



# Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Distr.: General  
8 April 2025

Original: English

---

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

### Summary record of the 772nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 12 March 2025, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Kim Mi Yeon

## Contents

Consideration of reports submitted by Parties to the Convention under article 35 (*continued*)

*Combined second and third periodic reports of the European Union (continued)*

---

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



*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 (continued)*  
([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.*

*Articles 10–20*

2. **Mr. Schefer** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that he would like to know what steps the European Union planned to take to implement the guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community of persons with disabilities in the context of European Union funding and to increase the accountability of member States with respect to their compliance with rules on spending, with a view to ensuring that they refrained from using the funding provided to them to finance care institutions that segregated persons with disabilities from their communities. In that connection, the delegation might wish to comment on whether the guidance contained in the opinion issued in June 2018 by the Legal Service of the European Commission, which contradicted the provisions of the Convention by permitting the use of European Structural and Investment Funds to support long-stay residential institutions for persons with disabilities, continued to be valid in the eyes of the European Union.

3. **A representative of the European Union** said that the Common Provisions Regulation established that European Union funding should not be used to support actions that contributed to any form of segregation or exclusion and that any infrastructure financed should be accessible for persons with disabilities. Member States' use of such funding was also governed by various horizontal enabling conditions. In the case of the funds provided under the Cohesion Policy, for example, member States were required to ensure that any action financed was consistent with the principles of the Convention and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

4. Much of the funding provided by the European Union was managed jointly by the European Commission and member States' national authorities. While the Commission sought to guide member States to ensure that the funding was used for activities that were compliant with the Common Provisions Regulation and the relevant horizontal enabling conditions, the final decision regarding what projects should be financed lay solely with member States themselves. The Commission could audit a member State's use of funding only once the member State had submitted a request to be reimbursed for the costs arising from the projects selected. The Commission would then examine any complaints received in relation to the projects and other evidence provided by interested parties.

5. She was not in a position to discuss the opinion issued by the Legal Service, which was a document intended for internal use only. Any public discussions on funding for care institutions should instead be based on the recently issued guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community.

6. **A representative of the European Union** said that the purpose of the aforementioned guidance was not to establish new obligations for member States but, rather, to support them in promoting the right to independent living and giving effect to the provisions of article 19 of the Convention. The topics covered included housing arrangements, the prevention of institutionalization, the delivery of support services and the types of intervention that could be carried out with European Union funds. The annex to the document contained a self-assessment tool designed to help authorities developing projects in the area of independent living to reflect on what specific issues they needed to consider. The guidance was not tied to a specific funding cycle and was intended to be applicable to any project in which activities relevant to independent living were included.

7. The European Commission had sought to ensure that the guidance closely reflected the content of the Committee's general comment No. 5 (2017) on living independently and being included in the community and had cooperated actively with the Disability Platform,

member States and organizations representing persons with disabilities when drafting the document. It had already conducted a number of activities to disseminate the guidance and was working with the Platform to prepare a document detailing some of the good practices identified.

8. **Mr. Schefer** said that it would be helpful to learn whether it had ever become apparent, as a result of an audit of a project, that European Union funds had been used to support residential institutions for persons with disabilities and, if so, whether the relevant request for reimbursement had been rejected. He would welcome the delegation's comments on the conspicuous vagueness of the guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community with respect to the permissibility of financial support for small group homes.

9. **A representative of the European Union** said that the delegation would provide an answer to the question on the audit mechanism in writing.

10. **A representative of the European Union** said that the guidance promoted the use of social housing and other non-segregated living arrangements for persons with disabilities and stressed the need to ensure that deinstitutionalization efforts did not lead to an individual simply being transferred from one institutional setting to another.

11. **Mr. Schefer** asked whether the European Union planned to revise its legislation on State aid and public procurement in order to ensure that member States were not able to use public funds to support practices that were contrary to the Convention, such as employment in sheltered workshops.

12. **A representative of the European Union** said that, as part of a review of European Union legislation on public procurement currently under way, work was being done to explore ways of mainstreaming disability issues in the relevant instruments.

13. **A representative of the European Union** said that the European Accessibility Act contained provisions complementing those that were already in place under the Public Procurement Directive, pursuant to which contracting authorities were required to set out technical specifications that took into account accessibility criteria for persons with disabilities, including when purchasing digital products.

14. The European Union was familiar with the content of the Committee's general comment No. 8 (2022) on the right of persons with disabilities to work and employment and was aware that persons with disabilities continued to be engaged in sheltered employment in some member States. A study designed to address the scarcity of data on the existence of sheltered employment systems across the European Union had recently been launched.

15. **Mr. Schefer** said that he would like to know why no mention was made in European Union legislation of the concept of procedural accommodation and whether there were plans to incorporate provisions thereon as part of the process of revising certain instruments, such as the Victims' Rights Directive. He would welcome information on the procedural accommodations in place for persons with disabilities involved in proceedings before the Court of Justice and its General Court.

16. **A representative of the European Union** said that the Victims' Rights Directive contained a new provision that sought to ensure that victims with disabilities had equal access to the procedures, electronic means of communication, support services and protection measures provided for under the Directive. A response to the rest of the question would be provided in writing.

17. **Ms. Fefoame**, putting follow-up questions under articles 1–9 and 31–33, said that she wished to know whether the European Union intended to draw up a specific action plan to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and ensure that all external actions were compliant with the Convention. Regarding recognition of disability, it would be helpful to learn what could be done to address the inconsistent application of reassessment requirements across member States. Information on any plans to bring internal European Union policies on disability into line with the Convention would be welcome, as would details of the accessibility measures in place for staff and visitors with disabilities and the support available to staff members with caring responsibilities.

18. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** said that she wondered what was being done to ensure that national documents attesting to an individual's disability status were automatically recognized throughout the European Union. She would be interested to learn whether the delegation agreed that the significant funds being invested by the European Union in efforts to prevent infants being born with disabilities would be better used to improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities who already existed.

19. **Ms. Guala Beathyate** said that she would like to know what steps the European Union planned to take to increase the range of services to which persons with disabilities would be able to obtain access through the European Disability Card and to ensure that they could do so across all member States.

20. **Mr. Makni** asked whether the European Union had a list of such services.

21. **Mr. Corporán Lorenzo** said that he would be interested to learn whether the European Union offered any incentives – such as certificates or seals of approval – to promote member States' compliance with the Convention, in particular article 19 on living independently and being included in the community, and, if so, whether it could provide specific examples of the schemes in place.

22. **Mr. Schefer** said that many women and girls with disabilities in States members of the European Union were denied the right to reproductive freedom. Forced sterilization, forced contraception and forced abortion were performed in European Union countries, with the majority of the victims being women living under guardianship arrangements or in institutions. The Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence did not establish forced sterilization as a criminal offence, and the planned recommendation on preventing harmful practices against women proposed in the Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 had not come to fruition. Consequently, the European Union lacked any significant legislative or policy measures to combat such violations. He would be grateful for information on how that situation had come about and on any measures that might be taken to protect the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls with disabilities.

23. **A representative of the European Union** said that the European Union was strongly committed to promoting independent living for persons with disabilities, as shown by the fact that €1.7 billion had been invested in family- and community-based care services across all member States.

24. **A representative of the European Union** said that European Union institutions coordinated with each other to share information on measures taken to support staff and visitors with disabilities. Protocols on the provision of adequate support to visitors and staff with mobility problems had been established. Measures were taken to ensure that events organized by European Union institutions were accessible to persons with disabilities and accessibility requirements were taken into account when contracts with service providers were renewed.

25. A centralized office was responsible for providing additional financial support to staff members with care responsibilities. In addition, each institution undertook measures to support such staff. Responsibility for determining priorities in the allocation of resources fell to the heads of the administrations. Particular emphasis was placed on ensuring that children were enrolled in a school that met their needs and received appropriate support, including any necessary therapies, outside of school.

26. **A representative of the European Union** said that the policy documents that had been used to promote the rights of persons with disabilities at the international level were the European Union Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, which had expired in 2024, and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030. The regulations governing funding instruments for external actions established that the allocation of funding must be in compliance with the Convention. The disability marker of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development was used to review and report on funding.

27. The European Commission frequently consulted with civil society organizations, including organizations of persons with disabilities, in connection with its meetings with partner countries. The Commission held regular meetings with civil society organizations in Brussels and in international forums. In 2021, the Commission had issued a guidance note

on inclusive consultation with a view to making its dialogues more accessible to organizations of persons with disabilities.

28. The Commission did not certify member States' compliance with article 19 of the Convention. It had, however, launched a self-assessment tool to provide them with guidance in that regard. As for other articles of the Convention, good practices were promoted through, for example, the Access City Award, which was given to at least three European cities every year in recognition of their efforts to promote accessibility.

29. **A representative of the European Union** said that the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities were expected to become operational by 2028. The European Disability Card would provide proof of disability status, while the European Parking Card would provide proof of parking rights to facilitate the free movement of persons with disabilities across member States. Persons holding the European Disability Card would be able to take advantage of any special conditions or preferential treatment reserved for persons with disabilities in the member States they were visiting.

30. Recognition of national disability cards was afforded on a voluntary basis but, under the relevant directive, would become mandatory. The directive did not establish a right of access to social security or social protection as that matter was governed by another European Union law that remained in force. Under the directive, the European Union must undertake an analysis of any remaining gaps affecting the free movement of persons with disabilities across the European Union by 2029. The European Union had no jurisdiction over the frequency of disability assessments in the member States.

*The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.10 p.m.*

#### *Articles 21–30*

31. **Ms. Jacobs** (Country Task Force) said that, according to reports received by the Committee, candidates taking tests for positions within the European Union were not always provided with reasonable accommodation and staff members did not always have access to the assistive technologies they needed to perform their work. It would be interesting to know whether the needs of staff with disabilities were taken into account in procurement processes, whether any efforts were made to consult such staff about their needs and how the current situation was compatible with the commitment made by the European Commission to include in its renewed human resources strategy actions to boost the recruitment, effective employment and career perspectives of persons with disabilities. Lastly, she would welcome information on how disability was defined in the rules governing the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme of the European Union and whether the definition was compliant with the Convention.

32. **A representative of the European Union** said that the European Personnel Selection Office processed applications from a large number of candidates every year. In the past, candidates had not always requested reasonable accommodation as the available forms of accommodation had not been made clear to them. In order to address that shortcoming, the Selection Office had used its web pages to publish examples of situations in which reasonable accommodation had been made for candidates. Guidelines on reasonable accommodation had also been established.

33. Over the years, efforts had been made to identify barriers and unconscious bias that might have adversely affected the recruitment and employment of persons with disabilities within the European Union institutions. A group had been established to discuss those problems and determine what type of testing was most appropriate for different jobs. During the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, when all testing had been conducted online, technical difficulties had hampered the testing process and the measures taken to guard against fraud had been excessively harsh and inappropriate. Lessons had been learned from that experience and online testing had improved.

34. Significant work had been undertaken to bring the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme into line with the Convention. A team of doctors had been established to ensure that each case submitted received the appropriate level of consideration. Staff were normally reimbursed for between 80 and 85 per cent of their medical fees. In certain cases, however,

staff could be reimbursed for 100 per cent of fees, subject to an ad hoc examination of their case. The goal was not to take an overly medical approach, but, rather, to understand the health impact of conditions, which varied from one case to another.

35. **Ms. Jacobs** said that she wished to know whether staff members with disabilities were consulted about the introduction of new digital platforms. With regard to the Joint Sickness Insurance Scheme, it would be interesting to hear whether the understanding of disability underpinning the Scheme took account of barriers or whether it was solely based on medical considerations.

36. She wondered what steps the European Union was taking to remove the barriers that prevented persons with disabilities from voting and standing for public office in member States. She would like to know who decided that a person had the capacity to vote and whether the right to vote was protected by any safeguards other than judicial review, which could be expensive and hard to obtain.

37. **A representative of the European Union** said that the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security engaged with staff members with disabilities to identify their needs in a wide range of areas, including in relation to digital technology. The Directorate-General also collaborated with the European Personnel Selection Office, which organized competitions to recruit staff. Efforts were made to take account of accessibility requirements in procurement processes and to seek the views of colleagues who would be using new tools. The Directorate-General played a central role in ensuring that all staff members knew how to acquire the equipment and tools that they needed to do their jobs.

38. **A representative of the European Union** said that the organization and conduct of elections were the responsibility of member States, subject to European Union law and their international obligations, including under the Convention. The Charter of Fundamental Rights established that all citizens of the Union had the right to vote and to stand as candidates at elections to the European Parliament and in municipal elections in the member State in which they resided under the same conditions as nationals of that State. Electoral rules fell within the competence of the member States and therefore differed from State to State.

39. In 2023, the European Commission had adopted a recommendation on inclusive and resilient electoral processes in the European Union, with a view to promoting voter turnout and participation. In that document, it recommended that member States should support the participation of persons with disabilities in elections, as both voters and candidates, and prevent and eliminate any barriers they faced in that regard, including the blanket removal of the electoral rights of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities without individual assessment and the possibility for judicial review. Member States were also asked to ensure the accessibility of polling stations and the dissemination of best practices.

40. In late 2023, the Commission had adopted the European Union Citizenship Package, which included a guide to good electoral practices relating to the participation of citizens with disabilities in the electoral process and a compendium on e-voting and other information and communications technology practices. In 2022, the European Parliament had issued a proposal for a new electoral code that contained specific provisions relating to the political participation of persons with disabilities. The proposal was still being discussed by the member States.

41. **Ms. Jacobs** said that she wondered whether the initiatives just mentioned by the delegation might be amended to include reference to the Convention and the concept of capacity. She would be interested to learn what steps the Party was taking to ensure that persons with disabilities could exercise their right to stand for political office and benefited from reasonable accommodation both during the election process and while in office.

42. **A representative of the European Union** said that the organization of elections fell primarily within the competence of member States. The European Union had more opportunities to introduce measures for upholding the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of elections to the European Parliament.

43. **Ms. Jacobs** said that she would be grateful to learn how the European Union would revise the regulations related to the use of medical devices, including in vitro diagnostic devices, to take account of accessibility standards so that such devices could be used by

persons with disabilities. It would also be useful to hear what steps, if any, the European Union was taking to strengthen its gender and health policies with a view to upholding and promoting the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls with disabilities.

44. **A representative of the European Union** said that, under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, member States were responsible for the organization and delivery of health services and medical care, accessibility to which therefore varied. The objective of European Union policies and tools in those areas was to enhance the protection of citizen health and equip the member States to better prevent and address future challenges and improve the resilience of their healthcare systems.

45. The Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030 included studies to increase understanding of the barriers faced by women and other persons with disabilities, including in the area of health, the results of which would be published in 2025 and further inform efforts to tackle health inequalities. The European Commission had recently launched the Roadmap for Women's Rights, which made reference to sexual and reproductive health rights. The Commission also provided support to civil society organizations working in those areas. For example, the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network had been provided with funding under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme. Member States too received support, under mutual learning programmes. The European Union planned to adopt a recommendation on harmful practices that would cover forced sterilization and forced abortion.

46. Persons with disabilities and organizations of such persons were able to contribute their views on the revision of the regulations relating to medical devices, including in vitro diagnostic devices, at consultations that were being held as part of the revision process.

47. **Ms. Jacobs** said that, as not all of the 29 national sign languages of the European Union were identified as official languages in EEC Council: Regulation No 1 determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community, she wondered what steps the European Union would take to make information available to persons with disabilities who used those national sign languages. She would also be grateful to learn what was being done to ensure that information provided in public contexts, including in the healthcare and legal systems, was available in accessible formats such as Braille, Easy Read and sign language, and that professionals who worked with persons with disabilities were trained to communicate appropriately with them.

48. **A representative of the European Union** said that, under the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, as amended in 2018, media service providers must make their services continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities through proportionate measures. While ensuring that sign language users had access to their national sign language was primarily the responsibility of member States, instruments such as the European Accessibility Act set forth requirements for ensuring that persons who were deaf or hard of hearing could use certain key products and services. The European Commission had launched several research projects with the aim of enhancing accessibility and communication for such persons through artificial intelligence technology. Through the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme, support was provided to the European Union of the Deaf, an organization that encouraged the European Union and the Governments of member States to promote sign language.

49. **Ms. Jacobs** said that, as in some member States personal assistants were reportedly required to be with persons with disabilities at all times, it would be helpful to learn what measures were being taken to ensure a consistent approach across the European Union to safeguarding the privacy of persons with disabilities, including in intimate and medical settings.

50. **A representative of the European Union** said that, while regulation of the profession of personal assistant fell within the competence of member States, the European Care Strategy included measures for promoting social dialogue in the field of caregiving across the European Union. In its guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community, the European Commission had emphasized the need for personal assistance services to be provided to persons with disabilities in full compliance with the Convention. A number of

member States that were in the process of amending their laws on personal assistance had asked the Commission to provide relevant inputs.

51. **Ms. Jacobs**, noting that substitute decision-making arrangements prevented some persons with disabilities from directly giving or refusing consent to the processing of their data, said that she would like to know what measures were being taken, if any, to deal with that issue, which was not addressed in the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act or the General Data Protection Regulation.

52. She wondered whether it was correct that the directive providing for the incorporation of the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled into European Union law allowed member States to require non-profit entities that produced works in accessible formats to compensate the right holders, which would appear to undermine the aim of the Treaty. If that was the case, she wished to know how the Party viewed that situation and what action was being taken to ensure that the Treaty was effectively implemented.

53. **A representative of the European Union** said that the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles for the Digital Decade included commitments to avoid unlawful discrimination, prevent the use of technology to predetermine choices and ensure that digital systems were safe and were used with full respect for fundamental rights. Pursuant to codes of conduct developed on the basis of the Digital Services Act, digital services had to be accessible to persons with disabilities and service providers had to explain how accessibility requirements were met. Under a regulation on the European Health Data Space, all data that were made available for secondary use had to remain anonymized and could be used only for certain purposes in a highly secure processing environment. It was prohibited to use the outcome of research to the detriment of patients.

54. **A representative of the European Union** said that under the directive that provided for the alignment of European Union copyright laws with the Marrakesh Treaty and the accompanying regulation, member States were permitted to provide for compensation of right holders within certain limits. It was permitted under the Treaty itself for such compensation schemes to be introduced. The European Commission was in the process of evaluating the directive and accompanying regulation and the schemes established thus far.

55. **Mr. Schefer**, putting a follow-up question under article 12, said that he would be grateful to learn why the European Union was continuing to support and promote the Convention on the International Protection of Adults and had proposed the adoption of a regulation governing the cross-border protection of adults.

56. **A representative of the European Union** said that issues related to legal capacity fell primarily within the competence of member States. The European Union had greater competence in the area of cross-border protection for adults, in which divergent and sometimes conflicting national systems could give rise to practical difficulties. The European Commission had made efforts, both in the proposed regulation and in the associated negotiation process, to ensure that, where persons placed in an institution had to move to another country, their choices and wishes would be taken into account and that such persons could not simply be transferred from one institution to another. Member States receiving an adult could reject the placement decision made in the country of origin if that decision was not in line with the wishes and preferences of the adult, or where appropriate care facilities or funding were unavailable. The European Union was not competent to determine legal capacity or to harmonize the substantive laws that related to adults' legal capacity.

57. **The Chair** invited those Committee members who were not members of the Country Task Force to put questions under articles 21–30 and to ask any remaining follow-up questions under other articles of the Convention.

58. **Ms. Gamio Ríos** said that she wondered whether the Party would consider modifying the Strategy on Victims' Rights for the period 2020–2025 so that it addressed the issue of institutionalization. She would welcome examples of how the €1.7 billion invested in family- and community-based care services had been spent and clarification as to whether that sum had included expenditure on so-called group homes.



59. It would be useful to learn what measures the European Union would take to ensure that reasonable accommodation was provided for all students with disabilities who participated in the European Community action scheme for the mobility of university students (the Erasmus programme). The delegation might also comment on whether the views of persons with disabilities had been taken into account in the EU Global Health Strategy adopted in 2022.

60. Lastly, given the apparent systemic lack of awareness about disability, she wondered whether there was any mandatory training on disability-related issues for leaders and whether those issues were addressed in universities or other institutions. What were the delegation's views in that regard?

61. **Mr. Tamon** said that he would be interested to know whether article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, under which any discrimination on the grounds of language was prohibited, might be invoked as part of efforts to ensure that the 29 national sign languages were recognized as official languages of the European Union.

62. **Ms. Guala Beathyate** said that, as guaranteeing the right of persons with disabilities to vote fell within the competence of member States, she would like to hear how the Party ensured that persons with disabilities who resided in a country other than their country of origin were able to exercise that right.

63. She still wished to know how the Party would include organizations of persons with disabilities in consultation processes under the Global Gateway initiative, both at the level of the European Union and in countries in which the initiative was implemented, particularly in the global South. She also wondered how accessibility in all its forms – not merely physical accessibility – would be guaranteed under that initiative, and whether the European Union intended to incorporate clauses related to human rights compliance into agreements concluded within the framework of the initiative with a view to ensuring that they were in keeping with the Convention.

64. She would welcome information on any plans that the Party had to broaden access to the European Disability Card, increase the number of sectors covered and extend the Card's validity.

65. **Ms. Dondovdorj** said that she wished to know what steps the European Union was taking to ensure that its member States did not establish segregated schools for children with disabilities and that any that were in operation would be phased out. She would also like to know what it was doing to make travel and tourism more accessible in all countries of the European Union.

66. **Mr. Al-Azzeh** said that he would be grateful for information on measures being implemented by the European Union to ensure that individuals were not deprived of the rights to custody or parenthood on the basis of disability, to ensure that social services for persons with disabilities included the services of a personal assistant in all member States and to address the practice whereby parents of children with disabilities sent their children to other member States in order to place them in institutions that were cheaper than those in the home country. It would be helpful for the delegation to clarify how the European Union ensured that none of its funds were used for the maintenance or establishment of residential institutions.

67. **Mr. Corporán Lorenzo** said that he wished to know whether, in the European Union, workers who acquired a disability following a workplace accident or illness benefited from rehabilitation services and were reintegrated into the workforce.

68. **A representative of the European Union** said that a typical activity for which the €1.7 billion of investment in family- and community-based services could be used was the training of personnel. The organization of social security schemes, including with respect to invalidity and medical benefits, fell within the competence of the European Union member States.

69. **A representative of the European Union** said that the European Schools, which were primarily attended by children of staff members of the European institutions and of which there more than 10, were run not by the European Union but by an international

organization on whose board representatives of member States and the European Commission sat. Funding for the schools was partly channelled through the European Union budget. A system of individualized support had been introduced, and funds were available to help parents accompany their children to the schools. European Union trainees with disabilities received individualized support and could receive additional funding to help offset extra costs that they might incur.

70. Under the rules of the European Commission, a medical committee took part in determinations of invalidity with respect to employees, and the employees in question were entitled to have their own doctors contribute to the process. A decision as to whether an employee could return to work involved a thorough examination of his or her situation. When employees returned to work, they were provided with assistance in reintegrating into the workplace and in adapting to any changes that might have taken place during their absence.

71. **A representative of the European Union** said that, under the Erasmus+ programme, students with disabilities could receive financial support to cover the travel costs of persons accompanying them. Any additional support needed could be fully funded through the Erasmus+ budget upon submission of the necessary documentation. Funding was also available under the programme for projects that promoted inclusion.

72. Education was within the competence of member States. The European Union could, however, make use of soft tools such as the Council Recommendation on Pathway to School Success to encourage member States to include learners with disabilities in mainstream schools. To support deinstitutionalization, the Commission had, in 2024, adopted a recommendation on child protection systems, which encouraged member States to take steps to ensure that children with disabilities had access to family- and community-based care.

73. The Global Gateway initiative was fully aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and drew on several tools under the European Union Multiannual Financial Framework. Equal partnership and democratic values were among its founding principles. The Global Gateway was consistent with the Convention, and efforts were made to mainstream the principles of the Convention into the implementation of the initiative by both the European Union and its partners.

74. The Charter of Fundamental Rights was applicable only when member States applied European Union law. It did not have direct effect. Therefore, although discrimination on the basis of language was mentioned in the Charter, issues relating to national sign languages largely remained the responsibility of member States.

75. **A representative of the European Union** said that each member State set its own conditions of eligibility for the right to vote and stand as a candidate. Although the European Disability Card was generally valid for three months, member States had the option of accepting the cards for longer periods. For persons participating in mobility programmes, the period of validity was extended to cover the period of the programme. The European Union was working on legislation to address the accessibility of information, and passenger rights regulations that aimed to facilitate the travel of persons with disabilities were in place.

76. **Mr. Schefer** said that he wished to clarify that the Committee's concern relating to the proposed European Union regulation regarding the Convention on the International Protection of Adults was that it sought to encourage European Union member States to ratify that Convention, an instrument that violated the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition, it was important to note that any measures that allowed individuals to decide on the institution where they would be placed would apply only to persons not under a regime of substitute decision-making. Any such decision regarding a person under that regime would be made by someone else.

77. **A representative of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights** said that, although the European Union had made significant progress in protecting the rights of persons with disabilities, more remained to be done. The fight against disability-based discrimination must be mainstreamed into all European Union laws and policies and across all European Union institutions, bodies and agencies. The European Union must ensure that all European Union funding was spent in line with the letter and spirit of the Convention, in consultation, as appropriate, with organizations of persons with disabilities and national

human rights institutions. The ability of the Commission to block funding for projects that were not compliant with the Convention must be increased, and the requirement for funding to be compatible with the Convention must be defended in future negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework. The European Union must put in place a monitoring framework with a legal basis, structure and resources that would allow it to carry out efficiently and independently the activities provided for in article 33 of the Convention.

78. **A representative of the European Union** said that the motto of the European Union, “United in diversity”, reflected the commitment of the Union to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities across the region, within the framework of the Convention. The European Union would focus on the areas where action on its part would have the highest added value, and a strong call would be issued to member States with respect to matters within their competence.

79. **Ms. Jacobs** said that a number of issues had been addressed during the dialogue, including the adoption by the European Union of the human rights model of disability under the Convention, the limits and potential of shared competence within the European Union, and equality and non-discrimination, both generally and with regard to women and girls with disabilities in particular. The Committee hoped that the spirit of positivity and engagement that had characterized the dialogue would continue through the period of follow-up by the European Union to the Committee’s concluding observations.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*