



**SECRETARIAT D'ÉTAT  
CHARGÉ DES PERSONNES  
HANDICAPÉES**

*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*



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## **Press Release**

### **Ministerial conference**

#### **“Improving Accessibility and Access to Rights – Implementing the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021- 2030”**

Under the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Sophie Cluzel, French Minister of State for Disabled People, attached to the Prime Minister, held a **ministerial conference bringing together the ministers responsible for disability from the 27 Member States, European Commissioners and Directors as well as representatives of civil society** to discuss possible means of **improving the living conditions of EU citizens with disabilities and strengthening their social and economic participation** in line with the new **Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030**. Discussions focused on three main topics: **the rights of people with disabilities; their personal independence and autonomy; and equal opportunities and non-discrimination**.

*“While major progress has been made for persons with disabilities thanks to the 2010-2020 Strategy, we must go even further to make Europe more inclusive and just, in particular in terms of disabled persons’ access to employment and rights”, said Sophie Cluzel, French Minister of State for Disabled People, attached to the Prime Minister.*

*“Despite the progress achieved, people with disabilities continue to face significant obstacles to the enjoyment of their rights. The lack of accessibility, repeated discrimination in many forms and prejudices hinder their access to employment or quality education. Our strategy builds on Europe’s commitment to implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We are now calling on the Member States to adopt ambitious national strategies for the implementation of the UN Convention and our European Strategy”, stated Helena Dalli, European Commissioner for Equality.*

#### **Accessibility: A crucial issue for the digital and ecological transition in the EU**

Concerning **universal access to physical and virtual infrastructure, goods, services and information**, France supports the flagship initiatives of the EU’s new Strategy for the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities such as the creation of the **AccessibleEU resource centre for accessibility** in 2022 and **the EU disability card**, which ensures equal access across borders.

A pilot for the EU disability card was launched in 2016 in eight EU countries: Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Malta, Romania and Slovenia. The card does not affect national criteria nor national eligibility rules. The Member States remain free to decide who can obtain the card on the basis of the national definition of disability, and to determine the procedure for granting it. The conference provided the opportunity to highlight these examples of progress and to discuss procedures for their rollout.

### **Access to education and training for all: a priority for Europe**

The European Union has set itself the ambition of **empowering everyone to forge their own path**, with regard to **school, higher education, apprenticeship, training and employment**.

The European Union is reaffirming its support for **the creation of the European Education Area** and has allotted **a budget of over €26 billion to the new Erasmus+ programme for 2021-2027**, which notably provides for special assistance including the additional costs that directly concern disabled students and those assisting them.

### **Developing a European vision of research on autism in neurodevelopmental disorders**

Each year, 5% of children worldwide are born with a neurodevelopmental disorder. **Research on neurodevelopmental disorders is a field undergoing constant evolution in Europe**. Numerous initiatives show that there is a real interest in **building a European Research Area for autism and neurodevelopmental disorders**, for example:

- **The ERA-NET NEURON project** to support the financing of collaborative and multinational research
- **The Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI)** focused on personalised medicine-based approaches to autism spectrum disorders (ASD)
- **The AIMS-2-TRIALS project**, a European research programme for developing, testing and implementing new treatment with stakeholder participation and a global network of clinical trials for ASD

*“Improving the communication and synergies between the various research teams in the neurosciences and neurodevelopmental disorder fields is an essential pre-requisite to building a European Research Area for autism and neurodevelopmental disorders. We must go further, and involve the subjects and their families in each step of research, placing them at the heart of the procedures and methodologies chosen”*, said **Sophie Cluzel, French Minister of State for Disabled People, attached to the Prime Minister**.

### **Towards an open and inclusive labour market in view of the European package on employment for persons with disabilities**

**A flagship initiative of the 2021-2030 strategy for employment, the future “employment package”** is a set of non-legislative measures aiming to **improve the employment opportunities** of persons with disabilities, thanks to the cooperation of the European Network of Public Employment Services, social partners and disability representative organisations. The measures also aim to **increase their employment rate in Europe**, which is lower than that of non-disabled persons (51% compared to 75%).

European initiatives such as *Duoday* and *Job Coaching* are powerful **springboards to employment**.

*“ Within the European Union, only half of people with disabilities are able to access the labour market. This situation is unacceptable. Encouraging access to employment would not only improve the daily lives of the people in question, but would also benefit our economies and societies as a whole. An inclusive labour market, offering opportunities for all and quality work, is our goal. To reach this goal, coordinated action both at national and European level will be paramount”, affirmed European Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli.*

**Key facts on disability in the European Union**

[Source: Eurostat, 2019, 2020]

**In the European Union, approximately 87 million people aged 16 to 64 have a disability, which accounts for 17.9% of this age group.**

- 50.8% of them are employed (compared to 75% of persons without disabilities) and they are overrepresented in precarious and low-paying jobs
- 29.4% have completed secondary education (compared to 43.8% of persons without disabilities)
- More than half of persons with disabilities say they have experienced discrimination

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