



## NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US

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### 4TH EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES: DISABILITY RIGHTS AT THE HEART OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

6 December 2017

**More than 600 persons with disabilities from all over Europe are meeting today at the European Parliament to engage in dialogue with European leaders concerning their rights.**

The **4th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities (EPPD)** is a landmark event marking the **International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December)** and the **20th anniversary of EDF**. EDF was created in 1997 to ensure that decisions concerning persons with disabilities are taken with persons with disabilities, through their active involvement in policy and decision-making; This is the basis of our motto **'nothing about us without us'**.



The discussions taking place at the EPPD are focusing specifically on the **right of persons with disabilities** to vote and participate in political and public life, the next **European Disability Strategy** and the European Union (EU) being a global leader on inclusive **Sustainable Development**.

The **President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani**, and **EDF President, Yannis Vardakastanis**, are opening the EPPD.

**President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani**, stated: "Our commitment to improve the lives of persons with disabilities is founded in our values as Europeans, including our attachment to freedom, equality and inclusion of all individuals in society. These values have to be translated into concrete actions, to enable every person to live an independent life, and to make sure that our society empowers everyone."

**EDF President, Yannis Vardakastanis**, stated: "Today we show a European Parliament close to its citizens. The EPPD is another milestone in the dialogue between EU elected representatives and citizens with disabilities. Throughout all EDF existence, the European Parliament has always been a strong and vocal defender of the human rights of persons with disabilities. Over the last two legislatures, the European Parliament promoted and protected the rights of persons with disabilities during legislation negotiations on the right to equal access to the internet, to transport or to independent living, as well as on the structural funds – in line with the provisions of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UN CRPD\)](#)".

During the EPPD, a [manifesto on European elections 2019](#) will be adopted by the delegates calling on the EU leaders to ensure that the upcoming European elections are fully accessible to persons with disabilities. The right to political participation and the right to vote are enshrined in the CRPD that the EU and all its Member States -except Ireland- have ratified. However, in reality hundreds of thousands of people with disabilities in Europe are deprived from exercising this fundamental right. **Women with disabilities, people with disabilities living in institutions and people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities are at even higher risk of being excluded.**

Delegates with disabilities will also adopt a [resolution on the next European Disability Strategy](#). During EU's review in 2015, the CRPD Committee recommended the EU to "adopt a strategy on the implementation of the CRPD with the allocation of a budget, a time frame for implementation and monitoring mechanism". Thus, the resolution is calling on the EU leaders to adopt a European Disability Strategy 2020-2030 that will cover all provisions of the CRPD. The Strategy should include 2021 as the next European Year of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Moreover, participants will discuss the [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) and the importance of taking people with disabilities on board in their implementation. Five of the SDGs are directly mentioning disability: goal 4 on quality education, goal 8 on decent work and economic growth, goal 10 on reduced inequalities, goal 11 on sustainable cities and communities and goal 17 on partnerships for the goals.

"It is crucial that the EU implements the SDGs and keep up to the commitment to leave no one behind. No person with disability should be forgotten, including those in more vulnerable situations such as women, children and refugees with disabilities", says **EDF Vice President, Ana Peláez**

Finally, delegates will also adopt an [emergency resolution on the European Accessibility Act](#). The resolution is calling on the Council of the EU to live up to its obligations to implement the CRPD and to adopt an ambitious and forward-looking General Approach to the [European Accessibility Act at the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council](#) meeting on 7 December 2017.

EDF members have worked closely with their MEPs, including members of the [European Parliament's Disability Intergroup](#) to ensure that the 4th EPPD is the most inclusive, diverse European gathering of persons with disabilities which has ever taken place at the EU level. It comes at a crucial time for the EU, when belief of Europeans in the European project is weakening. EDF is coming together with its members to tell Europe's leaders about the kind of Europe we want. A Europe of human rights and social participation for all.

The EPPD is live web streamed at the [European Parliament's TV](#) as well as through EDF website.

Follow all discussions on EDF [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages using the hashtag: #EPdisability

## Background

The EPPD has been held three times to date - in 1993, 2003 and 2012. The 1st EPPD was organised under the initiative of the European Commission within the scope of the HELIOS Program before the creation of EDF, and coincided with the adoption of the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. The 2nd EPPD, organised this time by EDF, marked the end of the European Year of Persons with Disabilities 2003 and the 10th anniversary of the UN Standard Rules, and took place while negotiations for the CRPD were ongoing. The 3rd EPPD focused on the implementation of the CRPD in the EU in a time of crisis, following its ratification and immediately prior to the EU submitting its first implementation progress report to the CRPD Committee.

The CRPD and its optional protocol were adopted on 13 December 2006 by the UN General Assembly. Since then, the CRPD has been ratified by 173 countries, including 27 EU Member States, and the optional protocol has been ratified by 92 countries, including 22 EU Member States. The EU concluded the CRPD on 23 December 2010, while EU ratification of the optional protocol remains pending. In 2015, the [EU was reviewed by the CRPD Committee](#) on its progress in implementing the CRPD and received recommendations from the Committee, the so called 'Concluding Observations'.

[See all the photos of the 4th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities here](#)

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