



# Preparation of a new EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020

Summary of the main outcomes  
of the public consultation







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## 1. Background of the public consultation

On 4 November 2009 the Commission launched a two-month online public consultation called "Public consultation on the preparation of a new EU Disability Strategy 2010-2020".

The aim of the consultation was to provide the possibility to different stakeholders (organisations, public authorities, individuals including persons with disabilities and their organisations, enterprises) from all Member States to give their opinion on the problems that persons with disabilities face in Europe and the ways to solve them. The consultation was also designed to give feedback on priorities and challenges for the future of the European disability policy and the forthcoming strategy 2010-2020.

The new disability strategy is needed to address new challenges and opportunities since the launching of the European Disability Action plan in 2003:

- obligations taken by the EU and the MS by signing and ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,
- increase in differences in the situation of persons with disabilities across the EU connected to the accession of twelve Member States in 2004 and 2007,
- the current demographic trends and the situation of the economy.

The consultation focuses on issues at European level. However, many areas of vital interest to persons with disabilities, such as content and structure of education, the norms for built environment and public spaces, leisure issues as well as social assistance are mainly in the competence of the Member States. Often they are dealt with by the local authorities. Therefore the public consultation also addressed the question of appropriate actors for each thematic area as well as questions of governance. I

## 2. Questionnaire

The questions were divided into six groups:

1. Profile of the respondents;
2. What should the new EU disability strategy cover;
3. Ten thematic areas  
(Accessibility; Employment; Education; Healthcare; Free movement; Independent living; Participation in democratic and public life; Participation in cultural life; recreation; leisure and sport; Adequate standards of living and social protection; Freedom and dignity);
4. Governance issues;
5. The role of the European Union
6. Any other remarks

Depending on a concrete question, the respondents were asked to evaluate on a 5-point scale (with a neutral position in the middle) the usefulness of a selection of activities; the relevance of different actors in addressing the issues or the importance of the different problems.



### 3. Statistics and profile of the respondents

In the period 4 November 2009 until 4 January 2010 a total of 336 responses were received to the online consultation. Given the effort needed to reply to a questionnaire with a large number of questions, the participation is a positive indicator of a public interest in the area.

70% of the responses came from individual persons not representing any type of organisation or public body, 30% of the responses were on behalf of different organisations.

The individual respondents were in the following age groups:

- 8% up to 24 years
- 55% 25-49 years
- 32% 50-64 years
- 3% 65 or older
- 57% of the respondents were female and 43% male.

The most common countries of origin were:

Germany and UK (23%), followed by Belgium (7%), France, Ireland and Italy (5% each).

49% of the individual query participants were persons with disabilities, further 16% of the respondents were family members or non-paid careers for persons with disabilities and 8% take care of persons with disabilities as a paid job.

Nine responses from organisations were received separately, in a format chosen by the sender.

### 4. What should the new EU disability strategy cover

This section of the questionnaire yielded strong evidence of perception of discrimination. 79% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that persons with disabilities face discrimination in their everyday activities because of their disabilities. 44% of individual respondents indicated that they had experienced problems because of their disabilities, further 45% had indirect experience, through friends or family.

Responding to questions on the main areas of daily living, the respondents saw every one of them as important or very important for persons with disabilities. For almost 95% of respondents, lack of access to the built environment was an important or very important issue. Just one percentage point behind was the lack of equal opportunities in the job market. 91% saw the lack equal opportunities in education and difficulties in independent living as important or very important issues.

79% of responses confirm that equal access to healthcare is important or very important for persons with disabilities.

The item with the "lowest" importance rating in this section - barriers to free movement – still achieves 68%. These high percentages suggest a need for action in a wide range of areas covering most aspects of life.



## 5. Thematic areas

In section 11 the main results per thematic area are given in tabular form. In this section the main findings are described per area.

### Accessibility

Most favoured tools in the area of accessibility were legislation and measuring. Guidelines and research were the less favoured tools in this area. Greater involvement of persons with disabilities received ratings "very effective or effective" from 78% of respondents.

As regards the actors, the respondents saw a clear need for more effort from all established actors. 98% of respondents said that national governments should do "more" or "much more" in the area, for local government and private sector this share was respectively 91% and 88%.

For the EU this share was 86%, ahead of NGOs (72%) and "other" (27%). 85% of respondents agreed that harmonising rules and standards for accessible goods and services was important or very important.

### Employment

In the area of employment, all measures proposed in the consultation received over 74% of "useful" or "very useful" ratings, with promotion of self-employment and training to job-seekers being the lowest-rated (74% and 77% respectively) and provision of assistive technologies and increasing accessibility of workplaces the highest-rated (88% and 87% respectively).

Fighting discrimination and raising awareness were very highly rated, along with making standard technologies and digital content accessible (all 86%). 83% of the respondents considered more and better labour market support services "useful" or "very useful", enforcement of the obligation to make reasonable accommodation at the workplace received 82%. 77% of respondents considered dealing with the "benefit trap" useful or very useful.

### Education

In the area of education, accessibility of learning materials emerged clearly as the most critical issue with 90% of respondents indicating that action in this area would be useful or very useful. This was closely followed by increasing the accessibility of buildings (89%). At the other end of scale, scholarships and grants for persons with disabilities enjoyed support of 73% of respondents.

Awareness-raising to increase social acceptance of persons with disabilities and specific training for teachers on accommodating the persons with disabilities in classroom were seen as useful or very useful by respectively 87% and 86% of respondents. Support for increasing resources to bring students with disabilities into the general and higher education systems was at the 84% level.

Finally, mechanism enabling the move from special to general education and adapting adult education and training programmes were supported by respectively 83% and 82% of respondents.



## Healthcare

In the area of healthcare, prohibiting discrimination in provision of health insurance emerged as the most supported measure (86% respondents said that it would improve access to healthcare "clearly" or "very much"). Specific training for health professionals followed with 83%. Developing more health services for special needs of persons with disabilities was supported by more than three quarters of respondents. Preventive action to reduce the incidence of disabilities enjoyed lowest popularity, but 64% is still a significant level of support.

## Free movement

Free movement is the one area, where the respondents expect more from the European Union than from Member States or local authorities. Highest rating (85% of "clearly" or "very much" in terms of improvement expected) is given to mutual recognition of disability status across the Member States. Harmonisation of criteria used by the Member States to assess the degree of disability is supported by 80% of respondents. Similar disability related benefits and the portability of such benefits were given respectively 77% and 78% of high and very high helpfulness ratings.

## Independent living

In the area of independent living, avoiding placement in residential institutions was at the top of the respondents' agenda. Out of the measures to avoid this, 90% approval rating was given to measures directed at increasing provision of community-based services and increasing access to assistive technologies that can support the disabled to live independently.

Supporting families and other informal carers enjoyed 80% level of support. On the other hand, planning for closing down the existing residential institutions received relatively little support – only 49% of respondents felt that it would "clearly" or "very much" improve the ability of persons with disabilities to live independently.

Awareness-raising received 85% approval, minimum quality standards for care services was supported by 80%. Provision of personal budgets and retraining the staff from institutions appeared helpful to respectively 75% and 74% of the respondents. In addition to supporting personal budgets and retraining the staff from institutions, some respondents made separate written comments highlighting the central role played in empowerment of persons with disabilities by the provision of personal assistants as well as the need to secure adequate working conditions for the assistants.

## Participation in political life

Accessibility was high in the wish-list for the participation in political life: 89% of responses supported making elections and voting (including the related materials) fully accessible. In a separate question, 88% support was given to providing policy-related material in accessible formats. Media action to improve the image of persons with disabilities received 84% ratings "useful" and "very useful" and financing the disability NGOs 81%.



## Recreation and leisure

Accessibility was again highly rated in the area of recreation and leisure: ensuring accessibility of both cultural venues (including monuments and sites) and sports facilities received 92% support.

Accessible formats for cultural material and programmes were seen as useful or very useful by 87% of the respondents. Training sports staff and ensuring the funding to address disability issues in sports received the approval of respectively 88% and 84%. Support for the creative activities for persons with disabilities was seen as useful or very useful also by a high proportion of respondents - 80%.

## Standards of living

The responses in the thematic area addressing standards of living stand out by their high convergence levels. 90% approval ratings of compensating for extra costs and burdens caused by disability and expanding job opportunities are not very far from the 82% rating given to measuring the situation of persons with disabilities while gathering data on the most vulnerable groups. Also, the rating of 86% given to providing adequate disability pensions is very close to 85% for expanding public housing opportunities.

In the area of freedom and dignity, practical tools and actions received relatively more support than legislative measures. Nevertheless, support levels of 81% and 86% for legislative measures concerning respectively decision-making and preventing violence as well as legal monitoring are by no means low. Legislation to ensure the legal capacity of persons with disabilities received the same support as most practical measures – 88%.

Practical measures in decision-making and awareness-raising were supported or strongly supported by 88% of respondents, the most supported measure was developing practical tools to prevent violence against persons with disabilities with 89% support.

## 6. Governance issues

The public consultation confirmed that assigning clear political responsibility for disability at all governance levels is considered important (or very important) by 92% of responses given. Along the same lines, 83% of respondents favoured identification of a lead office for disability issues.

Developing communication and cooperation mechanisms between different actors (EU, national and local governments, civil society) remains a challenge, but a challenge that must be tackled - 87% of respondents agreed it was important or very important.

Assessing the impact of new policies (in all sectors) on persons with disabilities was important or very important for 87% of respondents. As to how to do this best - 78% of respondents considered establishing indicators and targets to measure improvements in the situation of persons with disabilities important or very important.

## 7. The role of the European Union

In each thematic section respondents indicated, which actors should be involved to what extent. The choices were European Union, National Government, Regional/local Government, Disability NGOs, Industry and Other.



The lowest share of respondents who wanted EU to do more or much more, was evident in the area of recreation and leisure - 74%. At the same time, doing more or much more was favoured by 86% of the respondents in the area of accessibility.

High on the list of areas, where the EU should engage more actively, were also: freedom and dignity (86%), free movement (84%), independent living and participation in democratic and public life (both 83%). Even the items lower on the list also enjoyed a high level of support for more EU engagement: 80% for employment and education, 78% for standards of living and 75% in healthcare.

EU should be involved		
more or much more	in the area of	less or much less
86%	Accessibility	2%
86%	Freedom and dignity	2%
84%	Free movement	1%
83%	Independent living	2%
83%	Participation in democratic and public life	2%
80%	Employment	3%
80%	Education	2%
78%	Standards of living and social protection	3%
75%	Healthcare	2%
74%	Culture, recreation, leisure, sport	3%

The table shows that there was very little call for the EU to do less in any of the areas and that the differences in percentages to do more are small between the areas.

In the special section devoted to the role of the EU, the respondents were asked to rate the suitability of a variety of instruments the EU could use. All proposed instruments received at least 76% of "suitable" or "very suitable" ratings, with targets and indicators being the least favoured and ensuring disability-friendly public purchasing the most supported with 92%.

Legislation to harmonise disability-related objectives across Member States enjoyed 79% support, whereas financial support for local projects and research received "suitable" or "very suitable" from respectively 84% and 82% of respondents. Financing NGOs enjoyed the support of 81% of responding organisations and 77% of all respondents. 86% of respondents regarded helping the MS to exchange information and best practice as "suitable" or "very suitable" role for the EU, information campaigns reached 80% level of support.

On a more general level, 75% of respondents considered mainstreaming alone to be insufficient to address the problems faced by the persons with disabilities. 66% of respondents supported addressing disability issues with a combination of mainstreaming and specific policies.

Legislation to harmonise disability-related objectives across Member States enjoyed 79% support; helping the MS to exchange information and best practice seen as "suitable" or "very suitable" by 86% of respondents. Featured in two different sections, targets and indicators were found "suitable" or "very suitable" by 76% or 78% of respondents.



## 8. The role of the Member States

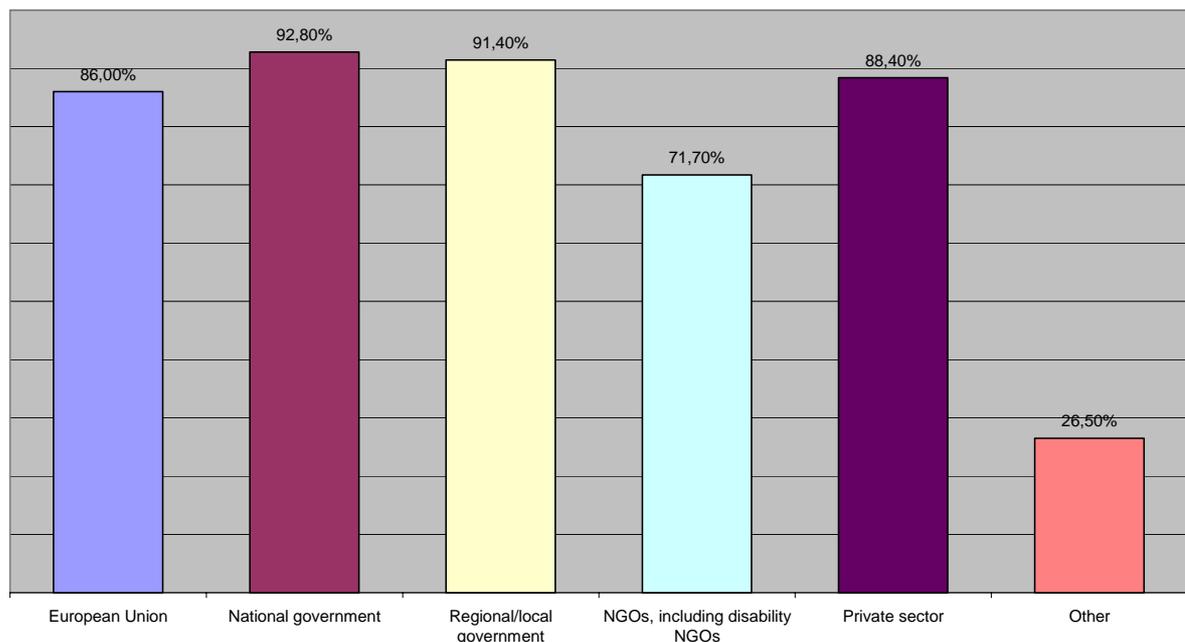
The lowest share of respondents who wanted MS to do more or much more, was in the area of free movement – , but even there the percentage was still 81%.

Accessibility issues received the highest percentage with 93% of responses seeing a need for the MS to do more or much more. Standards of living/social protection and employment as well as independent living (91%), also freedom of dignity (90%) were among the areas, with the highest shares of respondents wanting to see additional effort by the Member States, followed by 89% in education and participation in democratic and public life, 88% in culture and recreation and 87% in healthcare.

MS should do more or much more	
93%	Accessibility
91%	Standards of living and social protection
91%	Employment
91%	Independent living
90%	Freedom and dignity
89%	Education
89%	Participation in democratic and public life
88%	Culture, recreation, leisure, sport
87%	Healthcare
81%	Free movement

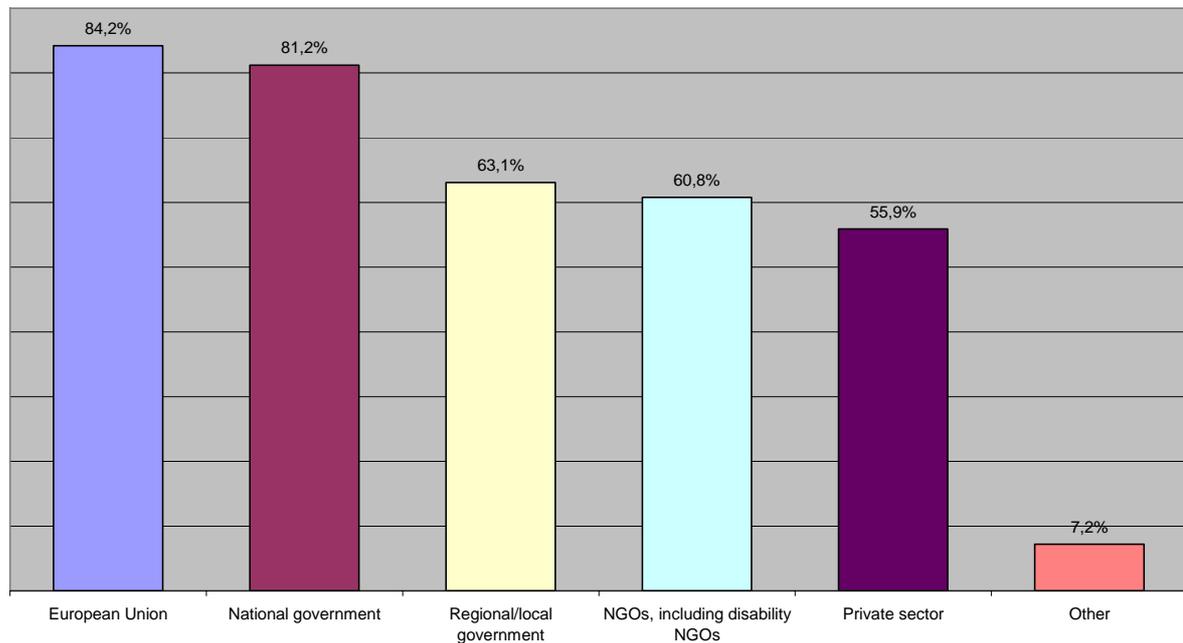
Overall, the respondents laid most responsibility for thematic areas with the Member States, followed by the local or regional governments and the European Union but differences are small. In this sense, the table depicting the distribution of the answers in the area of accessibility is rather representative. Main exception was the area of free movement, where the EU is expected to take most responsibility.

**Accessibility: who should do more or much more**





**Free movement: who should do more or much more**



## 9. Any other remarks

In addition to replying to the questionnaire, several organisations sent detailed proposals, with recommendations for the new Disability Strategy. Many respondents also used the free text field in the questionnaire to add further remarks. Among the suggestions made, some of the most prominent were:

- Providing a comprehensive legal framework which is clear and binding for all involved parties. In particular, a horizontal Directive aimed at achieving equal treatment and non discrimination for persons with disabilities in design, manufacturing and provision of goods and services, was mentioned.
- The implementation of the UN Convention should be stated as priority in the new strategy.
- Development of specific action plans to address particular situations: health inequalities, de-institutionalization, employment of people with disabilities; people with high dependency needs.
- Introduction of the quota system for employing persons with disabilities in the public service in the whole EU as an encouragement for private sector.
- Establishing indicators and targets.
- Mainstreaming of disability in EU programmes for financial support such as the European Structural Funds or in programmes for development cooperation.
- Using public procurement as leverage to achieve the inclusion of accessibility features in the design and manufacturing in the EU.

Among the submissions, there was support for the following actions of the Commission: mainstreaming, particularly in the assessment and evaluation of policy-making as well as research; awareness-raising; more detailed and segmented collection of data.

A specific proposal for a Disability Pact was made by the European Disability Forum. Their document contains comprehensive and detailed recommendations for the EU to remodel



its handling of disability issues, including the governance aspects. Several free-form submissions referred to this Pact proposal or reflected its individual recommendations.

## 10. How the consultation was taken into account

The consultation was taken into account in the following phases of the preparation of the new EU Disability Strategy: problem definition, setting general and specific objectives as well as formulating the options.

## 11. Tables relating to thematic areas

<b>"effective" or "very effective"</b>	<b>Developing legislation to ensure accessibility of</b>
71%	the built environment
69%	transport
66%	Internet and communication technologies
59%	other goods and services

<b>"effective" or "very effective"</b>	<b>Measuring accessibility of</b>
60%	the built environment
59%	transport
58%	Internet and communication technologies
55%	other goods and services

<b>"effective" or "very effective"</b>	<b>Developing guidelines and standards to promote accessibility of</b>
58%	Internet and communication technologies
57%	transport
55%	the built environment
49%	other goods and services

<b>"effective" or "very effective"</b>	<b>Funding for research on accessibility of</b>
56%	Internet and communication technologies
52%	transport
51%	the built environment
51%	other goods and services



<b>"effective" or "very effective"</b>	<b>Accessibility – other measures</b>
78%	Greater involvement of persons with disabilities in developing accessibility standards
75%	Increasing availability of assistive technologies
75%	Regular checks of accessibility of goods and services
69%	Increasing use of "universal design" or "design for all"
68%	Supporting the development of the assistive devices industry
65%	Providing know-how to support application of the "reasonable accommodation" principle

<b>"useful" or "very useful"</b>	<b>Employment – usefulness to persons with disabilities in seeking employment</b>
88%	Providing assistive technologies
87%	Increasing accessibility of workplaces
86%	Fighting discrimination related to recruitment, employment and career advancement
86%	Raising awareness of the potential of persons with disabilities among employers
86%	Better accessibility of standard technologies and digital content
83%	More and better labour market support services
82%	Enforcing the obligation to make reasonable accommodation for disabled persons at the workplace
77%	Reducing financial risks for persons with disabilities entering or leaving the labour market
77%	Providing training to job-seekers with disabilities
74%	Promoting opportunities for self-employment

<b>"clearly" or "very much"</b>	<b>Education - expected improvement equal opportunities for Persons with disabilities</b>
90%	Increasing the availability of accessible learning material, including electronic material and assistive technologies
89%	Increasing the accessibility of educational buildings
88%	Awareness-raising activities in the general education system to increase social acceptance and understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities
86%	Providing specific training for teachers to accommodate students with disabilities in their classrooms
84%	Increasing human and financial resources to bring students with disabilities into the general and higher education system
83%	Facilitating mechanisms for students with disabilities to move from special to general education



<b>82%</b>	Adapting adult education and training programmes to the needs of persons with disabilities
<b>73%</b>	Providing scholarships and grants for persons with disabilities

<b>"clearly" or "very much"</b>	<b>Healthcare - expected improvement in equal opportunities for persons with disabilities</b>
<b>86%</b>	Prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities in the provision of health insurance
<b>83%</b>	Providing training for health professionals on health needs of persons with disabilities
<b>76%</b>	Developing more health services for special needs of persons with disabilities
<b>64%</b>	Preventive action to reduce the incidence of disabilities

<b>"clearly" or "very much"</b>	<b>Free movement – degree of helpfulness in ensuring persons with disabilities enjoy the right to free movement</b>
<b>85%</b>	Mutual recognition of disability status across the Member States
<b>80%</b>	Harmonisation of criteria used by the Member States to assess the degree of disability
<b>78%</b>	Portability of disability-related benefits and services when moving to another Member State
<b>77%</b>	Work towards similar disability related benefits across the Member States

<b>"clearly" or "very much"</b>	<b>Independent living – expected contribution to increasing the ability of the disabled to live independently</b>
<b>90%</b>	Avoiding the placement of persons with disabilities in residential institutions by increasing provision of community-based services
<b>90%</b>	Avoiding the placement of persons with disabilities in residential institutions by increasing access to assistive technologies that can support the disabled to live independently
<b>85%</b>	Awareness-raising activities to make the right of people with disabilities to live in the community more socially acceptable
<b>80%</b>	Avoiding the placement of persons with disabilities in residential institutions by supporting families and other informal carers
<b>80%</b>	Setting minimum quality standards for care services
<b>75%</b>	Providing persons with disabilities with personal budgets
<b>74%</b>	Retraining and requalification of staff working in institutions to provide them with skills for community-based care
<b>49%</b>	Developing action plans to close down residential institutions



<b>"useful" or "very useful"</b>	<b>Usefulness in enabling persons with disabilities to participate in democratic and public life</b>
<b>89%</b>	Ensuring that elections and voting, including related material, are fully accessible
<b>88%</b>	Providing policy-related information in accessible formats
<b>84%</b>	Media action to improve the image of persons with disabilities
<b>81%</b>	Providing support to disability NGOs

<b>"useful" or "very useful"</b>	<b>Recreation and leisure - usefulness in enabling persons with disabilities participation</b>
<b>92%</b>	Ensuring that cultural venues and monuments and sites of cultural value are accessible
<b>92%</b>	Ensuring that sports-related facilities are accessible
<b>88%</b>	Ensuring that sports staff concerned are trained in disability issues
<b>87%</b>	Providing cultural material and programmes in accessible formats
<b>84%</b>	Providing funding to address disability issues in sports
<b>80%</b>	Supporting the development of creative activities for persons with disabilities

<b>"useful" or "very useful"</b>	<b>Usefulness in ensuring persons with disabilities enjoy an adequate standard of living and social protection</b>
<b>90%</b>	Compensating for extra costs and burdens caused by disability in everyday life
<b>90%</b>	Expanding job opportunities
<b>86%</b>	Providing adequate disability pensions
<b>85%</b>	Expanding public housing opportunities for persons with disabilities
<b>82%</b>	Measuring the situation of persons with disabilities when gathering data on the groups most vulnerable to poverty

<b>"useful" or "very useful"</b>	<b>Usefulness in guaranteeing freedom and dignity for persons with disabilities</b>
<b>89%</b>	Preventing violence, ill-treatment and abuse of persons with disabilities by developing practical tools e.g, supporting services, training for families and formal carers
<b>88%</b>	Developing legislation to ensure persons with disabilities have full legal capacity
<b>88%</b>	Raising awareness of the situation of persons with disabilities
<b>88%</b>	Supporting people with disabilities in decision-making e.g, in financial transactions and medical treatment options by developing practical tools



<b>86%</b>	Preventing violence, ill-treatment and abuse of persons with disabilities by developing legislation e.g, criminal law
<b>86%</b>	Monitoring relevant legal practice in the Member States
<b>81%</b>	Supporting people with disabilities in decision-making e.g, in financial transactions and medical treatment options by developing legislation