



Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Thirty-second session

Summary record of the 770th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 11 March 2025, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Kim Mi Yeon

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by Parties to the Convention under article 35

(continued)

*Combined second and third periodic reports of the European Union
([CRPD/C/EU/2-3](#); [CRPD/C/EU/QPR/2-3](#))*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the European Union joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of the European Union**, speaking in a pre-recorded video message and introducing the combined second and third periodic reports of the European Union ([CRPD/C/EU/2-3](#)), said that, since its previous appearance before the Committee, in 2015, the European Union had focused on the right of persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in their communities. For example, in November 2024, it had presented guidance to help its member States make targeted investments to promote inclusion through European Union funding. It had also continued advancing accessibility through initiatives such as “AccessibleEU”, which allowed it to support member States in meeting their legal obligations in that regard and sharing information and good practices.
3. **A representative of the European Union** said that the European Union Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 was the main policy framework for the implementation of the Convention at the level of the European Union. It included 64 actions, of which 7 were flagship initiatives. A progress report was being prepared; where necessary, the objectives and actions set out in the Strategy would be updated. Consultations with stakeholders would be launched later in the year, including in the context of the Disability Platform.
4. The European Commission sought to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities when it proposed legislative revisions or prepared new legislation. To enhance mainstreaming, disability coordinators had been identified within the different departments of the European Union institutions. Following the commitment made by the President of the Commission in 2019 to building a union of equality, the Commission had adopted strategies on gender equality, the equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer persons, anti-racism, Roma inclusion and the rights of persons with disabilities, building a framework for addressing intersecting forms of discrimination.
5. The European Accessibility Act, adopted in 2019, set accessibility requirements for various products and services on the European Union internal market. Accessibility must be considered in the implementation of programmes under the European Union cohesion policy, and goods, services and infrastructure subject to public procurement contracts must be accessible. European standards had been developed to support the implementation of accessibility rules. The Commission had launched “AccessibleEU”, the European Union resource centre on accessibility, in 2023 as a flagship initiative under the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
6. The Commission had recently issued guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community of persons with disabilities in the context of European Union funding. Access by victims with disabilities to support services and protection measures had been addressed in a proposal adopted by the Commission in 2023 for the revision of the Victims’ Rights Directive. The European Union had acceded to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence with respect to matters falling within its exclusive competence; the Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence had been adopted in May 2024; and the revised Anti-Trafficking Directive, which ensured full respect for the rights of persons with disabilities, had entered into force in July 2024.
7. The directive establishing the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card had been adopted in 2024 with a view to facilitating the free movement of persons with disabilities across the European Union. The Disability Employment Package provided guidance and model practices for all stages of employment. While certain aspects of the Convention were largely within the competence of member States, the European Union

strove to encourage convergence in related policies of member States. Those efforts were reflected in, for example, the 2023 guide to good electoral practices in member States addressing the participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process.

8. **A representative of the European Ombudsman** said that, while the European Union had made changes to its rules and practices to comply with the Convention, there remained room for progress. An ongoing concern was the potential use of European Union funds for activities that were at odds with the obligation to promote deinstitutionalization. The European Commission should ensure that the activities it funded promoted the right to independent living and take a proactive approach to enforcement, including through the use of the infringement procedure provided for under European Union law. Another concern was the European Union's limited compliance with the Convention when it acted as an employer. Pressing issues included the provision of reasonable accommodation in recruitment and the implementation of rules on allowances for staff members with children with disabilities. A recent joint survey by the European Ombudsman and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights had shown that European Union agencies had limited policies and procedures on the implementation of Convention standards. There was also concern about the operation of the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme of the European Union. The Commission should monitor the situation of European Union staff and their dependants with disabilities under the Scheme and reflect on ways to revise the rules governing it so as to address inequalities and ensure comprehensive coverage for disability-related health needs.

Articles 1–9 and 31–33

9. **Mr. Schefer** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that it would be helpful for the delegation to comment on why the Court of Justice did not accord the Convention direct effect in European Union law, with the result that secondary legislation could not be assessed in the light of the Convention, even though the Convention occupied a position above secondary legislation in the hierarchy of European Union law. He would also like to know whether the European Union accepted the Committee's interpretation of the Convention as authoritative and, if it did not, what the conditions would be for deviating from that interpretation.

10. **A representative of the European Union** said that, while the Convention did not have a direct effect on the primary law of the European Union or the general principles of European Union law, it did have to be respected in the interpretation of secondary law. With respect to the consistency between the legal framework of the European Union and the Convention, it was important to remember that member States, when implementing European Union law, must respect the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, including article 21 thereof, which addressed the principle of non-discrimination. The Convention was not sufficiently precise to have a direct bearing on areas of law systematized in the treaties of the European Union. Rather, it set out objectives and principles that must be respected, with the States Parties then needing to determine the appropriate measures for doing so.

11. **Mr. Schefer** asked whether the European Union had conducted a cross-cutting, comprehensive review of its legislation in order to ensure full harmonization with the provisions of the Convention, as the Committee had recommended in its concluding observations on the European Union's initial report (CRPD/C/EU/CO/1, para. 9), and if not, why not.

12. **A representative of the European Union** said that the European Union took a progressive approach to its consideration of the rights of persons with disabilities under European Union legislation and policies. Those rights were considered whenever a new piece of legislation was proposed or an existing one was revised. When the European Union had acceded to the Convention, fewer than 50 of its laws had addressed the rights of persons with disabilities; by 2017, that number had risen to over 140.

13. **Mr. Schefer** said that the delegation might clarify whether the European Union regarded the views set out in the Committee's general comments in particular as authoritative interpretations of the provisions of the Convention.

14. **A representative of the European Union** said that the European Union took the Committee's general comments very seriously; the recent issuance of the guidance on

independent living and inclusion in the community was one of a number of measures that had been taken in response to the recommendations contained therein.

15. **Mr. Schefer** said that he would welcome information on any substantive or procedural measures, taken or envisaged, to ensure that all new legislation was compliant with the Convention.

16. **A representative of the European Union** said that consultation processes were organized prior to the submission of all legislative proposals. Consultations were held with the general public and with organizations representing the groups concerned by each proposal. Interested parties could respond to calls for evidence in order to provide factual information demonstrating the impact that a given proposal would have on them. The Better Regulation Guidelines and Toolbox set out a series of questions to be answered by all European Commission staff members working on a proposal so as to give an idea of its positive and negative effects in a number of areas. Those staff members were invited to consider whether the proposal was consistent with principles of equality and non-discrimination and what specific impact it would have on persons with disabilities. Each proposal was also the subject of negotiations between the Commission and other European Union institutions.

17. **Mr. Schefer** said that he would like to know whether the European Union planned to involve national organizations of persons with disabilities in the work of the Disability Platform. He wondered whether steps had been taken to clearly define situations that would give rise to the organization of consultations through the Platform, ensure that sufficient time was allocated for such consultations and guarantee that any relevant information was accessible to representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities. It would be useful to learn whether the Council of the European Union had established any mechanisms to promote the participation of such organizations in its work.

18. **A representative of the European Union** said that the Disability Platform was an expert group made up of representatives of each member State and 14 civil society organizations. The organizations had been selected following an open call for applications and were responsible for voicing the concerns of the national organizations of persons with disabilities that existed across Europe, representatives of which were given a chance to participate directly in discussions on European Union disability policy during the annual celebration of the European Day of Persons with Disabilities. The Platform held at least two regular meetings per year and could convene ad hoc sessions whenever an issue requiring its attention arose. The agendas for the meetings were prepared in cooperation with stakeholders such as the European Disability Forum. Staff members of the European Commission often attended the meetings to present future legislative proposals that would be of relevance to persons with disabilities.

19. The Council of the European Union was a body composed solely of representatives of each member State and did not, to her knowledge, have any formal mechanisms for consultation with external stakeholders. Civil society organizations representing persons with disabilities nonetheless had ample opportunity to discuss issues with member States, including through the Platform and other, more informal channels.

20. **Mr. Schefer** said that the delegation might wish to comment on the current status of the equal treatment directive and indicate how the European Union planned to proceed with efforts to guarantee equal treatment in the event that the directive was withdrawn.

21. **A representative of the European Union** said that the equal treatment directive had been under negotiation for 16 years, during which time member States had not achieved the unanimity required for its adoption. The European Commission had thus announced its intention to withdraw the directive, granting the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament a six-month period within which to respond to the announcement. Once that period had elapsed, a final decision would be made on the basis of the input received from those institutions. It went without saying that, regardless of the decision made, the European Union would remain fully committed to promoting equal treatment and non-discrimination. The Employment Equality Directive had been in effect for 25 years, and all work to enhance accessibility, even if it was not grounded in the European Union treaty

articles on non-discrimination, contributed to ensuring the equal treatment of persons with disabilities.

22. **Mr. Schefer** said that he wished to know whether the European Union planned to adopt legislative and policy proposals to ensure the fulfilment of the objectives set under the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 and establish time frames for achieving those objectives.

23. **A representative of the European Union** said that most of the 64 actions set out in the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 had already been carried out. The European Union was now preparing to conduct a midterm review of the Strategy, as part of which it would analyse the comments received from the Committee during the current review and hold discussions with the members of the Disability Platform in order to determine the most appropriate course of action going forward.

24. **Ms. Jacobs** (Country Task Force) said that she would be interested to know what measures the European Union was taking to ensure that women with disabilities were actively involved in the development of laws and policies concerning them and that their input was translated into concrete action. It would be useful to learn what was being done under the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 to provide women with disabilities with the same access to employment as their male counterparts and women without disabilities and guarantee that reasonable accommodation would be made for them once they joined the workforce. Information on the steps that would be taken after 2025 to address women's issues would be welcome.

25. **A representative of the European Union** said that the specific challenges and multiple discrimination faced by women with disabilities were recognized in both the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030. The Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence provided for the recognition of certain crimes, including forced sterilization, as violence against women and acknowledged that women with disabilities were at higher risk of such violence. It also established the obligation of member States to ensure that the support offered to victims of violence was accessible to women with disabilities and guarantee the full enjoyment by such women of all rights provided for in the instrument.

26. One of the flagship initiatives under the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was the Disability Employment Package, through which guidelines had been issued on a number of topics, including reasonable accommodation, with a view to strengthening the implementation of the Employment Equality Directive and remedying the fact that little progress had been made in increasing the employment rate of women with disabilities and reducing the overall disability employment gap.

27. All proposals affecting women with disabilities were subject to the consultation process described earlier. The European Union worked closely with the European Disability Forum and its committee on women with disabilities to advance the rights of such women. The Statistical Office of the European Union, Eurostat, was working to integrate a disability perspective into its activities by generating data that were disaggregated by both sex and disability status.

28. **Ms. Jacobs** said that the delegation might wish to outline the reasons for which no mention of women with disabilities was made in the new Roadmap for Women's Rights. She wished to learn about any steps, taken or envisaged, to ensure that facilities and infrastructure not currently covered by the European Accessibility Act were accessible to persons with disabilities and compliant with universal design requirements. It would be helpful to know what measures had been adopted to ensure the enforcement of digital accessibility laws and guarantee adherence to accessibility standards in the development of artificial intelligence and virtual reality technology.

29. **A representative of the European Union** said that the Roadmap for Women's Rights had been drawn up for the purpose of reaffirming the key values and principles of the European Commission in that area. It had a strong focus on intersectionality and referred to many issues affecting women with disabilities. It was not, however, intended to be a programmatic document and, as a result, made no mention of any concrete action to be taken.

Action to promote women's rights would instead be set out in the new Gender Equality Strategy 2025–2030. She was personally committed to ensuring that that Strategy was based on an intersectional approach.

30. **A representative of the European Union** said that the Web Accessibility Directive set out common accessibility requirements for the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies, while the European Accessibility Act set out requirements for certain products and services, such as computers, smartphones, e-commerce sites and consumer banking services. Accessibility requirements were also set out in the Artificial Intelligence Act, the European Electronic Communications Code and the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, among others.

31. The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive of 2024 established that accessibility for persons with disabilities must be addressed in building codes for new buildings and those undergoing major renovations. The accessibility of the built environment was covered by the European Accessibility Act. Member States could decide whether they wished to comply with the requirements set out in the annexes to the Act, and a number of member States had indicated that they wished to do so.

32. In the area of transport policy, the European Union had shared competence with the member States. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the European Union could take action on a particular matter only when it would be more effective than action taken at the national, regional or local levels. For that reason, European Union initiatives in areas such as urban transport were very limited. In line with the revised Trans-European Transport Network Regulation of 2024, over 430 urban nodes would be required to prepare sustainable urban mobility plans providing for the development, by the end of 2027, of multimodal passenger hubs. Those hubs would ensure seamless connections between different types of public transport, resulting in improved accessibility for all users, including persons with disabilities, by 2030. European transport legislation mandated the purchase of accessible goods in public procurement procedures.

33. The European Union had requested European standardization organizations to establish harmonized standards in order to support the implementation of the European Accessibility Act. That process would involve the revision of three current accessibility standards applicable to different areas and the development of new standards on the accessibility of non-digital information relating to products and services and the accessibility and interoperability of emergency communications. In accordance with the Artificial Intelligence Act, standardization organizations were mandated to develop standards relating to different aspects of artificial intelligence and data governance.

34. **Mr. Schefer** said that the disability database launched by Eurostat was a good tool for retrieving information about persons with disabilities in many key areas. However, the available data were not disaggregated by type of disability and related only to persons living in households, excluding those who lived in institutions. Furthermore, the data collected were based on national statistics and were rendered less useful by the fact that there was no common understanding of disability at the national level. It would be interesting to know whether the member States were aware of those deficiencies and whether the European Union was planning to remedy them.

35. **A representative of the European Union** said that the common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households established that Eurostat and national statistics institutes were required to collect data on disability in most of the social surveys that they conducted. Such surveys used the so-called global activity limitation indicator, which did not allow for data to be disaggregated by type of disability. Eurostat was now considering how it could generate more statistics disaggregated by type of disability.

36. Surveys relating to health contained questions about the respondents' level of difficulty in undertaking basic activities, personal care activities and household activities. The data published indicated the prevalence of different types of disability across Europe but were not disaggregated at a more granular level.

37. Surveys governed by the regulation establishing the common framework for European statistics relating to persons and households did not cover persons in institutions, which was

a major drawback. However, Eurostat would be launching a pilot project that would allow some national statistics institutes to explore the possibility of conducting surveys that included such persons.

38. **Mr. Schefer**, noting that disability inclusion appeared to be a minor consideration in European Union development assistance programmes, said that he wished to know what steps the European Union was taking to design and adopt a disability action plan that would promote the rights of persons with disabilities in its external actions and ensure that all international cooperation, partnerships, climate action and humanitarian aid policies and programming were in conformity with the Convention. He wondered what was being done to ensure that the next Multiannual Financial Framework and the regulations governing funding instruments for external actions were compliant with the Convention. It would be interesting to learn how the European Union would safeguard funding for disability rights and disability inclusion in current and future financing for external actions and whether it would increase the amount of targeted funding that prioritized disability inclusion as a principal objective. Lastly, he wished to know how the European Union would ensure that the perspectives of organizations of persons with disabilities in partner countries were taken into account in the programming of future funding for external actions.

39. **A representative of the European Union** said that a full chapter of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 was dedicated to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities around the globe. The Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument and the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance referred to the Convention and included the rights of persons with disabilities among their thematic priorities. The relevant regulations established that the allocation of funding should be in line with the Convention and required the European Union to apply a human rights-based approach to its external cooperation. The European Commission had continued to use the disability marker developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to track investment. Between 2019 and 2023, the proportion of external actions undertaken by the European Commission that included disability considerations had risen from 4 to 28 per cent. In 2021, the Commission had published an updated toolbox for placing rights holders at the centre of neighbourhood, development and international cooperation actions. The toolbox included guidance on disability inclusion in external actions. In 2022, the Commission had issued a guidance note to its staff entitled “Leaving no one behind – EU disability inclusion in external action”. Staff working in the area of external cooperation continued to receive training on the inclusive human rights-based approach and disability inclusion in general. In the context of the discussions on the new Multiannual Financial Framework, the Commission had launched a public consultation to gather evidence and the views of stakeholders, regions and member States.

The meeting was suspended at 4.45 p.m. and resumed at 4.55 p.m.

40. **Mr. Al-Azzeh** said that there were fundamental differences in the manner in which the Convention was implemented in different States members of the European Union. In view of that situation, he would be interested to know how the European Union implemented the Convention and monitored its implementation in the different member States, which did not all have the same conceptual understanding of disability.

41. He wondered what would be done, particularly in terms of tracking, to ensure that European Union funds were not used for activities that were not in alignment with the Convention, such as maintaining institutions for persons with disabilities. He would welcome further information on the application of European Union regulations on accessibility – of premises and websites, for example – when projects were undertaken in other countries, notably in the global South, with European Union funds and technical support.

42. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** said that the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy of the European Union had rejected an attempt made by a network of organizations of persons with disabilities to share its views regarding the needs of such persons in the context of regional development. The Directorate-General, which had stated that the European Commission was best placed to communicate the views and needs of persons with disabilities, had not responded to a complaint that the network had subsequently made about how it had been treated. She wished to know whether, in the delegation’s view, the actions

of the Directorate-General had been in line with the obligations of the European Union under article 4 (3) of the Convention. She would also like to hear the delegation's views on the impact on support for civil society organizations of the Commission's new policy guidelines establishing the avoidance of "reputational risk" as a benchmark for European Union funding for such organizations. Lastly, She wondered why persons with disabilities, and the organizations that represented them, did not appear to participate in a meaningful way in the preparation and execution of budgets.

43. **Ms. Guala Beathyate** said that she wished to know how the European Union would ensure that the disability perspective was incorporated into the development and implementation of the Global Gateway initiative, the main purpose of which was to mobilize the private sector in order to secure financing for projects in the digital, energy and transport sectors around the world. She wondered how the European Union would ensure that persons with disabilities could participate in the consultation mechanisms established at the European level and at the local and national levels in each of the countries where the Global Gateway initiative was being implemented. She was also curious to know how the European Union would incorporate the OECD disability marker into the strategy.

44. With regard to the negotiation of the Multiannual Financial Framework, it would be interesting to know how funding would be secured for the implementation of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030, in consultation with organizations of persons with disabilities, and what mechanisms would be established to ensure the participation of such organizations in the development of implementation and monitoring measures.

45. **Mr. Tamon** said that he wished to know whether the European Union would make the 112 emergency call system accessible to deaf persons and whether organizations of deaf persons would participate in that process.

46. **A representative of the European Union** said that, in areas where the European Union had legislative competence, it could enact legislation, which member States were required to transpose into their national laws. In such areas, the Commission was able to play a key role in ensuring the implementation of the Convention. In other areas, where the European Union could not have a direct impact on national legislation, it was required to use other means, such as policy guidance, to exert influence on member States. An example of an area over which the European Union did not have legislative competence was the development of school curricula; it could, however, seek to influence member States by using so-called soft measures and by allocating funding to projects that were aligned with its values.

47. **A representative of the European Union** said that the policy guidelines on funding for civil society organizations were meant to ensure that the organizations funded by the European Commission upheld its values. The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme, for example, continued to finance many civil society organizations every year.

48. Negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework were still at an early stage, and consultations on the Framework were ongoing. Once they were complete, the European Commission would be able to present its initial plans for the architecture of the Framework. The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 set out measures for which member States were responsible and measures for which the European Commission was responsible. Whenever the Commission considered announcing a new initiative for which it would be responsible, it must ensure that sufficient funding would be available to implement it.

49. **Ms. Fefoame** said that she would welcome information on any measures taken in response to the data gathered in the self-survey on children with disabilities. She would be grateful for up-to-date information on the implementation of the accessible child participation platform and its impact on children with disabilities.

50. **Ms. Dondovdorj** said that she would be interested to hear details of any mechanisms for conducting mandatory training or awareness-raising activities on the Convention for decision makers, law enforcement officials and other officials working at the European Union level to ensure that they were aware of the Convention and that the human rights-based approach to disability was mainstreamed across their agendas. If any such mechanisms

existed, it would be useful to know to what extent persons with disabilities were involved in them.

51. **Mr. Makni** said that he wondered to what extent holders of the future European Disability Card, which was intended to promote free movement of persons with disabilities, would have access to services for persons with disabilities in European Union countries besides their own and, if not, whether the plans for the Card could be modified. He would be interested to learn why the European Union did not make allocation of funding to countries conditional on their implementation of the Convention.

52. **Mr. Corporán Lorenzo** said that it would be useful to learn whether the European Union had engaged in international cooperation on any capacity-building or other projects with partner countries in accordance with article 32 of the Convention, particularly with the aim of encouraging third countries to fully implement the Convention. He wondered how the delegation would quantify the degree of political determination to implement the Convention in the European Union on a scale from 1 to 10. He would be grateful to learn whether any campaigns were conducted with the aim of ensuring that correct, up-to-date, non-offensive and non-discriminatory language was used to refer to disability and persons with disabilities throughout the European Union. The delegation might comment on whether it was the case that the size and complexity of the European Union hindered the implementation of the Convention by making it difficult to successfully apportion responsibility for that process.

53. **Ms. Gabrilli** said that she would welcome more information about the tools used by the European Union to ensure that funding it provided to support the implementation of the Convention was used appropriately. What proactive steps, such as sharing best practices or issuing warnings about violations of the Convention, did it take with that objective in mind?

54. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** said that she would welcome a reply to her earlier question concerning the communication of the views and needs of persons with disabilities within European Union institutions.

55. **A representative of the European Union** said that the apportionment of responsibility for implementing the Convention reflected the division of competences between the European Union and its 27 member States, all of which were Parties to the Convention and reported to the Committee in their own right. The fact that the European Union was also a Party to the Convention added a supranational dimension that reinforced the region's commitment to the Convention. Given the limited time available, the delegation would respond to the other questions asked in writing.

56. **Mr. Schefer** said that he would be interested to learn whether the European Commission had begun the promised study of the European Union framework for implementation and monitoring of the Convention, or whether it had already developed concrete plans for improving the framework. He wondered in particular what the Commission was doing to address the questions of who should participate in the monitoring framework, what its legal basis and mandate should be, and how monitoring outcomes should be communicated to the relevant bodies with a view to ensuring an appropriate response. It would be useful to learn whether the European Union wished the European Parliament to continue to participate in the framework.

57. **A representative of the European Union** said that, as the European Commission had withdrawn from the monitoring framework with a view to ensuring the framework's independence, as had been recommended by the Committee ([CRPD/C/EU/CO/1](#), para. 77), it was for the bodies that now comprised the framework to organize themselves as they saw fit. A study of the framework was ongoing and would be completed by the end of 2025. The Commission would discuss the recommendations yielded by the study with the bodies constituting the framework, and it was expected that they would make use of them with a view to improving the framework's internal composition and organization. It would be premature to express an opinion as to whether the European Parliament should participate in the framework.

58. **Mr. Schefer**, noting that not all European Union institutions had focal points for matters related to the implementation of the Convention, as required under article 33 (1), and that there was no unit with overall responsibility for the implementation of the Convention

and no inter-institutional coordination mechanism, said that he wished to know whether the current situation was considered satisfactory and whether there were any plans to improve organizational arrangements in and between the European Union institutions.

59. **A representative of the European Union** said that the Disability Unit, which was located within the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, was the focal point for the European Commission in relation to the Committee. Its activities were anchored in the articles of the Convention and it was responsible for coordination with other services in the European Commission in relation to disability policy. There was now a disability coordinator or focal point on disability in each department of the European Commission. Those coordinators and focal points, who together formed a disability interservice group, met regularly to report on their activities. A total of 33 agencies of the European Union had now appointed a disability coordinator, as had the European External Action Service. Appointing such a coordinator was one of the elements of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030.

60. **A representative of the European Union** said that regular inter-institutional discussions were held within the European civil service with the aim of sharing good practices and building capacity for meeting obligations under the Convention.

Articles 10–20

61. **Ms. Jacobs**, speaking on behalf of Ms. Kayess (Country Task Force), said that she wished to know how the European Union ensured that its policies in the areas of humanitarian action, civil protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change were in line with the Convention, particularly with respect to the use of indicators and consultation, monitoring, reporting and enforcement mechanisms.

62. She would welcome an explanation as to why the European Accessibility Act allowed member States to delay guaranteeing access for persons with disabilities to the 112 emergency number until 2027. She would also like to know what mechanisms were in place to assist member States wishing to guarantee such access at an earlier date, whether a mechanism for enforcing compliance with the relevant provisions of the Act would be applied from 2027 and what protection was available to persons with disabilities in the meantime.

63. It would be helpful to learn what action the European Union was taking to advocate for the withdrawal of the draft additional protocol to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine (Oviedo Convention) concerning involuntary placement and involuntary treatment within mental healthcare services. What, in its view, were the risks associated with the adoption of the draft additional protocol? Was it aware that the draft additional protocol undermined article 14 of the Convention, which provided for the abolition of involuntary detention on grounds of disability?

64. **A representative of the European Union** said that, in line with the Convention, the European Union had a long-standing commitment to providing humanitarian aid that was inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities and had issued operational guidance on the inclusion of such persons in funded humanitarian aid operations. In 2023, it had launched e-learning resources with a view to further promoting that guidance and better equipping partners and staff to put it into practice. The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations was committed to ensuring that such aid benefited persons with disabilities in difficult situations on the ground. Plans for climate action proposed by the European Union underscored the need for such efforts to give full consideration to the needs of persons with disabilities.

65. **A representative of the European Union** said that, while the deadline for member States to meet the requirements of the European Accessibility Act related to emergency communications was June 2025, some member States had requested a derogation from that deadline because they had encountered difficulties in complying. The European Commission had issued European Standardisation Mandate 587 to standardization organizations, which were charged with developing a new, harmonized standard to ensure the accessibility and interoperability of emergency communications, with the aim of supporting member States to

meet the requirements set out in the Act. It had also assisted member States in transposing the Act into national law, through regular dialogue. Member States were responsible for properly implementing European Union law, including by correctly transposing directives into national law within the given time frames, while the European Commission was responsible for ensuring that they did so and closely monitored the progress made. Where there had been delays in the transposition of the European Accessibility Act, it had launched infringement procedures. The Act provided for the establishment of authorities that were responsible for checking market supply and monitoring the compliance of products and services with the Act with the aim of ensuring its proper implementation at the national level. Under the AccessibleEU initiative, exchanges, training and events were held with the aim of closing the accessibility gap between member States.

66. As it had indicated in its periodic report, the European Union was not a Party to the Oviedo Convention. The European Commission had supported member States that had complied with the Statement by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities calling States parties to oppose the draft additional protocol to the Oviedo Convention and had previously assisted member States in obtaining information about the draft additional protocol.

67. **Mr. Schefer** said that it remained unclear whether the European Commission agreed with the Committee's interpretation of the Convention with respect to the measures envisaged in the draft additional protocol.

68. Speaking on behalf of Ms. Kayess, he said that it would be useful to learn what steps the European Union was taking, notwithstanding the limitations on its competences, to work with member States to eliminate the use of harmful practices in respect of persons with disabilities, such as solitary confinement, physical and chemical restraint and forced treatment, including forced electroconvulsive therapy.

69. **A representative of the European Union** said that member States were obligated, when implementing European Union laws, to comply with article 4 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which provided that no one was to be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

70. All research funded by the European Union was guided by an ethics review mechanism that included questions about the participation of persons with disabilities. Reference to disability in grant applications triggered an evaluation as to whether the applications raised serious or complex ethical issues. Applicants for funding from the Horizon Europe research and innovation programme were invited to design and use informed consent forms that were accessible and easily comprehensible to potential research participants. The importance of such forms was consistently emphasized by the experts involved in ethics reviews, who followed the same guidelines.

71. In 2022, the European Commission had issued a recommendation on pretrial detention that included measures for protecting detainees with disabilities and serious medical conditions. In 2023, it had proposed that the Victims' Rights Directive should be amended to address the specific requirements of victims of crime with disabilities.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.