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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Empowering persons with disabilities to fully participate in society, by
increasing their mobility
Information from the Presidency

Delegations will find attached the conference conclusions on the above subject, with a view to the meeting of the EPSCO Council on 6 December 2021 (Any Other Business item).

“Empowering persons with disabilities to fully participate in society by increasing their mobility and accessibility”

CONFERENCE CONCLUSIONS

The Slovenian Presidency Conference “Empowering persons with disabilities to fully participate in society by increasing their mobility and accessibility”, which was held on 20 November 2021, focused on the mobility and accessibility for persons with disabilities, which reflected in the contributions leading to awareness raising of the rights of persons with disabilities and as a guide for the future systemic policy in the European Union and the member states, relating to persons with disabilities.

An example of best practice was presented at the introduction of the Conference on the inclusion of the Slovenian sign language and the language of the deafblind in the Constitution and has made Slovenia the fifth country in Europe after Austria, Finland, Hungary and Portugal to recognise sign language as a constitutional category and the first country with the right to use the language of the deafblind enshrined in its Constitution.

The focus of the first debate was about raising awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, in particular in the area of accessibility and multimodal mobility. Two successful projects were presented that could be translated into an integrated approach to the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the new EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030. Later in the discussion, the non-discriminatory use of transport for persons with disabilities was addressed.

The second discussion focused entirely on the EU Disability Card project, which is one of the most important elements of the new EU Strategy. The speakers presented their experiences in developing and implementing the project and explained why it is important to extend it, since the EU Disability Card presents a bridge that connects the EU member states by ensuring access to its benefits across member states for persons with disabilities. At the same time, it facilitates the integration of persons with disabilities in society at both the national and EU level. The EU Disability Card project is also important in terms of education and awareness-raising about persons with disabilities, their abilities, needs, preferences and lifestyles and, above all, as it enables persons with disabilities to travel and thus develop as individuals. That is why the final impact of the EU Disability Card is also part of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the new EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030.

The speakers participating in the final, third discussion presented the purpose of the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030, which is based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and covers all aspects of life of persons with disabilities, including times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and ensures their equal integration in society in all spheres of life, including access to goods, digitalisation, information and communication technology, education, employment, health, and thus overall participation in society.

Main conclusions:

- To foster multimodal mobility and accessibility, it was proposed that projects in this area should be regulated in a systemic way and in a way that the European Union and the Member States contribute to greater accessibility for persons with disabilities and enable them to participate in society even more.
- European Commission should continue to promote the EU Disability Card, encouraging its expansion to all EU member states, as this is the only way to achieve and fulfil the card's intended purpose.
- All EU member states should follow and implement the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021–2030, and thereby contribute the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- Participants have welcomed the Slovenian example of including the sign language for the deaf and hard of hearing and the deafblind into the national Constitution as a good example, that should be considered also by other Member States