



## EUROPEAN UNION OF THE DEAF

A European Non-Governmental Organisation in official liaison with European Parliament, European Commission and the Council of Europe

### **EUD's contribution to the European Commission [public consultation](#) "Have your say on reinforcing Social Europe": recommendations for European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan – Principle 17: deaf perspective**

#### **Who are we?**

Based in Brussels, Belgium, EUD is a not-for-profit European non-Governmental organisation (ENGO) whose members comprise of National Associations of the Deaf (NADs). It is the only supranational organisation representing Deaf people at European level and is one of the few ENGOs representing associations from all of the 27 EU Member States, in addition to Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. EUD is a full member of the European Disability Forum (EDF) and is a Regional Co-operating Member of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) to tackle issues of global importance, and also has participatory status with the Council of Europe (CoE).

#### **Why the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights is essential for deaf Europeans?**

Implementation of the Principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights is fundamentally important for deaf Europeans. Since the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights (Social Pillar or the Pillar) in November 2017, EUD has undertaken various actions to advocate for the implementation of the Pillar on the national level by producing [a toolkit to be used on the national level](#) and by raising awareness on the Pillar and the European Semester process among its member organisations (National Associations of the Deaf).

For deaf Europeans the implementation of [Principle 17](#) of the Pillar is critical. and EUD very much welcomes the fact that the implementation of the Principle 17 will mostly be supported by the upcoming post-2020 European Disability Strategy, however, highlights that setting out the specific measures for the implementation of the Principle 17 in the Action Plan remains very important as well.

#### **Implementation of Principle 17 of the European Pillar of Social Rights**

EUD highlights that for persons with disabilities a comprehensive and ambitious implementation of Principle 17 is essential. The Action Plan must define concrete targets and timelines and clearly outline how the principle will be implemented. EUD emphasises that it is essential to ensure that the European Pillar of Social Rights is not just a statement of principles or good intentions, but actually strengthens social rights by means of concrete and specific tools, legislation, policy-making mechanisms and financial instruments, so that it has a positive impact on people's lives.

Principle 17 states that *‘People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs.’* In this section we will propose concrete recommendations how to implement the Principle 17 for deaf Europeans.

1. *Principle 17: ‘People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, **services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society**, and a work environment adapted to their needs’*

Services that enable deaf persons to participate in the labour market and in society are mostly linked to the services that grant them an access to sign language interpreting services. Provision of sign language interpreting services means provision of services that allow an access through sign language, which provides deaf people with full barrier-free access to information, communication and knowledge in the labour market and in society. EUD proposes for the Action Plan to deliver guidelines for the Member States on a social protection floor for persons with disabilities that would guarantee them an adequate standard of living.

From the perspective of deaf persons, this would mean that the EU should encourage Member States to ensure minimum, meaningful access to sign language interpreting services for deaf Europeans.

- **To implement Principle 17 for deaf persons, the EU should promote that an adequate provision of sign language interpretation services that are necessary for the participation in the labour market and in society is ensured and that the costs related to such services are covered in the EU Member States. This would fully enable deaf individuals to meaningfully participate in all areas of life—both in private and in public.**
- **The implementation of Principle 17 must aim at ensuring that all deaf persons in the EU are provided by public authorities with the harmonised minimum number of hours of sign language interpretation which would enable them to meaningfully participate in all areas of life and would ensure adequate living conditions.**
- **Importantly, the EU should set out harmonised standard on sign language interpretation ensuring that such interpretation would be of high quality, which would not be a pre-determined value, but contextually determined.**

2. *Principle 17 ‘People with disabilities have the right to income support that ensures living in dignity, services that enable them to participate in the labour market and in society, and **a work environment adapted to their needs’***

Currently, due to the lack of different, reasonable accommodation and accessibility measures many people with disabilities do not have meaningful access to employment, despite their willingness and ability to be a part of the labour market.

Implementation of Principle 17 should aim at ensuring that all persons with disabilities, **with their different reasonable accommodation needs, have meaningful access to employment.**

- **The EU should outline what different forms of reasonable accommodation measures are necessary for different groups of people with disabilities. It should be clearly explained what the minimum standards for the measures that the**

**employers are responsible for providing, as well as outlining what support Member States and the EU should be offering to employers in this process. Organisations of persons with disabilities must play a key role when defining such minimum standards.**

### **Implementation of all principles of the Pillar: ensuring strong synergy with the post 2020 European Disability Strategy**

EUD highlights that in order to ensure full implementation of the Social Pillar, the Action Plan must ensure strong synergies with existing and future thematic strategies which fall under different Social Pillar principles, such as the Youth Guarantee, Child Guarantee, European Disability Strategy, Gender Equality Strategy, the EU Strategic Framework on Roma Equality and Inclusion and the LGBTI+ Equality Strategy.

### **Social Scoreboard**

Importantly EUD highlights that it is essential for the Action Plan to ensure that persons with disabilities are visible through the **Social Scoreboard**. Currently persons with disabilities are invisible through the [indicators of the Social Scoreboard](#) therefore the measuring of the implementation of the Pillar for persons with disabilities is impossible.

- **EUD recommends that the Action Plan updates the Social Scoreboard and ensures that indicators on the levels of inclusion of on persons with disabilities are included.**

### **Contact details**

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