



EDF input on the Roadmap “Delivering for children: an EU strategy on the rights of the child”

July 2020

About the European Disability Forum

The European Disability Forum (EDF) is an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of over 100 million persons with disabilities in the European Union. We are a unique platform which brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe. We are run by persons with disabilities and their families, and as such represent a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe.

Input to the Roadmap “Delivering for children: an EU strategy on the rights of the child”

In 2019 the EU counted around 68 million of children below 15 (Eurostat, 2020). Yet, there is total lack of data on the number of boys and girls with disabilities.

Some of the existing data indicates that in 2017, about 5 % of EU families with children had a child or children with disabilities (Eurostat, ilc_hch13). As much as 9.4% of girls and young women and 7.4% of boys and young men aged 16-24 had a disability (Eurostat, Health variables of EU-SILC, 2017).

In most EU countries, children with disabilities continue to be institutionalised, segregated in special schools and are victims of violence and abuse, in and outside the family setting. Despite the disproportionate risks that they face, children with disabilities have been given very little consideration in national or European child rights legislation.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratified by the EU and all its member states requires states parties to take measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children (article 6 CRPD), including freedom from violence (article 15), living in the community (article 16) and access to inclusive education (article 16). Children with disabilities also have the right to express their views on all matters affecting them (article 16.3).

In 2015, the UN CRPD Committee specifically recommended that EU policies on children include a comprehensive rights-based strategy for boys and girls with disabilities and safeguards to protect their rights. The Committee also recommended that the EU takes the necessary measures, including through the use of the European Structural and Investment Funds and other relevant European Union funds, to develop support services for boys and girls with disabilities and their families in local communities, foster deinstitutionalisation, prevent any new institutionalisation and promote social inclusion and access to mainstream, inclusive, quality education for boys and girls with disabilities.

The European Disability Forum, umbrella organisation defending the rights of over 100 million persons with disabilities in the EU, calls the Commission to include the following issues in the Strategy for Children Rights 2021-2024:

- **Reference & compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD):** the Strategy must refer to the CRPD ratified by the EU and all member states. It must be CRPD compliant, advance the rights of children with disabilities and implement the 2015 recommendations of the CRPD Committee.
- **Data collection:** the EU and member states must urgently collect data on children with disabilities, including those living in institutions; where general data is collected, it should be disaggregated by disability, gender and age.
- **Consultation with children with disabilities:** in the preparation, design, implementation and monitoring of the strategy, the Commission must consult organisations of persons with disabilities.
- **Access to inclusive education and recreational opportunities:** the Strategy must include actions to ensure access to inclusive education to all children with disabilities in the EU, including to the European schools and from pre-primary education onwards. Children with disabilities are children first and foremost and have the right to family life, social inclusion and the full range of leisure, recreation, sport and cultural activities as other children. In all these actions, the EU must take specific measures if needed to ensure their full inclusion.
- **Ending child poverty:** households with children with disabilities, especially single-parent and female-headed ones, are more likely to face poverty (EIGE, 2019). The Strategy must address the specific difficulties face by families with children with disabilities so they can grow up in decent and dignifying living conditions.
- **Living in the community:** children with disabilities continue to be institutionalised (EIGE, 2019). The Strategy must ensure that children with disabilities can grow up in the community. This should include measures to develop support services for children with disabilities and their families in local communities, including early assessment, health care, (re-)habilitation and other specific support measures, and foster desinstitutionalisation.
- **Protection against violence:** the Strategy must ensure that the actions on protecting children against violence specifically address the needs of children with disabilities and the specific issues faced by them, including abuse in institutions and in the family settings, and the forced sterilisation and contraception faced specifically by female adolescents/youth with disabilities. The Strategy should align itself with the Gender Equality Strategy and the Victims' Rights Strategy in calling the EU and member states to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

- **Mainstreaming:** the intersectional discrimination and specific issues faced by children with disabilities should be included in all areas addressed by EU strategies, including external policies.

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