a legislation on the disability card coming in autumn, a consultancy is performing an impact assessment. EDF expects this spring the revision of the Victims’ Rights Directive, and for legal capacity campaign the package on protection of vulnerable adults. EDF is organising a board meeting in Sweden in March and the main topic will be Accessibility and AI. EDF’s most important conference will be the European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities on 23 May in the EP where they will present EDF manifesto for EP elections.

Concerning the CRPD Committee, the EU answer to the List of Issues Prior to Reporting is due soon, and a meeting was organised by the Commission. There was a discussion with members involved in the dialogue, but still no information about a date of the EU review (interactive dialogue) in the CRPD Committee. EDF hopes that a date will be set in March 2024. EDF submitted to the CRPD Committee an information note on European priority, including issues of transposition of EU legislation, and encouraged experts to ask questions to implement such legislation in compliance with the CRPD. Since this year CRPD Committee only included one expert from Europe (Switzerland), and none from the EU. We need to inform the new non-EU members of the CRPD Committee on how the EU works. EP adds that for the project on violence against women a lot of amendments were made which included victims with disabilities.

EP asked for details about the employment and the Disability Strategy. EDF noted that the employment package was one of the initiatives of the Disability Strategy, it includes a set of deliverables, mainly soft policies and guidelines. One was already published, for public employment services. Now, they are working on a positive action, on hiring persons with disabilities.

FRA noted that they continued to work on several papers which will come out soon. First, the paper on indicators aimed at national monitoring frameworks and the paper on the fundamental rights survey in relation to the CRPD. They are also working on the EU funds project, they met with NGOs dealing with that in December and discussed Charter & CRPD compliance in the funds cycle. The relevant report will come out in September. The EU funds report will focus on the role of national bodies with a human rights remit in monitoring the Charter and the CRPD in the funding cycle. Furthermore, FRA received a request from the Commission to look at abuses and violence against persons with disabilities in institutions and has commenced initial work on this.

The EO announced that they received two complains on reasonable accommodation and recruitment. The EO also said that the office is launching a call for a traineeship for persons with disabilities. The EP noted a policy action scheme for trainees with disabilities and a positive action scheme to recruit contracted agents with disabilities.

The EP noted that a positive action scheme for trainees with disabilities and the recruitment for contracted agents with disabilities exists in Parliament. EPSO competitions remain inaccessible.

It was suggested that also all Framework members should look into their own policies for recruitment of colleagues with disabilities.

1. **Discussion of the Framework’s work programme 2023-2024**

EO opened the floor for 2023 suggestions. The work programme is adopted, with a note that the questionnaire proposed by EDF should not be referred to as a survey. Members of the Framework also agreed that a short document summarising the activities will be adopted and published end of 2024/beginning of 2025 on the implementation of the work programme.

1. **Discussion on cooperation with the Council of the European Union**

EDF noted that in January the EDF Secretariat visited the Council and met with the Diversity Unit and with the trainees.

EDF also noted that different institutions have different rules. At the Council, traineeships are remunerated with some additional resources being provided for personal assistance, but this is often not enough to cover the additional costs faced by trainees with disabilities. Also, the buildings of the EU are not fully accessible.

EDF suggested that the Framework should have a first contact with the Council to understand how they see the CRPD on their side. Then, we should deal with how the Council mainstreams the CRPD as a co-legislator. EO noted that we must make this cooperation more concrete and choose someone to send there. EDF suggests that this person be from FRA. It would be good to meet them to discuss how the CRPD works at the EU level. We can also come up with recommendations on their work. FRA answered that the best would be to invite someone from the unit that deals substantively with disability issues, for example the head of that unit, and someone from the administrative side. FRA asked whether we should meet at the Council or whether we should invite them to our meeting? EO noted that inviting them for the next meeting would be easier. However, by then we need to know what we want to discuss, asking FRA to identify the people and invite them.

EDF raise a general question of transparency regarding the Council’s website. Is the EO working on it? EDF points out that it cannot follow consistently the work of the Council because of this lack of transparency.

The EO noted that, in principle, they do have the power to look into such transparency issues. But transparency issues are numerous with the Council, a topic the EO has worked on for a number of years and could focus even more on. On another note, the EO noted that FRA needs to create a list of issues for the meeting with the Council. Each of the institutions here, if they have ideas, should send to FRA their suggestions for the next agenda.

1. **Dates of Framework meetings in 2023**

The EO asks about the next date of the framework meeting.

FRA replies that they must avoid the EP plenary weeks. FRA will send a few options to all of the Framework members. A date before the summer and then one more meeting in November would be a good option. FRA will also think about a potential date for the meeting with the Commission and for an exchange with the ENNHRI working group.

1. **AOB**

No AOB.

End of the meeting.

1. EMPL, LIBE, PETI, DROI, DEVE, BUDG, ENVI, IMCO, TRAN, REGI, CULT, JURI and FEMM Committees. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)