

FEBRUARY 2010

European Parliament approves new European Commission

The European Parliament elected the new European Commission by 488 votes to 137, with 72 abstentions, in Strasbourg on 9 February 2010. The vote took the form of a single ballot on the whole College of Commissioners, consisting of one

Commissioner from each of the 27 EU Member States. The new Commission will stay in office until 31 October 2014. By way of comparison, the first Barroso Commission was voted into office in November 2004 by 449 votes to 149, with 82 abstentions. Ahead of the election, the

EPP, S&D and ALDE groups announced that they would vote in favour of the college of Commissioners. The Greens, GUE/NGL and EFD groups said they would vote against the new college and the ECR group announced it would abstain.

Public hearing at the European Parliament to discuss further implementation of the UNCRPD

The European Parliament has organized a public hearing on 22 February concerning the accession of the European Union to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Although the European Union has become a party to the convention, it will only become binding on the EU if all member states ratify it. So far only 13 EU member states have ratified the treaty. Therefore, most of the 65 million of disabled people in Europe are still deprived of the benefits of the UN Convention.

The Council of the European Union adopted the decision to become a party to the UN Convention in November of 2009. However, the ratification has to be formally deposited with the United Nations to enter into force. According to the Council this can only be done when all member states have ratified the UNCRPD. This means that even in the 13 member states that have ratified the convention not all of its benefits can be claimed by people with disabilities. These are mostly articles that are based on national law.

According to the European Union has previously ratified international treaties without the agreement of all member states. Europeans concerned about the implementation of The political reluctance in the case of the UNCRPD leaves millions of rights that people with disabilities are formally entitled to. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantees disabled people the right to live and move around independently, decide for themselves and receive adequate education as well as it prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

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EU 2020: EASPD writes to four Commissioners

On the first week of March, Commissioners are drafting a proposition of the EU 2020 Strategy, which will define the EU priorities for the coming decade. Read our open letter we sent to four Commissioners.

Dear Commissioner Andor,

EASPD is a member of the Social Platform, the representative organisation of European Social NGOs, and fully supports the Social Platform's requests to prioritise the following areas in the EU 2020 Strategy that is currently being defined:

1. Ensure that the EU economic strategy serves people and planet;
2. Make social cohesion and the fight against poverty a key pillar of the EU 2020 strategy;
3. Revise the European Employment strategy to focus on the care sector, quality jobs and inclusive labour markets;
4. Make the participation of citizens and civil society matter.

EASPD agrees with the EU 2020 Consultation Paper stating that new policies must contribute towards social cohesion, tackling unemployment, fostering social inclusion and securing well performing labour markets.

EASPD specifically asks the European Commission to focus on the following areas in the new strategy:

1. The development of an employment strategy that delivers quality jobs for all (including those people that are often excluded from the labour

market, i.e. people with disabilities or migrants), with a clear focus on tackling the issue of the working poor: there are increasing numbers of people in the EU who live in poverty despite being employed. This is true for many people, especially front line care staff that are employed in the care sector, where working conditions have deteriorated: the workforce is mostly female; jobs are often at risk, underpaid, and increasingly offered on a part-time basis. For providers of social services in Europe, two elements are essential to help redress this situation: the participation of employers of the nonprofit sector in the social dialogue, and improving the attractiveness of careers in social services, so as to ensure the improvement of working conditions for staff.

2. Ensuring that social services can continue to provide adequate and universal assistance to European citizens. We are at a time in which new sources of economic growth and job creation must be identified. EASPD knows that this new source of growth can be found in the social and health care sectors. The social field is a vital economic sector capable of providing many jobs and boosting economic growth. Work in social services should be valued for what it is truly worth, and training and employment in this sector should be encouraged. Currently, the EU average of employment in the social, educational and health care sectors is of

11%, but the potential is to employ 15% of the working population to satisfy current needs. These needs are bound to increase given that the population of the Union is ageing and there will consequently be also increasing numbers of citizens with a disability who will need social care, for example. Thus, investing in social services would positively contribute to the fight against poverty by creating job opportunities and delivering essential care to EU citizens.

3. Finally, EASPD believes that the new strategy should also incorporate a clear plan to fully implement the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: it will be essential to ensure that we build a fair and inclusive society for all.

EASPD calls for the EU 2020 strategy to focus not only on economic aspects, but to also promote and facilitate the creation of inclusive and cohesive societies, by focusing on the eradication of poverty, the creation of quality jobs for all, investment in social services and ensuring the protection of all citizens' fundamental rights.

We thank you for your attention and hope that you will consider these views in the preparation of this vital strategy for the future of the EU.



EASPD's conference "What about me? Including the most excluded" on 3rd and 4th June 2010

On 3rd June, EASPD's annual Conference will kick-off in Helsinki, Finland and will address the theme of the quality of life of persons with profound disabilities and their integration into society.

Experts on disability related issues and representatives of persons with disabilities from all over Europe, representatives from the European institutions (European Commission and European Parliament), members of the Finnish Government and important international personalities will debate on the major challenges that persons with profound disabilities face today.

The topics of assistive technology, legal capacity, personal budgeting, models of active support, alternative ways of

communication and the perspective of the staff working with persons with profound disabilities will be, amongst others, at the centre of the Conference's sessions and workshops.

"People with profound disabilities and high dependency needs are one of the most excluded groups of citizens in the European Union. Due to the fact there are not enough high standard services, they often have to spend their lives in large institutions instead of enjoying inclusion into society. With this conference we aim at raising awareness of this complex type of discrimination and to improve the quality of life of this group of people by giving them a real choice when choosing the life they would like to live." Luk Zelderloo, Secretary General of EASPD, said.

Ádám Kósa, President of the European Parliament's Intergroup on Disability and Paula Risikko, Finland's Minister of Health and Social Services will be among the keynote speakers during the opening session of the Conference, which is organised in conjunction with NVC, Service Foundation for Persons with Intellectual Disability, FAIDD and the Finnish Network on Intellectual Disability. At the end of the conference, EASPD will present a set of recommendations to the .



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