

European Day of Persons with Disabilities 2021

Speeches in easy-to-read

Easy-to-read is information that is written in a simple way so that people with intellectual disabilities and all people can understand it. You can find more information about easy-to-read at www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read.



In this booklet
you can find some speeches of the event
in easy-to-read.

If there are words you do not understand
in the text or in the speeches,
do not worry.

All the difficult words in the text are marked in **bold**
and you can find their explanation at the end of this booklet.

Day 1: Thursday 2 December 2021

Opening session

In this session,
the speakers welcome people at the event
and talk about the discussions that will take place during the event.

Speech of Helena Dalli



Helena Dalli is Commissioner for Equality
at the European Commission.

A Commissioner is a person
who is responsible for a field of work

at the European Commission.

Helena Dalli talks about the **EU Disability Rights Strategy**.

The strategy describes what problems people with disabilities face in the European Union.

The strategy says what the European Union will do to help with these problems:

AccessibleEU will bring together ideas and tools to improve access to places, services, information.

The European Disability Card is a small document, like an ID (identity card).

The card says that the person has a disability.

The Disability Card makes it easier for people to travel across the EU and use services for people with disabilities.

The European Commission wants the card to be used in all EU countries.

The Disability Platform is organised by the European Commission.

The Platform is a new place for countries in the EU, disability organisations, and the European Commission to work together.

A campaign will promote the EU Disability Rights strategy in 2022.

The campaign will show how the EU helps people with disabilities to have the same opportunities as everyone else.

Speech of Yannis Vardakastanis

Yannis Vardakastanis is the president



of the 'European Disability Forum'.

This is an organisation
of people with disabilities
in Europe.

COVID-19 had a huge impact on people with disabilities
and even more on:

- Those who were already poor or left out,
- Those who live in **institutions** away from the community,
- Those who do not have a job,
- Those who cannot go around
because things in society are not **accessible**,
- Children with disabilities who are not allowed to go to school
with all other children.

The **European Union** gave money to its countries
to be able to protect people from COVID-19.

They should help people with disabilities too.

Sadly, most countries in Europe did not take into account
the needs of people with disabilities
in their plans against COVID-19.

This must change.

Countries should:

- Talk with people with disabilities and their organisations,
- Understand their needs,
- Take them into account in their work against COVID-19.

With COVID-19,

it is even more necessary than before that:

1. People with disabilities have access to good health care.
2. People with disabilities have access to technology and the internet as many things are now happening online.
3. Children with disabilities go to school with other children.

We will discuss these 3 important topics at this event.

Session 1:

Access to health care for people with disabilities

In this session,

the discussion focuses on access to health care for people with disabilities.

People with disabilities have the right to get good health care like all other people.

For example, they can go to the hospital and get the right treatment when they are sick.

Sadly, many people with disabilities in Europe say that they do not get the right health care.

Speech of Rodolfo Cattani



Rodolfo Cattani is part of the 'European Disability Forum'. This is an organisation of people with disabilities in Europe.

The right to health is very important for all people. People with disabilities should have access to health care like everyone else.

In practice, many people with disabilities do not have access to health care as they should because:

- Health care may not be **accessible** for people with disabilities. For example, doctors' offices and hospitals may have steps so people in wheelchairs cannot go in.
- People who work at hospitals may not know how to deal with the needs of people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities often must pay much more money for health care than other people.
- In some countries, hospitals may not even accept

people with disabilities.

Also, women with disabilities often get sterilised against their will. That means they put them through an operation that makes it impossible for them to have a baby. This is against the **UN Convention** and it must stop.

The **European Union** and its countries should work to:

- Make health care accessible to all people with disabilities,
- Make it possible for people with disabilities to access health care in any country of the European Union with no extra costs,
- Collect information and numbers that show how the situation is for people with disabilities,
- Ask for the views of people with disabilities and their organisations when they make laws and plans for better health care.

Speech of Stefan Schreck



Stefan Schreck works for the **European Commission**. His work focuses on health care in the **European Union**.

For the European Commission,
access to health care for all people is a priority.

The European Commission works
with all the countries of the European Union
to make sure all people who live in them
have access to good health care.

Amongst others, the European Commission made:

- The 'EU4Health' programme
This is a programme that aims to make health care better
everywhere in the European Union.

- The 'Europe's Beating Cancer Plan'
Cancer is a serious disease.
Many people in Europe have cancer and some die from it.
With this plan, the European Commission aims to:
 - Prevent cancer,
 - Make sure people who have cancer
have access to good health care,
 - Make sure people who have cancer
and people who have recovered from cancer
can still enjoy a good life.

People with disabilities may suffer from cancer too
so they should be part of this plan.

The European Commission wants to work together with people with disabilities and their organisations in order to:

- Understand the difficulties they have to access health care,
- Take action to make things better for them.

Session 2:

People with disabilities and the digital transition

In this session,
the discussion focuses on people with disabilities
and the 'digital transition'.

'Digital transition' or 'digitalisation' means
that today we do many things in our lives
using technology or the internet.

For example, we can work on the computer, do our classes online
and pay our bills on our phone.

But some people with disabilities do not have access to the internet
to be able to do all these things online.

Speech of Lisa Waddington



Lisa Waddington is a professor
at the University of Maastricht
in the Netherlands.

She is an expert on the European law
for the rights of people with disabilities.

The internet has made many things much easier for people.
It could make things easier for people with disabilities too.
For example, if they have access to technology and the internet,
they can work and study online.

But some people with disabilities do not have access

to technology and the internet.

Or they may not get support to learn how to use them.

The **European Union** and its countries have made some important laws and plans to promote access to technology for all people.

Sadly, most of these plans do not take into account the needs of people with disabilities as they should.

The European Union and its countries should:

- Make sure that people with disabilities have access to technology and the internet like everyone else.
- Hear the views of people with disabilities and their organisations. This way they can understand their needs and work to make technology **accessible** for them.

Speech of Humberto Insolera



Humberto Insolera is part of the 'European Disability Forum'. This is an organisation of people with disabilities in Europe.

Using technology and the internet can make many things in our lives easier. But it can also create problems if technology and the internet are not **accessible**.

The **European Union** should make sure that people with disabilities have access to technology and the internet like everyone else.

They should not be left out because technology is not accessible or because it is too expensive for them to use it.

With **COVID-19**, we spend more time at home using technology and the internet. We spend much of our free time in front of our screens watching the news, our favourite movies and series.

People with disabilities should have the chance to access all these programmes too.

For that to happen, all programmes, websites, televisions and platforms like Netflix should be accessible.

For example, news and other programmes should be available in sign-language so that people who are deaf can understand them too.

To make these things accessible
the European Union has made two important laws:

- The 'European Audiovisual Media Services Directive'.
Amongst others,
this law says that programmes, movies and series
that we watch on television or platforms like Netflix,
should be accessible for people with disabilities.
- The 'European Accessibility Act'.
Amongst others,
this law says that televisions and platforms we use
to watch programmes, movies and series
should be accessible for people with disabilities.

In all this work,
the European Union should not forget
to involve people with disabilities and their organisations.
Nothing should be decided about us without us!

Speech of Jakob Rosin



Jakob Rosin is the president of the Estonian Blind Union. This is the organisation of blind people in Estonia.

Estonia has worked a lot to make many things and services online **accessible** for people with disabilities.

Estonian people with disabilities can do many things online from anywhere they are in the world.

For example, they can sign a document on their phones or attend important meetings online and represent themselves from distance.

However, there are still websites and online services that are not accessible.

For example, the website that Estonian people needed to use to get their proof of vaccination against **COVID-19** was not accessible in the beginning so they could not use it for a long time.

It is important that the **European Union** keeps working to make all public websites in Europe accessible for people with disabilities.

Explanation of difficult words

- **European Union**

The European Union is a group of 27 countries in Europe that work together to make things better for their people.

- **European Commission**

The European Commission is the body of the European Union that suggests laws that can make a big difference in people's lives. It also does all the day-to-day work of the European Union.

- **European Disability Strategy 2021 - 2030**

The European Disability Strategy is the plan of the European Union about its work for people with disabilities in the next 10 years.

- **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

This is an agreement that many countries in the world have signed.

It says what rights people with disabilities have and how countries can protect these rights.

In short, we call it 'the UN Convention' or 'the CRPD'.

The European Union and all its countries have signed the UN Convention.

That means that they have agreed to work to make it happen and to protect the rights of all people with disabilities.

- **Accessible**

Things are accessible when they are easy to use for people with disabilities.

For example,

when buildings have ramps that people in wheelchairs can use to get in.

Or when information is easy to read

and people with intellectual disabilities can understand it.

- **Access City Award**

It is a prize the European Commission gives every year to cities that work hard to be more accessible.

A city is accessible when all people can live in it and use all things and services without problems.

- **Institutions**

Institutions are places where people with disabilities often live away from other people and from the community.

Often people who live in institutions must follow the rules of the institution and cannot decide for themselves.

- **COVID-19**

‘COVID-19’ is a new disease that can pass easily from one person to another.

We also call it ‘coronavirus’ or ‘pandemic’.

Sadly, too many people in the world are now ill from coronavirus.

Most of the people recover but many people die from it.

To help countries fight COVID-19, the European Union will give them extra money.

The countries have to make a plan to say how they will use this money to help their people.

We call this plan ‘Recovery Plan’.

There are more explanations of difficult words online in English, French, German and Spanish at:

<https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read/#explanations>

More information

If you have any questions
about the European Day of Persons with Disabilities,
you can send us an email at:

EMPL-EDPD-ACA@ec.europa.eu.