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Enhancing the strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities up to 2030 - Synopsis report

Stakeholder consultation – Synopsis report

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1. Introduction

In 2021, the **Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities** was launched to provide an EU framework to implement the United Nation’s Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities, in a joint effort with EU Member States. In this Strategy, the European Commission committed to publish a report assessing its implementation and, if deemed necessary, to update its actions and objectives.

In line with the Commission Work Programme 2026, the Commission adopted the **Communication ‘Enhancing the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities up to 2030’** on May 2026.

This synopsis report presents the main findings of the consultation process launched in June 2025 as inputs to this Communication.

2. Consultation strategy

2.1. Objectives and principles of the consultation

The consultation strategy aimed to gather a **broad range of views, evidence and experiences** to help prepare the Communication ‘Enhancing the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities up to 2030’. The objective was to assess whether existing priorities continued to be relevant, to identify persisting and emerging challenges and to collect input on possible areas for renewed or strengthened EU action.

The consultation was guided by the principles of inclusiveness, accessibility, transparency and proportionality, in line with the European Commission’s Better Regulation Guidelines and the commitment to ‘nothing about us without us’, which underpins EU disability policies and the UNCRPD.

Table 1 below gives an overview of the wide range of stakeholder categories reached by each consultation tool and method.

Table 1 – Overview of the stakeholders reached through each consultation tool/method.

Type of Stakeholder	Call for evidence	Open public consultation	Targeted consultations	Interinstitutional Input
General public	X	X	-	-
Persons with disabilities	X	X	-	-
National competent authorities (NCAs), other national public authorities (PAs)	X	X	-	-
National-level civil society organisations (CSOs)	X	X	-	-
National disability CSOs	X	X	-	-
National-level social partners	X	X	X	-
EU-level civil society organisations (CSOs)	X	X	X	-
EU-level disability CSOs	X	X	X	-
EU-level social partners	X	-	X	-
EU policymakers (Commission)	-	-	-	X
EU bodies	X	X	-	X
International organisations	X	X	-	-
EU Member States	X	X	X	-
Researchers/academics	X	X	-	-
Consumer organisations	X	X	-	-
Companies/business organisations	X	X	-	-

2.2. Overview of consultation activities

The Commission implemented a **multi-channel consultation strategy** at EU, national and local level. It combined open public consultations with targeted stakeholder consultations and institutional input at EU and national level. This approach aimed to ensure broad participation at all levels, while capturing the specific perspectives of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, as well as those of Member States, social partners, EU institutions, international organisations, experts and other relevant stakeholders. An intersectional approach was foreseen to take into account the diverse and overlapping forms of discrimination and disadvantage experienced.

The consultation activities were carried out between mid-2025 and early 2026, and included:

Open consultations:

- an open call for evidence and a public consultation survey conducted via the Have Your Say portal (from 14 November 2025 to 6 February 2026 (midnight Brussels time)).

Targeted consultations:

- dedicated meetings of the Disability Platform, including a meeting with Member State representatives (18 June 2025) and a meeting with the Disability Platform's CSOs (10 October 2025);
- a hearing with EU-level social partners, with contributions from member organisations (18 November 2025);
- a strategic dialogue with EU-level CSOs beyond the field of disability (10 December 2025); and
- the European Day of Persons with Disabilities Conference (3-4 December 2025) and a Youth Policy Dialogue (19-20 March 2026).

EU interinstitutional input:

- [European Economic and Social Committee own-initiative opinion](#) on the future of the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities post-2025 (June 2025);
- Technical exchanges with the European Parliament in the context of preparing of an own-initiative report on the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities post-2024, and in the context of the plenary debate (November 2025) leading to the adoption of the [corresponding resolution](#); and
- exchanges with the Committee of the Regions (February 2026).

2.3. Accessibility and inclusive participation

Specific measures were taken throughout the consultation process to meet the **accessibility requirements** of persons with disabilities to ensure inclusive participation.

The open public consultation was drafted so that the broadest possible range of stakeholders could understand it, and it was offered in several accessible formats. An easy-to-read version of the online survey was made available for persons with intellectual disabilities and others who might need it to participate. In addition, accessible Word document versions of both the standard and easy-to-read questionnaires could be sent via email to respondents who might experience accessibility barriers when using the online tool. An easy-to-read version of the call for evidence was also provided.

Accessibility measures, both online and offline, were also provided when required during the targeted consultation formats, such as the Disability Platform meetings, the European Day of Persons with Disabilities Conference and the Youth Policy Dialogue. Those measures included sign language interpretation, live captioning, audition loops, and documents in easy-to-read and Braille format, among others.

Moreover, dedicated meetings with CSOs, persons with disabilities and youth representatives were also a key component of the consultation strategy in addition to the open consultation and call for evidence. This has allowed an intersectional approach to be captured through as many perspectives as possible, including of those less likely to participate via a specific consultation channel or tool.

3. Consultation activities and participation

3.1. Open consultations: call for evidence and open public consultation

The call for evidence and the open public consultation were conducted via the Have Your Say portal. This allowed the Commission to collect feedback on key areas requiring further EU action to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The consultation was open from 14 November 2025 to 6 February 2026 (midnight Brussels time). It targeted the **general public and a wide range of stakeholders**, including national authorities responsible for disability policies and non-discrimination, equality bodies, CSOs, relevant EU agencies, social partners, and other public and private stakeholders with an interest in specific aspects of disability policy.

The call for evidence invited stakeholders to provide high-level input on the initiative's scope, objectives and policy direction, while the public consultation survey aimed to gather more detailed views and experiences as regards implementing disability rights across policy areas.

3.1.1. Call for evidence – participation overview

A total of 238 contributions were received in response to the call for evidence.

Respondents were located in 31 countries, including 25 EU Member States. The vast majority of submissions (232 contributions; 97%) came from EU Member States, while 6 contributions (3%) were received from non-EU countries (Iceland, Libya, Eswatini, Switzerland, Türkiye and the United Kingdom). Participation was highest in Italy (46 submissions), followed by Belgium (43), France (27), Germany (21), Spain (17) and Poland (14).

In terms of stakeholder categories, EU citizens represented the largest group of respondents (107 submissions; 45%), followed by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (86 submissions; 36%). Public authorities accounted for 12 contributions (5%), business associations for 9 (4%), consumer organisations for 7 (3%), companies for 6 (2.5%), trade unions for 6 (2.5%), academic/research institutions for 3 (1.3%), and other stakeholders for 2 (0.8%). The results indicate strong engagement from individual citizens and CSOs, which together accounted for more than four-fifths of all contributions.

Of the organisations that stated their size (109 respondents), participation was predominantly driven by smaller entities. Over 70% of organisations were micro or small bodies (fewer than 50 employees), with micro-organisations alone accounting for around 40% of responses. Among NGOs, which represented the largest organised stakeholder group, more than four in five were micro or small organisations. Overall, the results indicate strong engagement from smaller CSOs with contributions also from larger institutional players.

3.1.2. Public consultation – respondent profile and participation

A total of 642 responses were received in the public consultation (Table 2). Of these, 543 responses (85%) were submitted using the standard questionnaire and 99 responses (15%) using the easy-to-read version. The majority of respondents identified as EU citizens (433 respondents; 67%). **Among organised stakeholders, the category represented most was NGOs (85; 13%), followed by business associations (17; 3%), public authorities (12; 2%) and trade unions (6; 1%).** The easy-to-read version was primarily used by EU citizens (84 responses), with limited use among organisational respondents.

Table 2 - Respondents to the public consultation by stakeholder category

Categories	Standard	Easy-to-read	Total
Academic /research institution	9	0	9
Company/business organisation	7	1	8
Business association	17	0	17
Consumer organisation	2	0	2
EU citizen	349	84	433
Environmental organisation	1	0	1
Non-EU citizen	7	1	8
NGO	80	5	85
Public authority	10	2	12
Trade union	6	0	6
Other	48	4	52
N.A.	7	2	9
Total	543	99	642

Responses were received from 36 countries, including 21 EU Member States and 15 non-EU countries.

Participation was heavily concentrated in a small number of EU Member States. The largest share of responses came from Italy (242; 38%), followed by Germany (119; 19%), Hungary (76; 12%) and Belgium (62; 10%). Together, these four countries accounted for nearly four-fifths of all responses.

Other EU Member States represented include France, Spain and Poland, and several other countries with smaller shares. A limited number of responses were also received from non-EU countries, representing less than 1% of total responses.

A substantial proportion of respondents identified as persons with disabilities. 193 respondents (30%) indicated that they consider themselves a person with a disability, while 205 respondents (32%) reported having a recognised disability or impairment. As multiple responses were possible, these categories are not mutually exclusive and may overlap. In total, 305 respondents (48%) identified as persons with disabilities (either considering themselves a person with a disability or reporting a recognised disability or impairment), while 337 respondents (52%) did not.

In addition, 208 respondents (32%) stated that they care for a person with a disability and 180 (28%) reported working in an organisation for persons with disabilities. A smaller share indicated that they do not consider themselves a person with a disability (8%), while 3% preferred not to say.

Among respondents who replied as EU or non-EU citizens, the majority were aged 50-65 years (42%) or 30-49 years (38%). A further 12% were over 65 years of age, while 5% were aged 15-29. Only 0.3% were under 15 years, and 3% preferred not to disclose their age.

Respondents represented a diverse range of employment situations. The largest groups reported working in the public sector (20%) and the private sector (19%), followed by those engaged in paid work in CSOs, including disability organisations (17%), and those who are retired (16%). Smaller shares indicated that they did unpaid work such as volunteering (9%) or they were unemployed (9%), or a student (4%), while 10% selected 'Other' and 4% preferred not to disclose their status.

3.2. Targeted consultations – participation overview

As part of the targeted consultation activities, the Commission organised dedicated exchanges with specific stakeholder groups. Below is the participation overview for each activity:

- Within the context of the Disability Platform, an ad-hoc meeting with Member State representatives was held in June 2025, bringing together representatives from 22 Member States. In addition, 8 Member States submitted written contributions following the meeting.
- A separate ad-hoc meeting with the Disability Platform CSOs was organised in October 2025, in which 13 EU-level CSOs participated. 5 organisations also submitted written contributions following the meeting.
- A hearing with EU-level social partners was organised in November 2025, in which 8 employers' organisations and 11 trade unions participated. Written inputs were received from 5 EU-level organisations and 4 national organisations.
- In December 2025, the Commission held a strategic dialogue with EU-level CSOs beyond the disability field. It involved 32 participants representing 25 EU-level organisations.
- During the European Day of Persons with Disabilities Conference, organised on 4-5 December 2025, a specific session was dedicated to the future of the Strategy. The conference involved 430 participants, including policymakers, local authorities, civil society and persons with disabilities.
- A Youth Policy Dialogue with Commissioner Lahbib was conducted on 19-20 March 2026. The event involved 20 young participants with diverse disabilities, with 10 of whom were representing EU-level organisations of persons with disabilities.

All the above-mentioned targeted consultations offered the organisations the opportunity to provide written contributions. The inputs from these targeted consultations were considered alongside evidence from the open public consultations when preparing this synopsis report.

3.3. Institutional input

In addition to inputs collected in the call for evidence, the open public consultation and the targeted consultations, this synopsis report also draws on institutional input provided by EU institutions and advisory bodies according to their respective procedures.

This includes an own-initiative report of the European Parliament, and the related Parliament resolution adopted in November 2025, as well as an own-initiative opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on the future of the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities post-2025.

Institutional input from the Committee of the Regions was also taken into account. These contributions were analysed as part of the overall evidence base used to prepare this synopsis report.

4. Results of the consultation process

4.1. Public consultations

4.1.1. Open public consultation

4.1.1.1. Current situation of persons with disabilities and challenges identified by respondents

The survey opened with questions on whether the situation of persons with disabilities has improved over the last five years. Regarding the situation in the EU country where respondents live, 32% expressed a positive view (26% somewhat agree; 6% agree), while 52% expressed a negative assessment (19% somewhat disagree; 33% disagree). A further 15% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1% selected 'Don't know'

At EU level in general, 34% expressed a positive view (28% somewhat agree; 6% agree), compared to 27% who expressed a negative assessment (14% somewhat disagree; 13% disagree). In addition, 18% were neutral and 21% selected 'Don't know'.

Perceptions were least positive at global level. 13% agreed that the situation worldwide has improved (11% somewhat agree; 2% agree), while 38% expressed disagreement (16% somewhat disagree; 22% disagree). A further 21% neither agreed nor disagreed and 27% selected 'Don't know'.

Overall, respondents were more likely to perceive deterioration or lack of progress in their own country, they perceived more mixed progress at EU level and limited improvement worldwide.

Respondents were then asked to identify up to five **areas in which persons with disabilities face the most difficulties at EU level**. The most frequently selected area

was **living independently** (53%), followed closely by **work and employment** (51%). **Accessibility-related barriers were also prominent**, with 48% selecting access to buildings and places, and 46% access to transport. **Difficulties related to social inclusion and rights were also widely reported**: 39% identified inclusion in the community, while 35% selected equality and non-discrimination. Around one third of respondents pointed to healthcare services (33%), support for family members (32%) and standards of living and social protection (32%).

Fewer respondents selected education (23%) and awareness among the public and authorities (19%). All remaining areas were selected by less than 15% of respondents, including access to technology (14%), recognition of rights in the EU (13%), recognition of legal capacity (10%), crisis preparedness (8%), political participation (7%), and sexual and reproductive health and rights (7%).

Overall, responses indicate that independent living, employment, accessibility, and social inclusion remain the most pressing challenges at EU level.

When asked to identify up to five **areas in which the situation of persons with disabilities has improved** over the last five years at EU level, respondents most frequently cited **access to technology, goods and services** (32%), followed by **access to buildings and places** (29%), **recognition of rights in the EU** (27%) and access to transport (24%).

However, 22% of respondents indicated that no improvement had been made. All other areas were selected by fewer than 15% of respondents. These included awareness among the public and authorities (15%), education (15%), and equality and non-discrimination (14%). In particular, **areas previously identified as major challenges, such as work and employment, and living independently, were perceived less frequently as having improved** (12% and 9%, respectively).

Overall, perceived improvements appear to be concentrated primarily in the areas of accessibility and rights recognition, while progress in the areas of socio-economic inclusion and independent living was reported less frequently.

Indeed, when asked to identify areas where the situation has not improved or has worsened over the last five years at EU level, the most frequently selected areas were work and employment (31%) and living independently (31%), followed by equality and non-discrimination (27%) and healthcare services (26%).

Accessibility-related issues were also widely cited, including access to buildings and places (25%), access to transport (25%), and access to technology, goods and services (11%). In addition, inclusion in the community (25%) and standards of living and social protection (25%) were frequently identified as areas lacking improvement. More than one in ten respondents selected education (17%), recognition of legal capacity (13%), political participation (12%), and awareness among the public and authorities (12%).

Comparing responses across questions shows a consistent pattern. **Areas most frequently identified as presenting significant difficulties (living independently, work and employment, and social protection-related issues) were also among those most commonly perceived as showing limited improvements.** By contrast, perceived improvements were more concentrated in accessibility and recognition of rights. This suggests that while progress may have been made in certain structural or legislative areas, **socio-economic participation and independent living remain key areas of concern.**

Respondents were also asked to identify **which identities or disadvantaged situations, combined with disability, are associated with intersectional barriers and therefore require further action.**

The most frequently selected groups were **older people** (67%) and **children** (64%), indicating a strong perception that age combined with disability increases vulnerability. **Women** (50%) were also widely identified as facing intersectional barriers.

Socio-economic marginalisation was also highlighted, with homeless people (40%) frequently selected. Around one quarter of respondents identified refugees (24%) and migrants (23%), while racialised people (22%) and LGBTIQ+ persons (22%) were selected by just over one fifth of respondents. Fewer respondents selected Roma (8%) and other ethnic minorities (7%). Finally, 10.1% selected 'Other'.

Overall, responses indicate that age, gender and socio-economic marginalisation are most strongly perceived as compounding factors for people experiencing disability-related barriers.

4.1.1.2. Necessity of EU action, EU added value and areas where EU action has been insufficient.

Respondents were asked whether EU initiatives have helped to improve the general situation of persons with disabilities over the last five years. **Overall, respondents were more likely to perceive EU initiatives as contributing to improvements at EU level than at national or global level.**

Regarding the situation in the EU country where respondents live, 33% expressed a positive view (27% somewhat agree; 6% agree), while 44% expressed a negative assessment (18% somewhat disagree; 26% disagree). A further 16% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 7% selected 'Don't know'.

Perceptions were more positive when considering the EU in general. 35% agreed that EU initiatives have contributed to improvements (29% somewhat agree; 6% agree), compared to 21% who expressed disagreement (11% somewhat disagree; 10% disagree). In addition, 20% were neutral and 23% selected 'Don't know'.

Concerning the impact of EU initiatives worldwide, 13% agreed that they have helped improve the situation (11% somewhat agree; 2% agree), while 27% expressed

disagreement (11% somewhat disagree; 16% disagree). A substantial share of respondents selected 'Don't know' (36%) or neither agreed nor disagreed (25%).

Respondents were also asked to assess whether different types of EU action have helped improve the situation of persons with disabilities over the last five years.

Among the instruments listed, legislative activities were assessed most positively, with 44% expressing agreement (31% somewhat agree; 13% agree), compared to 29% expressing disagreement. Policy action and promotion of reforms followed closely, with 35% agreement and 35% disagreement.

A similar pattern emerged for sharing knowledge and best practices, where 33% expressed agreement and 33% disagreement. **Perceptions were more mixed regarding raising-awareness,** with 32% agreement and 40% disagreement. EU funding received comparatively lower positive assessments, with 27% agreement and 39% disagreement.

Levels of neutrality and uncertainty ranged between approximately 16% and 19% across instruments. **Overall, legislative action was most frequently associated with positive impact, while perceptions regarding awareness-raising and funding were more divided.**

Regarding the **assessment of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030,** respondents were asked whether it has contributed to improving the situation of persons with disabilities over the past five years.

At the level of the EU country where respondents live, 29% expressed agreement (24% somewhat agree; 5% agree), while 43% expressed disagreement (15% somewhat disagree; 28% disagree). A further 19% neither agreed nor disagreed and 8% selected 'Don't know'.

Perceptions were more positive at EU level. Regarding the EU in general, 34% agreed that the Strategy has contributed to improvements (28% somewhat agree; 6% agree), compared to 24% who expressed disagreement (11% somewhat disagree; 13% disagree). In addition, 18% were neutral and 24% selected 'Don't know'.

At global level, perceptions were less positive and marked by higher uncertainty. Only 13% agreed that the Strategy has contributed to improvements worldwide (10% somewhat agree; 3% agree), while 26% expressed disagreement (11% somewhat disagree; 15% disagree). A substantial share selected 'Don't know' (37%) or neither agreed nor disagreed (24%).

Following a similar pattern to previous questions, **respondents were more likely to perceive the Strategy as having a positive impact at EU level than at national or global level,** while there was particular uncertainty regarding its global impact.

When asked which factors have most helped the Strategy to make progress since 2021, respondents most frequently selected the political and legal impact of the

UNCRPD (33%), followed closely by EU legislative activities (31%) and advocacy by interest groups and NGOs (30%).

EU-level instruments were also singled out in particular, such as EU funding (26%) and EU policy action, including the promotion of reforms in Member States (24%). At the same time, 25% said that no progress has been made.

Other factors were selected less frequently, including private initiatives (17%), awareness-raising activities (17%) and public initiatives at regional or local level (15%). Structural or contextual drivers, such as public opinion (14%), new scientific or technological developments (11%) and the economic context (2%), were less frequently cited.

According to the survey results, **levels of awareness of EU disability-related initiatives vary considerably across instruments. The European Disability Card and European Parking Card were the most widely recognised initiatives**, with 81% of respondents indicating they were at least somewhat familiar with them (41% somewhat familiar; 40% very familiar). By contrast, respondents were less **familiar with the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030**: 60% reported being at least somewhat familiar with it, while 40% were not familiar at all.

Awareness of legislative and regulatory instruments was generally moderate to low. Around half of respondents were not familiar with the European Accessibility Act (50%), the European Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment (51%) and the European Passenger Rights Regulations (56%). The Web Accessibility Directive was relatively better known, with 56% indicating at least some familiarity. The relatively greater awareness of the Web Accessibility Directive may reflect the fact that many public authorities participated in the survey, given that the Directive applies to public sector bodies.

Initiatives related to governance and coordination were among the least known. A majority of respondents were not familiar with the Disability Platform (56%), the European Day of Persons with Disabilities Conference and Access City Award (55%) and, the European Commission's Renewed Human Resources Strategy (69%). **The Disability Employment Package and the Guidance on independent living and inclusion in the community were also unfamiliar to over 45% of respondents.**

Overall, instruments with the potential to bring direct and visible benefits, such as the Disability Card, were the most widely recognised, while governance frameworks and coordination mechanisms were considerably less known.

Respondents identified several areas in which the impact of EU action on disability has been insufficient since 2021. The most frequently selected areas were **fighting discrimination** based on disability (41%) and **accessibility** (37%), followed by **employment** (34%), **social protection** (33%) and **health** (31%). This indicates that, while some progress may have been recognised in areas such as accessibility and

rights, respondents consider these efforts insufficient in scale or implementation to address persistent structural barriers.

Around one fifth of respondents also identified goods and services including housing (22%), education and training (20%), and raising awareness of disability rights (20%) as areas where EU action has not been sufficiently impactful on the ground. Governance-related aspects, including supporting implementation through EU funding (16%), cooperation with EU countries (10%), and measuring progress on disability rights (12%), were selected less frequently.

4.1.1.3. Future action / policy priorities

Respondents identified employment, independent living and accessibility as the highest priorities for future EU action. The most frequently selected areas were work and employment (57%), independent living and inclusion in the community (55%), accessibility of buildings and places (51%), accessibility of transport systems (50%) and health (48%).

Accessibility emerged as a cross-cutting priority across multiple domains. In addition to buildings and transport, respondents highlighted universal design (34%), accessibility in tourism (30%) and accessibility of internet, communications and ICT (27%).

A significant share of respondents prioritised socio-economic inclusion, including social protection and anti-poverty measures (39%), education and training (33%), and housing (33%). Mental health (25%), reasonable accommodation (25%) and assistive technologies and research (25%) were also frequently identified.

Several respondents emphasised the need to strengthen legal rights and enforcement mechanisms, including monitoring and enforcing disability legislation (21%), equal recognition before the law (18%), and participation in political and public life (16%). Governance-related aspects such as funding organisations of persons with disabilities (20%) and statistics and data collection (5%) were selected less frequently but remain part of the overall priority landscape.

Respondents also identified specific groups requiring attention, including young people and children with disabilities and their families (26%), women and girls with disabilities (16%) and refugees and migrants with disabilities (9%). In addition, ageing and disability was selected by 22% of respondents as a priority area for action. While this share is lower than the proportion identifying older age as a compounding vulnerability factor, as captured by another survey question (see earlier section), it nonetheless reinforces the relevance of the age-related dimension and that intersectional barriers must continue to be recognised.

The pattern of responses **regarding awareness needs** closely mirrors the priority areas identified for policy action. **Employment, independent living, accessibility and health**

were again among the most frequently selected areas where further awareness-raising is needed. This suggests that stakeholders perceive both policy reinforcement and greater societal awareness as necessary for addressing persistent gaps.

4.1.2. Call for evidence

The Call for evidence generated extensive stakeholder engagement. There were 238 questionnaire contributions and 111 position papers and supporting documents attached. Across this body of input, **contributors broadly endorse the ambition of the Strategy and its alignment with the UNCRPD**. At the same time, **there is a strong and consistent message that the enhanced Strategy up to 2030 must prioritise enforceable actions, structural reforms and measurable outcomes rather than new declaratory commitments**.

4.1.2.1. Assessment of the situation and progress achieved

Stakeholders acknowledge that significant progress has been made since 2021. Positive references include the **European Accessibility Act, the Disability Employment Package, the Guidance on independent living, AccessibleEU** and progress towards **the European Disability Card**. Several respondents also recognise **increased mainstreaming of disability** within EU policy debates and funding instruments.

However, in both short contributions and structured position papers, progress is described as largely normative, i.e. reflected in policy commitments and legal frameworks rather than in tangible implementation outcomes. **Implementation at Member State level** is perceived as **uneven, and in some contexts regressive**, particularly regarding social protection, access to services and independent living. Many contributors underline that **tangible improvements in employment, poverty reduction, accessibility and community-based services remain limited**.

4.1.2.2. Key challenges

A dominant and cross-cutting theme emerging from the consultation is the implementation and enforcement gap. In both questionnaire responses and position papers, contributors argue that **voluntary guidance and soft coordination have not delivered systemic change**. While **the Strategy is widely supported in principle**, many stakeholders consider that **its impact has been limited** by weak monitoring, insufficient accountability mechanisms, and inconsistent application across Member States. **Contributors call repeatedly for binding measures, strengthened monitoring frameworks and stricter funding conditionality**.

Within this broader governance concern, **independent living and deinstitutionalisation emerge as central priorities**. Numerous submissions report that investment in institutional and segregated settings continues, personal assistance

schemes are insufficiently developed and barriers to the portability of disability-related benefits across Member States persist. **Contributors repeatedly stress that EU funding must be fully aligned with UNCRPD standards.** It should explicitly prohibit financing of institutional or segregated models, and **prioritise community-based services, accessible housing and person-centred support.**

Employment inclusion is identified as another structural challenge. Contributions note that, **despite the Disability Employment Package, the disability employment gap remains significant,** and sheltered or segregated employment models continue to dominate in certain national contexts. **Stakeholders therefore call for a systematic evaluation of labour market measures. They want clearer targets and stronger integration between disability policy, education and skills development, active labour market policies and social protection systems.** These structural concerns are reflected in individual **submissions from EU citizens,** which **describe persistent everyday barriers.** These, include difficulties in accessing transport and healthcare, complex and inconsistent procedures for recognising disability, lack of accessible and affordable housing, digital platforms that are formally compliant but unusable in practice, and heavy reliance on unpaid family members for care and administrative navigation.

Equal access to healthcare also emerges as a priority, with contributions highlighting barriers in preventive screening, mental health services and healthcare infrastructure, as well as the need for health professionals to follow disability-sensitive training.

Unequal access to diagnosis, early intervention and community-based care is described as contributing to higher risks of poverty and long-term exclusion. At the same time, **digitalisation and cyber safety are emerging as areas of attention,** particularly due to the disproportionate risks of online threats and lack of digital accessibility.

Finally, **perceived weaknesses in data collection, monitoring and UNCRPD compliance** are repeatedly identified. **Stakeholders call for disability assessments to be harmonised across Member States, data disaggregation to be improved, and EU legislation and funding to be systematically reviewed against UNCRPD standards.**

4.1.2.3. Necessity of EU action and added value

There is broad consensus that EU-level action provides clear added value in addressing structural disparities between Member States. The EU is seen as well positioned to help harmonise standards, ensure portability of rights, attach UNCRPD compliance conditions to funding and integrate disability considerations into the European Semester and cohesion policy. **In external action,** stakeholders emphasise that the EU can leverage its position as a major humanitarian and development player to argue for binding disability inclusion requirements in climate, humanitarian and development policies.

4.1.2.4. Priorities and directions for future action

Across contributions, the emphasis is less on creating a new strategic vision and more on demanding enforceable governance tools. Stakeholders consistently frame the period up to 2030 as a decisive phase for implementing the Strategy. **Rather than calling for a fundamentally new agenda, contributors emphasise the need to operationalise existing commitments through binding, measurable and enforceable mechanisms.**

A key priority is to set up monitoring and legislative review structures that are aligned with UNCRPD and are capable of systematically assessing EU law, funding instruments and policy initiatives against the Convention. Moreover, many submissions underline that, without **stronger accountability frameworks, including clearer benchmarks and transparent reporting**, progress will remain slow.

A second recurring priority concerns aligning EU funding with the right to independent living. Contributors stress that EU financial instruments should only support community-based services, accessible housing and personal assistance schemes, while explicitly prohibiting investments in institutional or segregated settings.

Employment inclusion is similarly described as **requiring a shift from policy commitments to measurable delivery.** Stakeholders call for **concrete targets, systematic evaluation of existing labour market measures and stronger integration between disability policy, skills strategies and social protection systems.** Key priorities for future action mentioned by stakeholders include ensuring the effective provision of reasonable accommodation. Targeted support should be provided at critical transition stages, such as from education to employment where learners with disabilities face a heightened risk of exclusion, and there should be greater investment in inclusive training and skills development. In this context, stakeholders asked the Commission to consider **setting up a Disability Employment and Skills Guarantee**, building on the model and achievements of the Youth Guarantee. At the same time, it is considered essential to ensure that algorithm-based employment systems do not reinforce discrimination particularly in light of forthcoming initiatives such as the Quality Jobs Act. Finally, several contributions highlight the **need to strengthen the Disability Employment Package** through concrete proposals to improve its effectiveness, by fostering the exchange of best practices between Member States, and by improving statistics and data collection on workers with disabilities.

Other **concrete measures proposed by stakeholders for the second phase of the Strategy include** setting up a European Agency for Accessibility to support the implementation of harmonised EU accessibility legislation, including assistive technologies for persons with disabilities; adopting a Directive on guaranteeing full freedom of movement for persons with disabilities across the EU, with a particular emphasis on the portability of social security rights; developing an EU deinstitutionalisation package that should build on the existing EU Guidance on

independent living and provide specific incentives for Member States; and adopting an EU disability action plan within the EU's external action framework.

Many submissions emphasise that **meaningful participation of organisations of persons with disabilities across all stages of EU policymaking, implementation and monitoring needs to be formalised**, for instance by expanding membership within the Disability Platform. Ensuring representation and participation of persons with disabilities in policymaking could be further strengthened through inclusive guidelines, dedicated initiatives and by ensuring sustainable funding for CSOs.

Overall, the consultation reveals a coherent and consistent expectation: the enhanced Strategy should consolidate and deepen existing commitments, strengthen enforcement and monitoring mechanisms, ensure funding coherence with UNCRPD obligations, and reduce inequalities up to 2030.

4.2. Targeted consultations

4.2.1. Disability Platform ad hoc meetings (Member States and CSOs)

Targeted consultations were organised within the framework of the Disability Platform, including an ad hoc meeting with Member State representatives in June 2025 and a separate ad hoc meeting with CSOs in October 2025. In both cases, they were complemented by the submission of written contributions. The consultations aimed to gather views on priorities and possible future actions for enhancing the Strategy.

Across both Member State and CSO contributions, there was broad recognition of the Strategy as an important and effective framework to promote the rights of persons with disabilities and to support the implementation of the UNCRPD.

Participants emphasised the need to continue implementing and strengthening existing actions, while also identifying gaps where further EU-level action would be necessary. **Mainstreaming disability rights across all relevant EU policies, improving data collection and monitoring, and ensuring meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations were repeatedly highlighted.**

Member States focused in particular on implementation challenges and governance issues, **stressing the need for guidance, coordination and exchange of good practices. Priority areas** included **accessibility** and effectively implementing EU legislation, in particular through **continued support for flagship initiatives such as AccessibleEU and the European Disability Card**, as well as for measures to improve **political participation** and the accessibility of electoral processes. Member States also highlighted the importance of action in the areas of **disability assessment, independent living, employment and support services**, while underlining the need to respect national competences. **Several contributions emphasised the role of the Disability Platform** as a forum for structured cooperation and called for its functioning

to be further strengthened through more flexible formats, increased exchange of good practices and a stronger role in monitoring and knowledge-building.

CSOs placed strong emphasis on filling remaining gaps in rights protection and promotion, **calling for more ambitious and concrete EU action. Key priorities** included **deinstitutionalisation and independent living**, with several CSOs calling for stronger and more structured EU-level action. This includes a **reinforced framework to support the transition to community-based services**. Other priority areas included **employment and social inclusion, legal capacity and supported decision-making, inclusive education, support for informal carers, access to healthcare including in the area of mental health**, and the situation of persons facing **intersectional discrimination**. CSOs stressed the importance of aligning the Strategy with other EU initiatives, of strengthening monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and ensuring that EU funding supports community-based and rights-compliant services.

Written contributions from both Member States and CSOs largely reinforced the discussions held during the meetings, providing additional detail and examples. Overall, the targeted consultations within the Disability Platform highlighted a shared commitment to the objectives of the Strategy, alongside clear expectations for reinforced implementation, improved governance and targeted new actions to enhance the Strategy.

4.2.2. Social partners consultation

The consultation with social partners combined a dedicated hearing held on 18 November 2025 with written contributions submitted by EU-level organisations representing employers and trade unions, as well as a limited number of national organisations. The consultation aimed to gather views on priorities and possible future actions to enhance the Strategy.

Across contributions from both employers' and trade unions, participants underlined the importance of **improving labour market participation of persons with disabilities** and ensuring the effective implementation of existing EU initiatives, in particular the Disability Employment Package. There was broad agreement on the **central role of reasonable accommodation and accessibility in employment**, as well as on the need to strengthen public employment services. Social partners also highlighted the importance of **data, guidance and knowledge-sharing**, and recognised the **role of social dialogue** at different levels in promoting inclusive labour markets.

Employers' organisations emphasised the benefits of an inclusive labour market for society and the economy, particularly in the context of labour and skills shortages. They highlighted the importance of **skills development, training, digitalisation and new technologies**, including artificial intelligence, as enablers of employment and reasonable accommodation. Employers stressed that incentives and supportive measures, rather than penalties, are more effective in encouraging recruitment of

persons with disabilities. They also pointed to the usefulness of **State aid rules, single contact points and upfront financial support to facilitate inclusive hiring practices.**

Trade unions focused on the **persistent barriers and discriminatory practices** faced by persons with disabilities in accessing and remaining in employment, with particular attention on women, young people and persons with severe disabilities. They called for stronger and more binding measures, including minimum levels of protection, and highlighted the role of collective bargaining and workplace-level mechanisms. Trade unions also raised issues related to **the portability of support and services for workers with disabilities who move between Member States**, as well as the need for improved and more disaggregated data.

Written contributions broadly reinforced the points raised during the meeting and, in some cases, provided additional detail and national examples, including on **sheltered workshops**, employment support schemes and implementing of existing legislation.

4.2.3. Strategic dialogue

A strategic dialogue was organised on 10 December 2025 with a broad range of EU-level CSOs active beyond the field of disability, with the aim of supporting a forward-looking reflection on gaps, priorities and cross-cutting issues relevant to enhancing the Strategy. The dialogue complemented other targeted consultations by engaging a wider set of CSOs beyond the Disability Platform and by focusing on strategic orientations rather than implementation details.

Participants broadly agreed that the eight priority areas of the current Strategy remain relevant, while underlining that stronger EU-level action is needed to address persistent gaps and uneven implementation across Member States. **CSOs emphasised the importance of mainstreaming disability rights and intersectionality across EU policies and initiatives**, including employment, skills, social inclusion, funding instruments and external action. Several contributions highlighted the **need to strengthen links between the Strategy and broader EU governance frameworks**, such as the European Semester and other Union of Equality initiatives, to increase impact and accountability.

Key priorities raised during the dialogue included independent living and deinstitutionalisation; employment and skills; accessibility and assistive technologies; housing and quality social services. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that EU funding does not support institutionalisation and is instead directed towards **community-based, human rights-compliant services.** The need for **improved data collection and monitoring**, including on institutionalisation and employment outcomes, was also highlighted as essential for measuring progress and informing future action.

CSOs further underlined the **importance of legal capacity and supported decision-making, and of ensuring the rights of women with disabilities**, and those of other persons facing intersectional discrimination, including racialised groups and persons with psychosocial disabilities. Several contributions called for **stronger EU leadership in reinforcing the implementation of the UNCRPD** and of the UN's 2025 concluding observations addressed to the EU, with a view to ensuring that **future actions under the Strategy translate into tangible change at national level**.

Overall, the strategic dialogue reinforced the messages emerging from other stakeholder consultations, while providing a broader and more political perspective on the future direction of the Strategy and on the need for improved coherence, ambition and implementation up to 2030.

4.2.4. European Day of Persons with Disabilities

The annual European Day of Persons with Disabilities (EDPD) Conference, organised on 4-5 December 2025, brought together 430 participants, including policymakers, local authorities, CSOs and persons with disabilities. A dedicated session focused on the future of the Strategy. This, reflected the significance of the 2025 mid-term phase and the ongoing discussions related to the next multiannual financial framework and the UNCRPD concluding observations. EU institutions and bodies were represented, including Commission services (notably DG JUST), the European Parliament (including the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs), the European Economic and Social Committee, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, along with CSOs and persons with disabilities.

Discussions recognised the Strategy as an essential framework for advancing disability rights and supporting implementation of the UNCRPD. At the same time, participants underlined that progress remains uneven and that significant gaps persist in translating commitments into tangible improvements in everyday life. **The mid-term phase was therefore widely seen as an opportunity to consolidate achievements while strengthening implementation, governance and accountability mechanisms.**

Key challenges highlighted during the session included persistently **low employment rates** and **barriers to reasonable accommodation; lack of accessible pathways between education and employment; high risks of poverty and social exclusion; slow progress in deinstitutionalisation; and continued accessibility barriers** in areas such as housing, transport, digital services and education. Participants also referred to **shortcomings in implementing and enforcing existing legislation, fragmented support systems and limitations in data collection and monitoring. Intersectional discrimination**, including the situation of women with disabilities and persons facing multiple disadvantages, was emphasised as requiring extra attention. **Digitalisation and artificial intelligence** were highlighted as areas where **accessibility**

and non-discrimination safeguards must be systematically embedded. These, include measures to prevent discrimination, hate speech and online violence.

Looking ahead, **stakeholders called for a reinforced Strategy focused on concrete and measurable outcomes**. Proposals from stakeholders included creating a Disability Employment and Skills Guarantee; ensuring that EU funding supports independent living and community-based services; strengthening monitoring and accountability; and setting clearer targets and timelines. Participants also stressed the importance of mainstreaming disability rights across all EU policies, including preparedness and crisis management.

4.2.5. Youth dialogue

A Youth Policy Dialogue on disability with Commissioner for Equality Hadja Lahbib took place in Brussels on 19-20 March 2026. It involved 20 young participants with disabilities from 13 EU Member States. During a preparatory meeting, participants chose to discuss: **1) political participation, 2) accessibility, 3) work and employment, and 4) education**. During the dialogue, they worked in thematic groups on a ‘policy document’ reflecting their experiences, the barriers they face and what the EU can do to support them, which was then presented to the Commissioner.

4.2.5.1. Political participation

Political participation was framed as a prerequisite for everything in life, emphasising that politics is where change happens. Participants underlined that they are already politically active, and their aim is to make it easier to participate. The difficulties highlighted by participants, who considered themselves already politically active, range from accessibility issues to challenges linked to legal capacity. Overall lack of political representation and limited awareness of disability restrict opportunities for active citizenship for young persons with disabilities.

Suggested actions include more active consultation with persons with disabilities, consistent provision of captions in the Commission’s broadcast, and fostering youth participation within the Disability Platform. Mapping barriers at national level, sharing best practices (such as easy-to-read manifestos and accessible rallies), and improving education and training for election organisers, politicians, and young voters were also highlighted as proposals for further action.

4.2.5.2. Education

The reason for the participants selecting education as a priority is the higher dropout rates among young persons with disabilities compared to their peers without disabilities. Inclusive education, including for those with intellectual disabilities and mental health conditions, should cover all age ranges, from school to university and beyond, with special given to early childhood intervention. The lack of accessibility of learning materials and their compatibility with assistive technologies was raised, as well as a lack of learning support and barriers into mobility programmes.

In terms of proposed solutions, participants called for a common framework for university inclusion and transparency, and targeted for Erasmus+ funding for inclusive education, structural support and training for education professionals. The opportunity to explicitly cover digital learning platforms under the European Accessibility Act was mentioned, and it was suggested that accessibility requirements should be further embedded in public procurement processes as an additional supporting element. Some mentioned the EU having a possible role as a ‘watchdog’, despite its competence in education matters being limited.

4.2.5.3. Work and employment

Access to employment was flagged as a major challenge, with a significant disability employment gap including for young people. A lack of accessible job offers and inclusive recruitment processes, insufficient workplace adaptations and perceived costs for employers, which discourage hiring, were among the issues raised.

Employment prospects for persons with intellectual disabilities and segregated employment are aspects of particular concern. The lack of certainty about the disability status when moving to another EU country and about the related support was also mentioned.

Participants stressed the following objectives for future action: investing in support mechanisms, such as job coaching and training; ensuring portability of benefits when someone moves from one Member State to another; increasing employment of persons with disabilities within the EU institutions; allowing individuals with disabilities to work without losing monetary support; and promoting supported employment over sheltered employment, for stronger outcomes on the open labour market.

4.2.5.4. Accessibility

Accessibility was raised as a pre-condition for persons with disabilities to fully participate in society, as it affects all areas of life. The group flagged accessibility in cities, including in public buildings, means of transport and stations. Lack of accessibility in healthcare, including lack of appropriate mental healthcare, was highlighted as a critical issue. The role of informal caregivers was raised. Participants

noted that in their personal experience, family members and friends often became caregivers without preparation, training or psychological support.

Participants called for the use of EU funding to make cities more accessible. They asked for guidance on everyday service delivery, training and accessible psychological support for informal carers, systematic consultation with persons with disabilities, and monitoring of implementation. Participants called for the EU to take concrete actions in the area of mental health, including for instance a study on forced medication and coercive treatment. EU guidance was also requested on the transition to recovery-oriented services and on identifying good practices in respecting consent.

4.3. Institutional input

4.3.1. Input from the European Parliament

4.3.1.1. Background and nature of the process

The European Parliament (EP) adopted in plenary an own-initiative resolution on the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities post-2024 in November 2025, based on a report prepared within the competent parliamentary committees and a plenary debate. The resolution constitutes the formal position of the EP and is not the result of a public consultation in the strict sense. However, it reflects the EP's assessment of progress achieved under the current EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030, as well as its views on persisting challenges and priorities for future EU action. The related plenary debate provided further context on expectations and areas of emphasis across political groups.

4.3.1.2. Assessment of the situation and progress achieved

In the resolution, **the EP acknowledged that progress has been made at EU level in advancing the rights of persons with disabilities**, including through legislative and policy initiatives aimed at improving accessibility, promoting inclusion and supporting independent living. Reference was made to EU-level action contributing to greater awareness of disability rights and to developing of common frameworks and tools. At the same time, **the EP underlined that progress remains uneven across Member States and policy areas**, and that many persons with disabilities continue to face barriers in their daily lives.

4.3.1.3. Key challenges and gaps identified

The EP highlighted a number of persisting challenges, including barriers to accessibility in the built environment, transport, digital services and information; continued gaps in access to employment, education and vocational training; and obstacles to independent living and community-based services. **The resolution drew**

attention to the employment gap for persons with disabilities and to the prevalence of poverty and social exclusion. It also identified shortcomings in access to healthcare, social protection and justice, as well as exposure to violence, discrimination and hate speech, in particular affecting women and girls with disabilities. **The EP further noted gaps in implementing and enforcing of existing legislation and policies, as well as limitations in data availability and monitoring.**

4.3.1.4. Necessity of EU action and added value

The resolution underlined the continued relevance of EU-level action in supporting Member States, promoting consistency across the EU and ensuring effective implementation of disability rights. It also emphasised the role of EU legislation, policy coordination, funding instruments and monitoring frameworks in addressing cross-border and structural challenges. During the plenary debate, **Members broadly supported a renewed and strengthened EU framework to address persisting disparities and to reinforce the implementation of the UNCRPD.**

4.3.1.5. Priorities and directions for future action

Looking ahead, **the EP called for renewed ambition in EU disability policy. Priority areas that were highlighted included** improving access to quality employment and inclusive education, strengthening accessibility requirements across policy areas, supporting independent living and deinstitutionalisation, increasing protection against discrimination and violence, and ensuring meaningful participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making. The resolution also stressed **the importance of adequate funding, effective governance, stronger monitoring mechanisms and improved data collection** to support implementation at national and EU levels.

Beyond the core themes, the plenary debate reflected **broad political support for maintaining disability rights as a cross-cutting priority in EU policymaking and for strengthening links between disability policy and other EU agendas.** Some Members also emphasised the need to ensure the long-term continuity and coherence of EU action beyond the current strategy timeframe (2021-2030).

4.3.2. Input from the European Economic and Social Committee

4.3.2.1. Background and nature of the process

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) adopted an own-initiative opinion on the future of the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities post-2025. The opinion was developed in accordance with the EESC's advisory role and reflects the views of its three constituent groups, representing employers, workers and CSOs. The opinion provides the EESC's assessment of progress achieved under the

current Strategy, identifies persisting challenges and gaps, and outlines priorities and considerations for future EU action.

4.3.2.2. Assessment of progress and continued relevance of the Strategy

The EESC acknowledged that the current Strategy has contributed to increased visibility of disability rights at EU level and to progress in specific areas, including accessibility, awareness-raising and policy coordination. The EESC recognised the importance of the Strategy as a common framework supporting the implementation of the UNCRPD. At the same time, **the EESC stressed that progress has been uneven and that tangible improvements in the daily lives of persons with disabilities are still limited in several Member States and policy areas.**

4.3.2.3. Key challenges and gaps identified

The EESC highlighted a number of persisting structural challenges, including barriers to accessibility across the built environment, transport, digital services and information, limited access to quality employment and vocational training, and insufficient progress towards independent living and community-based services. **The opinion underlined the continued risk of poverty and social exclusion among persons with disabilities and pointed to gaps in access to healthcare, education and social protection.** The EESC also identified shortcomings in implementing and enforcing of existing EU and national legislation, as well as weaknesses in data collection, monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

4.3.2.4. Necessity of EU action and added value

The EESC emphasised the continued need for strong EU-level action to support Member States, promote policy coherence and ensure effective implementation of disability rights across the EU. The opinion **highlighted the added value of EU coordination, guidance and funding** in addressing cross-border and systemic challenges. The EESC **underlined the importance of better integrating disability rights objectives into broader EU governance and policy processes, including economic, social and employment policies**, to strengthen impact and consistency.

4.3.2.5. Priority areas and directions for future action

Looking ahead, **the EESC identified several priority areas for strengthening EU disability policy.** These included reinforcing accessibility requirements across all relevant policy areas; improving access to inclusive and quality employment; supporting independent living and deinstitutionalisation; and ensuring equal access to education, healthcare and social services. **The Committee placed particular emphasis on the need for adequate funding, effective use of EU financial instruments, and stronger**

governance and monitoring mechanisms. The opinion also **stressed the importance of addressing intersectionality** and ensuring that the specific situations of different groups of persons with disabilities are adequately taken into account.

Beyond the core priorities, **the EESC highlighted the importance of meaningful involvement of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations** in policy design, implementation and monitoring. The opinion also underscored the need for continuity and long-term commitment in EU disability policy beyond the current Strategy timeframe.

4.3.3. Committee of the Regions

4.3.3.1. Background and nature of the process

Institutional input from the Committee of the Regions (CoR) was collected through a written consultation of CoR members following the cancellation of a planned discussion at the of the Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture (SEDEC) meeting. Members were invited to identify gaps relevant for further EU action, highlight regional and locally relevant aspects, suggest actions to promote accessibility and inclusive service provision across EU cities and regions, and outline how local authorities could contribute to designing and implementing of the actions.

In total, five written submissions were received. Contributions were submitted by the Community of Madrid (Spain), Regione Toscana (Italy), representatives at county level in Romania (including Harghita County) and a consolidated input reflecting feedback from municipalities in Poland.

4.3.3.2. Key challenges identified

Contributions highlighted that translating of the Strategy into concrete action is often limited by reduced operational capacity at local level, particularly in small and rural municipalities. **Persistent territorial inequalities** were also noted in rural and smaller municipalities facing structural limitations in service availability, public transport and administrative capacity. **Common challenges identified included** insufficient administrative capacity, funding mechanisms not fully adapted to rural realities, overlapping responsibilities between levels of governance and a lack of locally disaggregated data. **Accessibility was consistently described as a key gap**, extending beyond physical barriers to digital services, communication, integrated social services and attitudinal barriers, amongst others.

Contributions also highlighted that accessibility should be treated as a systemic quality standard in public service provision and stressed the need for sustainable support mechanisms enabling effective implementation at municipal level.

4.3.3.3. Priority areas and directions for future action

Submissions called for accessibility requirements in EU-funded projects to be more strictly enforced, for stronger support for independent living and community-based services, and for EU funding to be better aligned to territorial needs. Digitalisation and artificial intelligence were identified as emerging areas requiring clearer alignment with accessibility obligations and disability rights. Local and regional authorities emphasised that they need to be involved in EU policy design at an early stage and need simplified access to funding. They stated that accessibility criteria need to be embedded in public procurement and local investments, disability-relevant training reinforced for public officials, and EU action rooted in local realities to ensure the enhanced Strategy is effectively implemented.

5. Summary overview of the consultation results

This synopsis report draws on a comprehensive and multi-layered consultation process carried out between mid-2025 and early 2026 to inform the **Communication Enhancing the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities up to 2030**. The consultation attracted wide and diverse engagement across open, targeted and institutional channels. It involved substantial contributions from persons with disabilities, civil society, Member States, social partners, EU institutions and designated bodies.

Across all consultation strands, several consistent findings emerge: first and foremost, stakeholders identify implementation and enforcement gaps as the central challenge for the Strategy. While legislative and policy progress at EU level is widely acknowledged, tangible improvements in the everyday lives of persons with disabilities are perceived as insufficient and uneven. The overall message is that legislative and policy advances have not consistently translated into structural change.

Independent living, employment and accessibility clearly stand out as the core structural priorities. These areas were most frequently identified both as persistent challenges and as key priorities for future action. Although progress is recognised in legal frameworks and accessibility standards, socio-economic participation (including access to quality employment, inclusive education, adequate income and community-based services) is widely seen as lagging behind. **Living independently, reducing poverty and ensuring effective social protection remain areas where respondents report limited improvement.**

At the same time, there is broad recognition of the added value of EU-level action. Stakeholders emphasise the EU's contribution to harmonising standards, promoting rights, strengthening legislative frameworks and leveraging funding instruments. The European Union is seen as well positioned to support Member States: it can attach rights-based conditionality to funding, and integrate disability considerations into

broader governance tools, including the European Semester and investment policy frameworks.

Contributors also consistently underline that governance and monitoring require further strengthening, by combining EU and national efforts. Calls for clearer benchmarks, improved data collection and disaggregation, more robust monitoring mechanisms and systematically aligning EU funding with the UNCRPD, particularly in relation to independent living and deinstitutionalisation, emerge across all consultation strands.

Finally, **stakeholders stress that intersectionality must be more systematically embedded in implementing the Strategy.** Age, gender and socio-economic vulnerability are widely perceived as compounding disability-related barriers. Particular attention drawn to the rights of women and girls with disabilities, children and older persons with disabilities, migrants and persons experiencing multiple and overlapping forms of disadvantage. **Emerging areas such as digitalisation, artificial intelligence and crisis preparedness** also require systematic integration of accessibility and non-discrimination requirements, as well as protection against disproportionate threat risks for persons with disabilities.

The consultation results do not reveal a need for a new strategic framework, but the implementation of the current framework to be reinforced. Stakeholders consistently call for the Strategy's priority areas to be translated into time-bound, measurable, and monitorable actions and, **across consultation strands, there is a clear expectation of stronger governance and accountability mechanisms.** The Disability Platform is identified as a useful structure for cooperation and exchange, with potential for a strengthened role in this context. **Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in implementing and monitoring is consistently emphasised.** Overall, **the period to 2030 is widely viewed as an implementation phase requiring measurable and verifiable progress.**