**Minutes**

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

**the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) with the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)**

**20 September 2023, 11:30-13:00 CEST**

(hybrid meeting)

1. **Welcome and opening**

Attendees: European Ombudsman (EO), EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), European Parliament (EP), European Disability Forum (EDF), European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet)

1. **Approval of the agenda**

The agenda was approved.

1. **Update from ENNHRI on their activities in the CRPD implementation**

ENNHRI:

During the past months, ENNHRI’s CRPD working group has *inter alia* followed the work relating to the European disability card and the violence against women directive. ENNHRI is also planning to hold a webinar on the monitoring of the EU funds and the role of the NHRIS and CRPD monitoring bodies, with the assistance of FRA.

Human Rights Ombudsman of Slovenia:

The Ombudsman’s office has recently published a Special Report on Accessibility of Centres for Social Work for People with Movement and Sensory Impairments. The Ombudsman has also been working on the topic of non-voluntary institutionalisation. The NPM, based on regular monitoring and thematic visits, has repeatedly drawn attention to the unacceptable situation caused by overcrowding in the secure wards of special social care institutions aimed at providing institutional care services for adults with disabilities. The Ombudsman consistently repeats a recommendation to de-institutionalise the provision of care services in line with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Complaints submitted to the Ombudsman concern irregularities in persons with disabilities receiving personal assistance.

Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC):

IHREC has become this year the national monitoring mechanism for the CRPD. IHREC has also established a disability advisory committee with 13 members who are human rights advocates with disabilities. The committee has contributed to IHREC’s submission to GREVIO on violence against women, where attention to violence against women living in institutions was raised as a form of domestic violence. The committee has further received training on the optional protocol for the prevention against torture, under which IHREC is to receive a role as a national preventive mechanism. The committee strives to lead by example and continuously works on enhancing accessibility of all its meetings.

Swedish Institute for Human Rights:

The Institute was established in 2022 and is still developing its work and role, including as the national monitoring mechanism under the CRPD. It is awaiting accreditation as an A-status NHRI, which it applied for in April. The institute is currently elaborating a report to the CRPD committee in cooperation with civil society.

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission:

The Commission forms part of the national monitoring mechanism under the CRPD, monitoring its implementation in Northern Ireland. The Commission, along with UK colleagues, made written and oral submissions to the Follow-up review of the CRPD Committee’s inquiry into the UK in August 2023, raising concerns about the UK government’s lack of implementation of the Committee’s recommendations. In relation to BREXIT, the Commission has additional powers to oversee the UK Government commitment on human rights safeguards in the withdrawal agreement, including concerns for persons with disabilities. The obligation to promote, protect and implement the CRPD through EU law and policy continues to be relevant to the human rights protections in NI under the UK-EU Withdrawal Agreement.

Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism (UNIA, Belgium):

UNIA is currently developing a toolbox for federal officials and policy makers with focus on rights and needs of persons with disabilities. The aim is to provide a practical support tool to ensure that disability issues are mainstreamed in all policy formulation. The tool will be available in December in French, Dutch, German, and English and will be shared with the ENNHRI network. An evaluation of the tool is planned to be carried out later.

Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey:

The Institution launched a handbook on combatting discrimination based on disability in 2022 and organises webinars on different disability topics. A report on the situation of vulnerable groups after the earthquake will soon be available on the website of the Institution.

Romanian Institute for Human Rights:

The Institute has recently submitted a report on the implementation of the European Social Charter (although Article 15 was not part of the thematic review this year). The Institute is also carrying out a project on human rights impact assessments with the government and civil society and is developing guidance for legal drafting in this regard.

Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia:

The Ombudsman is currently working on oversight of the deinstitutionalisation process (boarding schools still exist despite the policy of an inclusive school system). The Ombudsman is also carrying out visits to higher education institutions to obtain an understanding of accessibility therein, and monitoring the national general health care programme to see how needs of persons with disabilities are considered. The Ombudsman is further looking for ways to cooperate with the State on implementing recommendations by the CRPD committee.

1. **FRA’s recent/upcoming work on disability**

FRA recently published a report ‘Implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Human rights indicators’in March 2023. The report gathers experiences of national monitoring bodies on indicators. The report is available on the FRA [website](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2023/implementing-un-convention-rights-persons-disabilities-human-rights-indicators).

FRA is further starting a new project on violence, torture and inhuman treatment of persons with disabilities living in institutions. The project is still in the planning phase. At the beginning of next year, desk research will be conducted by FRA’s research network (FRANET) from all Member States and FRA observers (Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia). Legal standards of institutional care, availability of complaints mechanisms and results from monitoring visits to institutions are *inter alia* planned to be examined. Differences between different groups of persons with disabilities (e.g., older people, children) will also be analysed, as well as differences between private and public institutions. As the project is still in the planning phase, possibilities of cooperation can still be explored. An idea could be conducting field visits to selected Member States.

FRA is further updating the human rights [indicators](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/data-and-maps/polpar) on political participation of persons with disabilities and will publish a paper on the topic in April 2024 ahead of EP elections. The paper will built upon the 2019 paper ‘[Who will (not) get to vote in the 2019 European Parliament elections?](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2019/who-will-not-get-vote-2019-european-parliament-elections)’. It will be based on desk research conducted by FRANET and include positive and negative developments at the policy and legal level, and promising practices. Any tips or views are welcome to be shared.

EDF asked whether the paper will also look at the situation of mobile EU citizens, i.e., people living and voting in other Member States, which may have differing legislation regarding the right to vote or stand for elections. The EDF further asked if organisations of persons with disabilities will also be included in the concept and drafting of the paper? FRA replied that they will explore the idea to include the issues experienced by mobile citizens. FRA further informed EDF that they will be invited to the Fundamental Rights Platform consultation on 12 October during which FRA’s upcoming work on disability will be discussed.

1. **Update from the EP**

The EP noted that the preparations for the new standards for equality bodies directive as well as for the European Disability Cards are currently ongoing, and the new legislation is aimed to be passed before the European elections next year. The Council of the EU adopted its position on a draft decision inviting Member States to ratify the ILO Convention 190. In the framework of the first Disability Rights Week in the EP between 27 November and 4 December, parliamentary committees will organise events with link to persons with disabilities, i.e. a workshop of the PETI Committee on measures for persons with disabilities to cope with the costs of living crisis, an EMPL and FEMM committee event on “Harmful practises against women girls with disabilities”, both on 29 November, on the initiative of EMPL Committee an event with the participation of national parliaments on participation of persons with disabilities in elections, on 4 December. All events can be found [here](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/european-parliament-s-first-disability-r/product-details/20231121EOT08001) and will be web streamed and are available afterwards on the EP website.

1. **AOB**

It was noted that any available and upcoming handbooks, guidelines, cases etc. are welcome to be shared with the network.