

DFI Submission to the EU Public Consultation on the Enhancement of the EU Disability Rights Strategy up to 2030

5th February 2026

The Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI), a member of the European Disability Forum (EDF), welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the enhancement of the EU Disability Rights Strategy up to 2030. We strongly support an ambitious, human rights-based Strategy that delivers tangible improvements in the lives of persons with disabilities across the European Union and fully implements the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD).

EU Disability Rights Strategy – Flagship Initiatives

The new flagship initiatives should reflect the recommendations of the European Parliament, the recent Concluding Observations of the UN CRPD Committee, and align closely with the detailed proposals of the European Disability Forum. Ambitious, concrete actions are required to address persistent structural inequalities.

Employment must be a central focus. Ireland continues to have one of the widest disability employment gaps in the EU, at 38.2%. A strong EU-level framework, supported by binding measures and adequate funding, is essential to drive progress, promote inclusive labour markets, and hold Member States accountable. The cost of disability must also be addressed as a priority in the next phase of the Strategy. This is a disability rights issue that has, to date, been neglected at the EU level.

EU Equal Treatment Directive

DFI emphasises the urgency of adopting the EU Equal Treatment Directive, which has been blocked for 17 years. In the current political climate, deprioritising this Directive would represent a serious backslide on equality and a capitulation to anti-democratic and anti-rights actors. The adoption of this Directive must be prioritised as an action of the next phase of the EU Disability Rights Strategy. It is essential to prohibit both direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of disability across a wide range of areas, giving real effect to the principle of equal treatment.

Key Priorities for the Second Half of the Strategy

DFI supports the European Parliament's position on the second phase of the EU Disability Rights Strategy, including:

- An EU-funded Employment and Skills Guarantee for persons with disabilities, inspired by the Youth Guarantee
- Continued action to strengthen freedom of movement for persons with disabilities
- The reinforcement of AccessibleEU through the establishment of a permanent, dedicated regulatory agency

- An EU directive regulating the use of AI in recruitment and workforce management, to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities
- An ambitious reform of air passenger rights and a revision of rail accessibility legislation
- Legislative initiatives to ensure equal rights to vote and stand for election
- An EU strategy to support the transition from institutional to community-based care
- Full accessibility of European Parliament plenary debates, including International Sign interpretation

Cross-cutting Issues

The enhanced Strategy must also address the extra cost of living faced by persons with disabilities, the specific situation of women and girls with disabilities, mental health, and the barriers experienced by people with invisible disabilities. These intersecting issues require targeted and inclusive policy responses.

DFI calls on the EU institutions to ensure that the enhanced EU Disability Rights Strategy delivers meaningful change, grounded in the lived experience of persons with disabilities and firmly rooted in human rights.