

Brussels, 5 January 2011

EU ratifies UN Convention on disability rights

Following formal ratification, it is the first time in history the EU has become a party to an international human rights treaty – the United Nation's (UN) Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities. The Convention aims to ensure that people with disabilities can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with all other citizens. It is the first comprehensive human rights treaty to be ratified by the EU as a whole. It has also been signed by all 27 EU Member States and ratified by 16 of these (see Annex). The EU becomes the 97th party to this treaty. The Convention sets out minimum standards for protecting and safeguarding a full range of civil, political, social, and economic rights for people with disabilities. It reflects the EU's broader commitment to building a barrier-free Europe for the estimated 80 million people with disabilities in the EU by 2020, as set out in the European Commission's disability strategy ([IP/10/1505](#)).

"Good news for the new year and a milestone in the history of human rights as it is the first time ever that the EU becomes a party to an international human rights treaty. I would like to thank the Belgian Presidency for their excellent cooperation, which allowed the swift and successful conclusion of the ratification process," said European Commission Vice-President Viviane Reding, the EU's Justice Commissioner. "The UN Convention promotes and protects the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities. In November, the Commission presented an EU disability strategy for the next ten years: concrete measures with a concrete timeline to implement the UN Convention. I now call on all remaining Member States that have not yet ratified the Convention to do so swiftly. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that people with disabilities do not face additional obstacles in their everyday lives."

The EU signed the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities on its opening day for signature on 30 March 2007 ([IP/07/446](#)). It has since been signed by all 27 EU countries and a further 120 states worldwide. Following completion of the ratification procedure, the EU as a whole is now the first international organisation which has become a formal party to the Convention (as are 16 EU Member States too).

The Convention commits parties to making sure that people with disabilities fully can enjoy their rights on an equal basis with all other citizens ([MEMO/10/198](#)). For the EU, this means ensuring that all legislation, policies and programmes at EU level comply with the Convention's provisions on disability rights, within the limits of EU responsibilities. Ratifying countries, such as the EU Member States, should take action in the following areas: access to education, employment, transport, infrastructures and buildings open to the public, granting the right to vote, improving political participation and ensuring full legal capacity of all people with disabilities.

Parties that have ratified the Convention will need to periodically inform the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities about the measures taken to implement the Convention. The Committee, composed of independent experts, will highlight any shortcomings in the Convention's implementation and make recommendations.

The [EU's disability strategy for 2010-2020](#) focuses on empowering people with disabilities to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others and on removing obstacles in everyday life. It also aims to help implement the provisions of the Convention in practice, both at EU and national level. The strategy complements and supports action by the Member States which have the main responsibility in disability policies.

Background

One in six people in the European Union – around 80 million – have a disability that ranges from mild to severe. Over one third of people aged over 75 have disabilities that restrict them to some extent. These numbers are set to rise as the EU population grows progressively older. Most of these people are all too often prevented from fully participating in society and the economy because of physical or other barriers, as well as discrimination.

Further information

- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:
<http://www.un.org/disabilities>
- Justice Directorate-General Newsroom:
http://ec.europa.eu/justice/news/intro/news_intro_en.htm
- Homepage of Viviane Reding, Commission Vice-President responsible for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship:
http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/reding/index_en.htm

ANNEX

State of play UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Dates of signatures and ratification				
Country	Signature		Ratification*/Formal confirmation	
	UN Convention	Optional Protocol	UN Convention	Optional Protocol
AT	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	26 September 2008	26 September 2008
BE	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	2 July 2009	2 July 2009
BG	27 September 2007	18 December 2008		
CY	30 March 2007	30 March 2007		
CZ	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	28 September 2010	
DE	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	24 February 2009	24 February 2009
DK	30 March 2007		24 July 2009	
EE	25 September 2007			
EL	30 March 2007	27 September 2010		
ES	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	3 December 2007	3 December 2007
FI	30 March 2007	30 March 2007		
FR	30 March 2007	23 September 2008	18 February 2010	18 February 2010
HU	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	20 July 2007	20 July 2007
IE	30 March 2007			
IT	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	15 May 2009	15 May 2009
LT	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	18 August 2010	18 August 2010
LU	30 March 2007	30 March 2007		
LV	18 July 2008	22 January 2010	1 March 2010	31 August 2010
MT	30 March 2007	30 March 2007		
NL	30 March 2007			
PL	30 March 2007			
PT	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	23 September 2009	23 September 2009
RO	26 September 2007	25 September 2008		
SE	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	15 December 2008	15 December 2008
SI	30 March 2007	30 March 2007	24 April 2008	24 April 2008
SK	26 September 2007	26 September 2007	26 May 2010	26 May 2010
UK	30 March 2007	26 February 2009	8 June 2009	7 August 2009
EU	30 March 2007		23 December 2010	

* Ratification means the deposit of the instrument of ratification with the Secretary-General of the United Nations

** Internal procedures achieved, however the instrument of formal confirmation not yet deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations