

P7_TA-PROV(2013)0579

Women with disabilities

European Parliament resolution of 11 December 2013 on women with disabilities (2013/2065(INI))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union,
- having regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD), and its entry into force on 21 January 2011, in accordance with Council Decision 2010/48/EC of 26 November 2009 on the conclusion, by the European Community, of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)¹, and in particular to Article 6 thereof on women and girls with disabilities,
- having regard to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979,
- having regard to the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers,
- having regard to Articles 10, 19 and 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,
- having regard to Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation²,
- having regard to the Commission proposal for a Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (COM(2008)0426) and Parliament's position thereon of 2 April 2009³,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 15 November 2010 entitled 'European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe' (COM(2010)0636) and to the documents in the accompanying Commission staff working document entitled 'Initial plan to implement the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 – List of Actions 2010-2015' (SEC(2010)1323 and SEC(2010)1324),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 16 December 2010 entitled 'The European Platform against Poverty and Social Exclusion: A European framework for social and territorial cohesion' (COM(2010)0758),
- having regard to the Commission proposal of 3 December 2012 for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites (COM(2012)0721),

¹ OJ L 23, 27.1.2010, p. 35.

² OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

³ OJ C 137 E, 27.5.2010, p. 68.

- having regard to Council Recommendation 98/376/EC of 4 June 1998 on a parking card for people with disabilities¹,
- having regard to the Council conclusions of 30 November 2009 on ‘Promoting labour market inclusion – Recovering from the crisis and preparing for the post-2010 Lisbon Agenda’,
- having regard to the Council Draft Resolution of 2 June 2010 on a new European Disability Framework (10173/2010) and the Council Resolution on the situation of persons with disabilities in the European Union (2008/C 75/01),
- having regard to the Commission’s report on the functioning and effects of Regulation (EC) No 1107/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air (COM(2011)0166),
- having regard to the ruling of the European Court of Justice in Case C-13/05, regarding Directive 2000/78/EC – Equal treatment in employment and occupation – Concept of disability²,
- having regard to its resolution of 17 June 1988 on sign languages for deaf people³,
- having regard to its resolution of 26 May 1989 on women and disability⁴,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 September 1992 on the rights of mentally disabled people⁵,
- having regard to its declaration of 14 December 1995 on the human rights of disabled people⁶,
- having regard to its resolution of 9 May 1996 on the rights of people with autism⁷,
- having regard to its position of 13 December 1996 entitled ‘Parking card for disabled people – rights of disabled people’⁸,
- having regard to its resolution of 11 April 1997 on equality of opportunity for people with disabilities⁹,
- having regard to its resolution of 4 April 2001 entitled ‘Towards a barrier-free Europe for people with disabilities’¹⁰,

¹ OJ L 167, 12.6.1998, p. 25.

² OJ C 224, 16.9.2006, p. 9.

³ OJ C 187, 18.7.1988, p. 236.

⁴ OJ C 158, 26.6.1989, p. 383.

⁵ OJ C 284, 2.11.1992, p 49.

⁶ OJ C 17, 22.1.1996, p. 196.

⁷ OJ C 152, 27.5.1996, p. 87.

⁸ OJ C 20, 20.1.1997, p. 386.

⁹ OJ C 132, 28.4.1997, p. 313.

¹⁰ OJ C 21 E, 24.1.2002, p. 246.

- having regard to its resolution of 3 September 2003 on the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards a United Nations legally binding instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities’¹,
 - having regard to its resolution of 24 April 2009 on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto²,
 - having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2011 on mobility and inclusion of people with disabilities and the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020³,
 - having regard to its resolution of 8 March 2011 on reducing health inequalities in the EU⁴,
 - having regard to the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020,
 - having regard to the Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2010-2015,
 - having regard to the Second Manifesto on the Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities in the European Union (‘A toolkit for activists and policymakers’),
 - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and the opinions of the Committee on Development and the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (A7-0329/2013),
- A. whereas 80 million people with disabilities living in the European Union are in significant need of an accessible and unprejudiced physical, intellectual and social environment, without barriers, obstacles or stereotypes hindering full enjoyment of their basic human rights and European citizenship; whereas of these 80 million people 46 million are women and girls, who make up 16% of the total female population of the EU;
- B. whereas an estimated one billion people worldwide⁵ live with disabilities and 80 % of them live in developing countries; whereas women with disabilities are multiply disadvantaged, facing significant difficulties in obtaining access to adequate housing, healthcare, public transport, education, vocational training and employment, experiencing inequality in access to credit and other productive resources, and rarely participating in decision-making processes;
- C. whereas the number of elderly people is increasing, which means that the number of people with disabilities, including women, will increase accordingly; whereas, according to the WHO, disability prevalence is higher among women and they are particularly affected by this phenomenon owing to their longer life expectancy, whereas, therefore, the number of women with disabilities will increase in greater proportion;

¹ OJ C 76 E, 25.3.2004, p. 231.

² Texts adopted, P6_TA(2009)0334.

³ OJ C 131 E, 8.5.2013, p.9.

⁴ OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 25.

⁵ World Report on Disabilities 2011, produced jointly by the World Health Organisation and the World Bank.

- D. whereas the increase in the number of people with disabilities will increase the burden on carers, and in particular on family carers, who are mainly women who are forced to work shorter hours and even to leave the labour market in order to care for dependent family members;
- E. whereas the full economic and social participation of women with disabilities is essential if the Europe 2020 strategy is to succeed in creating smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; whereas people with disabilities, women and girls included, must be given fair and equal possibilities and opportunities to participate in the social, economic and political life of the community; whereas people with disabilities still face a variety of barriers to full participation in society, often leading to social exclusion and poverty and limiting their full enjoyment of European citizenship;
- F. whereas discriminations can lead to social isolation and insulation, psychological trauma and unhappiness;
- G. whereas the basis for any association of democratic states is to facilitate the participation of all citizens, whether female or male, in the democratic processes (especially elections), to create, where it is lacking, the infrastructure for such participation, and, therefore, to promote the inclusion of women with disabilities;
- H. whereas all stakeholders shall ensure equal access of women and girls with disabilities to quality public healthcare services, e.g. by improving vocational training and lifelong learning for medical personnel with regard to their specific needs, including those related to sexual and reproductive health;
- I. whereas women with disabilities must enjoy the rights to education, health, employment, mobility, family life, sexual relations, marriage, and motherhood, and the safeguards guaranteeing those rights;
- J. whereas the representation in the public sphere of partnership, sexuality and maternity as experienced by women and girls with disabilities contributes to efforts to combat prejudice, persisting stereotypes and misinformation; whereas such representations can be made in a variety of ways, in particular using artistic and cultural means and the media;
- K. whereas women and girls with disabilities are far more likely to be victims of violence, and particularly of domestic and sexual exploitation, and estimates show that women with disabilities are 1,5 to 10 times more likely to be abused than non-disabled women¹; whereas, depending on whether the women concerned live in the community or in institutions, specific measures must be taken to tackle this inexcusable phenomenon which constitutes a crime and a severe violation of human rights; whereas full access to support services for all women must be provided, because women and girls with disabilities suffer from greater emotional dependency, greater risk of falling victim to all forms of gender-based violence, lower levels of personal and social development, and widespread ignorance regarding sexuality and the innumerable and damaging myths surrounding this issue; whereas figures show that, as a result of increased poverty, sexual exploitation of women with disabilities has become more common;

¹ Human Rights Watch: Human Rights for Women and Children with Disabilities (2012), p. 5.

- L. whereas women and girls with disabilities are exposed to multiple discrimination arising from gender inequalities, age, religion, ethnicity, cultural and social behaviour and disability stereotypes that need to be tackled; whereas women with disabilities are often discriminated against by comparison with men with disabilities when it comes to access to employment and education; whereas the Commission and the Member States can counter this phenomenon by implementing gender mainstreaming in all relevant areas of disability policy;
- M. whereas it is the responsibility of public authorities to set up specialised public services of a high standard, in order to provide women and girls with disabilities with an environment that is adapted in ways that can enable them to fully assume their rights and responsibilities and make decisions for themselves, thus gradually becoming more self-reliant, on an equal footing with people without disabilities; whereas the situation, infrastructure, legislation and support structures vary widely among Member States;
- N. whereas women and girls with disabilities can only enjoy equal rights if gender justice is realised, and if state administrations are as accessible to women with disabilities as to people without disabilities; notes, however, that gender equality practice and implementation vary widely within the EU;
- O. whereas the community of people with one or more physical, mental or intellectual disability is extremely heterogeneous and it is therefore necessary to ensure treatment according to individual needs;
- P. whereas the high rate of unemployment among people with disabilities remains unacceptable; whereas this puts those with disabilities, a vulnerable group more likely to suffer poverty, at a greater risk of social exclusion; whereas women and girls with disabilities encounter greater difficulties in entering the labour market, making it harder for them to lead ordered and independent lives; whereas employment is not only a source of income, but also has become a way of integrating into society by forging links with the wider world and creating a network of interpersonal relationships; whereas women and girls with disabilities often face underpayment; whereas barriers to mobility as well as higher dependence on family members and carers need to be overcome in order to encourage their active participation in education, the labour market and the social and economic life of the community;
- Q. whereas the more resources Member States invest in their integration, the more successful women with disabilities are in terms of living independent lives allowing them to develop their skills;
- R. whereas women with disabilities who come from more disadvantaged sections of society have had fewer opportunities to develop their skills and fulfil their potential by exercising self-reliance;
- S. whereas the economic crisis and the cuts in public health care and social services in most Member States are having detrimental consequences for vulnerable groups and in particular for women and girls with disabilities; whereas they were at great risk of poverty already before the crisis; whereas these austerity policies are translated into less special education and support personnel for people with disabilities, less social support for carers, lower welfare benefits for people with disabilities, reduced funding for institutions and organisations which help them, and restrictions on their access to public-sector

employment, all of which has had a severe impact on the lives of women with disabilities and on their prospects for independence;

- T. whereas there is a strong relationship between mobility, disability and social inclusion, especially with regard to freedom and access to communication (including Braille, sign languages and other alternative forms of communication), freedom of movement in all fields of life and access to services; whereas the full and active participation of disabled people in all aspects of society must be fostered, and they should be given greater access to information and communications technology, domestic automation and online communication solutions;
- U. whereas from the point of view of social inclusion and cost, it would be more desirable if the support provided by Member States were such that women with disabilities could continue to live with their families instead of being institutionalised;
1. Stresses the importance of inclusion for all EU citizens regardless of any physical, intellectual, psychosocial or mental impairments, and calls for special targets to be set to ensure this in order to improve the quality of life of people with disabilities and to enhance a coherent policy through the full participation of all; stresses that strategies, policies and legislative initiatives to ensure non-discrimination and equal opportunities must be drawn up with the active collaboration of all stakeholders involved, including women with disabilities;
 2. Insists that disability policies should be gender mainstreamed and underlines the importance of mainstreaming gender disability in gender policies, programmes and measures to strengthen the recognition and understanding of the intersectionality of gender and disability in the EU and in the Member States' legislation and policy; considers that women with disabilities should be invited to serve on the appropriate bodies as consultants, advisers, or experts; regrets the fact that the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 does not include an integrated gender perspective or a separate chapter on gender-specific disability policies; regrets likewise that the Strategy for Equality between women and men 2010-2015 does not specifically address the issue of disability, despite the fact that women with disabilities often find they are at a greater disadvantage than men with disabilities and are more often at risk of poverty and social exclusion;
 3. Urges those Member States that have not yet ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol to do so in order that it may be fully implemented;
 4. Highlights the fact that numerous studies have shown that women with disabilities suffer double discrimination on grounds both of their gender and their disability, and emphasises that the overlap of such discrimination has particularly negative effects on women and girls with disabilities; calls on the Commission and the Member States, given the current lack of specific provisions, to incorporate provisions for women with disabilities in the social protection system;
 5. Reminds governments that discrimination on the grounds of disability is forbidden, and calls on the Member States to make more ambitious efforts to remove the remaining obstacles;

6. Recalls that the inclusion and participation of women and girls with disabilities can only be achieved if their movement in a physical and social environment unhindered by barriers is facilitated, and calls for efforts to that end;
7. Stresses the role played by self-help associations in bringing together people, and particularly women, who act as carers for disabled members of their family or close circle of friends, as well as the awareness-raising work carried out by these associations;
8. Highlights the importance of optimising the use of EU funding instruments, particularly the Structural Funds, in order to promote accessibility and non-discrimination regarding persons with disabilities, paying particular attention to women, who often face multiple discrimination, and to action to increase the visibility of funding opportunities for measures of this kind in post-2013 programmes;
9. Maintains that information about available services for citizens (education, health, justice, transport, dealings with the authorities, etc) has to be provided in every possible language, form, and format in a simple and secure way; points out that when services of this kind are offered in the form of telephone helplines or tele-assistance, those systems must also be accessible to women who are deaf or blind and deaf;
10. Insists that inclusion presupposes that stereotypes are countered by conveying positive images through the use of cultural expressions and awareness-raising campaigns making an objective presentation of images of women with disabilities and exhibiting the vast diversity of roles they can undertake in their everyday life in society, as well as by targeting particular depictions of disabilities in the public sphere, since this is precisely the area that is trailing behind; points out that the media play an important role in disseminating information about women with disabilities and should help bring about a change for the better in the public's attitude towards them, in keeping with the principles and values set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
11. Calls on the Member States to consider sexual violence a serious crime liable to prosecution, especially in the case of women with disabilities and in particular with mental disabilities, in order to reduce the high incidence of reported rapes and sexual harassment and violence in large institutions;
12. Stresses that, in order to prevent the seclusion, abandonment, neglect and segregation of girls with disabilities, it is necessary to launch information campaigns for families, providing them with details of community support facilities for their care and future development and confuting sexist and discriminatory stereotypes; considers that, where children with disabilities cannot be cared for by their immediate families, the authorities should seek to ensure that, as an alternative, they can be cared for within their wider family entourage or, where this is not possible, provide them with community care in a family environment; observes that it is necessary to promote the fostering and adoption of children with disabilities by speeding up bureaucratic formalities and providing suitable information and assistance for the adoptive or foster families;
13. Proposes that, in the sphere of housing, architectural and other environmental considerations and measures must be taken into account in order to hasten a positive shift from 'design for special needs' to 'integral and inclusive design for all citizens'; notes at the same time, however, that the objective of ensuring unimpeded access and the adjustments necessary to achieve this should not be of an architectural nature alone, and that universal

design intended in particular to cater for the basic daily needs of women with disabilities should be a firm objective and a reality; stresses the need to guarantee women with disabilities joint or individual access to social housing schemes and to provide them with grants for the removal of obstacles to their mobility within the home, a facility which should also be extended to those living in rented accommodation; reiterates, therefore, the importance of ensuring that people with disabilities have greater access to decent living conditions, whether this be in terms of housing, mobility, access to public and social services, or participation in public life;

14. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to boost barrier-free accessibility for women and girls with reduced mobility and disabled women and girls to the transport infrastructure, the vehicles and the information and reservation formats; notes that among public transport users with disabilities, women outnumber men; stresses, therefore, that disability and gender mainstreaming are essential with regard to transport policy formulation, implementation and assessment, so as to ensure equal opportunities and prevent discrimination against women with disabilities; therefore recommends their involvement, as being expert in the field, as transport policy consultants;
15. Points out that accessibility to the internet and social media must also be ensured (e.g. readability of all public websites for people with visual impairment, with solutions also focusing on other types of disability that are non-visual, such as the adapting of complex content to the needs of the intellectually disabled and incorporating sign-language videos enabling content to be understood); expresses its concern that accessibility for citizens to government agencies and e-governance is not yet fully ensured; maintains that all people with disabilities, including older people with hearing disabilities, whose number and proportion within society is, according to WHO estimates, especially on the rise, must be given access to digital literacy; welcomes, therefore, the Commission proposal for a directive on the accessibility of public sector bodies' websites;
16. Stresses that democratic participation is part of the fundamental and civil rights of women with disabilities and must be facilitated and guaranteed; calls, therefore, on the Member States and on all relevant public authorities to provide adequately adapted facilities and to empower women's active involvement and participation;
17. Points out that the UN Convention promotes a 'support in decision making' human rights model based on the intrinsic equality and dignity of all people, as opposed to the obsolete system of 'substitution in decision-making'; therefore calls on the Member States to facilitate women with disabilities' representation in the decision-making process, in order to ensure that their interests and rights are protected;
18. Considers that women and girls with disabilities have the right to decide, as far as possible, over their own lives and needs, that they should to be heard and consulted and should be actively encouraged to be independent as far as possible, and highlights the fact that these rights should also be guaranteed in specialised public institutions in an ordinary context of life; stresses that personal assistance is a means of their autonomous living and should therefore be facilitated and promoted for women with disabilities when they receive support in educational or vocational training institutions, at the workplace, within their families, and in the event of pregnancy and maternity;
19. Recalls that every step in a woman's life entails not only opportunities but also responsibilities and that in this sense women often have to endure a disproportionate burden

in terms of pregnancy and childbearing when they have to face the negative implications of pregnancy, especially in cases when fathers neither assume their responsibilities nor contribute to their children's wellbeing and fate, having abandoned their families, recalling that in a family both parents should share the same responsibilities on a basis of equality unless they have previously mutually agreed otherwise;

20. Emphasises that women and girls with disabilities must be informed of their rights so that they can make decisions for themselves, with this information being conveyed in such a way that they can access and understand it, taking into account the different communication methods, media and formats chosen by them and, where applicable, the extent of their mental disability;
21. Notes that, for women and girls with disabilities in particular to receive proper care, there is a need in the medical sector for specific continuous and career-long training on the issue of mental illness/disabilities, in order that these ailments are better detected and patients suffering from these conditions are referred for treatment to the medical services specialising in this field; calls, therefore, on the Member States to ensure special training of all professionals dealing with people with disabilities, and emphasises that during their training health professionals and teachers need to be trained in and made aware of all types of disability, recalling that some are little-known despite their prevalence;
22. Notes that education and professional training for disabled people is being carried out in some of the Member States separately and deficiently; stresses the importance of integrating women with disabilities into standard education and professional systems in all cases where the disability allows for such integration;
23. Underlines the need to support disabled migrant girls and women in order to develop their skills and potential in vocational training and to give them opportunities to obtain suitable employment;
24. Notes that the various stages of a woman's life – pregnancy being one – entail specific challenges which have to be dealt with, and that when women with disabilities do so they should enjoy the same rights and opportunities as are offered to women without disabilities so as to avoid any discouragement from becoming pregnant; furthermore, bearing in mind the additional challenges faced by women with disabilities, stresses that they should be entitled to a longer period of maternity leave in order to adjust to their new situation and build a good family life; notes that forced sterilisation and coerced abortion are forms of violence against women and constitute forms of inhuman and degrading treatment that Member States must eradicate and strongly condemn;
25. Underlines that women and girls with disabilities must be allowed to enjoy their sexuality as freely as people without impairments, and considers that women with disabilities must be able to live and fulfil their wish either to have or not to have children, as women without disabilities do; stresses that for young girls, teenage girls and women with disabilities to take responsibility for their sexual behaviour, they need access to education on sexuality, given by professionals who are experts in the field, such as local public social services educators, and adapted where necessary to the intellectual ability of the disabled woman or girl concerned: they need to know and understand how the body functions (how pregnancy occurs and how to avoid it), how to say no to sexual practices they do not wish to engage in, how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases, etc; points to the need to provide specialised support, including childcare assistance, to women with disabilities, together with their

families, in order that they may enjoy motherhood to the full; maintains that Member States should, in this case, take particularly into account the needs of women with an intellectual impairment;

26. Considers it vital for women and girls with disabilities to have complete access to medical care that meets their particular needs, including gynaecological consultation, medical examinations, family planning, and adapted support during pregnancy; urges the Member States to ensure that their national public healthcare provision includes proper access to these services;
27. Points out the importance of eradicating prejudice, negative perceptions and social stigmas and of encouraging social acceptance, social participation, respect and tolerance and the valuing of human diversity; encourages Member States, in particular, to run awareness-raising campaigns;
28. Stresses that violence against women and sexual violence constitute a serious breach of fundamental rights; underlines, in view of their extreme vulnerability, the need to protect women and girls with disabilities living in care homes and mental hospitals from sexual assault and other forms of physical mistreatment to which they may be subjected, and points with concern to the lack of data on this alarming phenomenon; invites the Member States to investigate how pervasive this problem is by encouraging women with disabilities who are victims to break their silence; encourages the collection of relevant data in a confidential manner, with a view to taking the appropriate measures needed to tackle the problem; calls on the European Institute for Gender Equality to carry out studies on the situation of girls and women with disabilities in regard to violence;
29. Calls on the Member States to prevent harassment in the workplace through effective harassment protocols in accordance with the application of Directive 2000/78/EC, in order to reduce the high frequency of rape and cases of sexual harassment and violence, as well as forced sterilisations, in particular in large institutions;
30. Stresses that in many developing countries significant barriers still exist to escaping violence, to reporting such crimes, and to accessing justice and legal and social services;
31. Calls on the EU and the Member States to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect women and girls with disabilities, both within and outside the home, from all forms of exploitation, violence and abuse and to facilitate their access to justice through the provision of suitable community-based assistance and support, taking into consideration their specific needs, including assistive devices, in order to avoid isolation and confinement in the home; believes that additionally, all such services and programmes should be closely monitored by independent authorities; regrets that EU and national legislation to prevent exploitation, violence and abuse often lacks a focus on disability;
32. Urges the Commission to launch a comprehensive strategy to fight violence against women, as requested by Parliament in several resolutions and most recently in its resolution of 5 April 2011 on priorities and outline of the new EU policy framework to fight violence against women¹; reiterates the need for the Commission to present a legislative criminal law instrument to combat gender-based violence, including the protection of rights of disabled

¹ OJ C 296 E, 2.10.2012, p. 26.

women in cases of sexual abuse and violence, both in public and within their home environment;

33. Emphasises that women with disabilities have to be guaranteed affordable, easy and safe access to justice and that they need to be able, at each stage of the process, to use the verbal communication support systems and technologies they choose, including sign-language interpreters or guides-interpreters for deaf-blind people, in order to ensure they can communicate correctly with police and legal personnel; stresses that as many women with disabilities are highly dependent on the person caring for them, who is also in very many cases the person assaulting and abusing them, independent methods of communication need to be provided so that opportunities exist for disabled women who have been assaulted to file a complaint and be transferred immediately to a temporary full-time care centre until the complaint has been resolved through due legal process; proposes the introduction of trial procedures specifically tailored to meet the needs of women and girls with disabilities, including the provision of NGO assistance; underscores that no barriers may hinder the access of women with disabilities to legal recourse; points out in this respect that effective measures need to be taken so that women with disabilities can access the support they may need in exercising their legal capacity - support that, when required, must be in proportion to their personal needs and abilities, in regard to taking decisions concerning civil and political rights; points out that appropriate effective safeguard measures such as impartial assessment of women's genuine needs by recognised independent experts are also needed in order to prevent third parties or institutions taking advantage of disabled women in the exercise of their legal capacity, and that these measures should be periodically reviewed;
34. Stresses that any sterilisation agreement entered into by a woman or girl with disabilities must be voluntary and must be examined by an impartial third party charged with verifying that the decision was reached fairly and, in the absence of severe medical indications, without enforcement; further stresses that contraceptive methods must never be administered, nor a pregnancy legally terminated, against the will of a woman or girl with disabilities; believes that women and girls with disabilities must have the right to give their informed consent to and to understand all medical practices; considers that if a woman or girl with disabilities is incapable of giving her consent, then consent must always be based on respect for human rights; urges the Member States to prevent and condemn cases of forced sterilisation of women with disabilities;
35. Notes that the terminology used to describe physical impairments and disabilities is different and that the focus should be on disabilities instead of impairments in medical terms, in accordance with the approach chosen in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and followed by the European Court of Justice; stresses that employers should focus on the skills and abilities of employees or applicants with disabilities;
36. Invites the Member States to encourage and ensure access to all types of formal, informal and lifelong education and to the labour market for women and girls with disabilities, as they should be encouraged to follow study courses and use new information and communication technologies, and supported and encouraged to enter the labour market, and highlights that particular talents, views and experiences can enrich working environments considerably; urges the Member States to provide training and information to teachers, trainers, senior civil servants, and employers with a view to implementing social integration processes aimed at utilising the potential and added value of women with disabilities;

proposes effective use of the European Social Fund so as to improve the levels of inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all important areas of life such as access to the labour market, as well as in reducing youth unemployment and poverty;

37. Calls on the Member States to review their legislative and policy framework in respect of the participation of women with disabilities and women with intellectual impairments and mental disabilities in the labour market; stresses the need to adopt active labour-market policy measures for women with disabilities, which offer choices for the individual, including flexible, part-time and full-time employment, and to consider the possibility of stimulating small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through financial incentives and other support for better reconciliation of professional and private life; stresses that women with disabilities should have equal access to financing for the creation of small enterprises and other forms of self-employment, as well as the right to choose between different forms of employment; encourages Member States to draw on best practices around Europe; calls on employers to make reasonable adjustments to workplaces and working conditions in order to place a greater focus on providing incentives for disabled people and actively including them in the labour market, with the possibility for individual cases of discrimination to be heard at labour courts in accordance with Article 5 of Directive 2000/78/EC;³⁸ Notes that current education and training systems do not in general manage to prevent a high dropout rate among people with disabilities, and encourages Member States to pay special attention to boys and girls with disabilities or special needs in an educational context, in order to improve their integration and help reduce the school dropout rate to less than 10 %;
39. Urges the Member States to provide the necessary funding and support for associations and organisations representing people with disabilities, which play a key role in promoting their rights and emphasising the value of their active citizenship and participation in society;
40. Urges the Member States to provide the necessary specialised support to the families of women with disabilities, in the form of training and assistance for carers at every possible level, and to set up respite care institutions enabling people with disabilities to be looked after temporarily whenever families might need such a service;
41. Underlines the existing inequalities among infrastructure facilities of Member States for people with disabilities, stressing the need for mobility within the EU to be guaranteed for women and girls with disabilities, everywhere, and that the Member State of destination must provide such women with the special facilities to which they are entitled, on an equal footing with other people with disabilities;
42. Deplores the fact that the Council has not yet finalised its work on the draft Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, despite Parliament's position given in 2009; calls on the Council to ensure that this legislation is adopted by the end of the current parliamentary term;
43. Emphasises that people with disabilities, and women in particular, are far more likely to slip into poverty (according to the OECD, roughly every fourth person with disabilities lives in poverty); urges the Member States to take adequate measures to prevent women and girls with disabilities from slipping into poverty, and to guarantee that they receive disability allowances and entitlements and have access to social and health services, by devising national appropriate programmes and ensuring their effective implementation through

continuous monitoring and evaluation; notes that the danger of poverty and unemployment is particularly serious when it comes to single mothers with disabled children; points out that the promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities and the fight against the discrimination suffered by children with disabilities and their families constitute a tool which can be used to combat stigmatisation, poverty and social exclusion, and that the link between disability, gender and poverty should be taken into account in all policies to combat poverty and social exclusion;

44. Calls for public health systems to class vulnerable groups as users with special needs and to be equipped with the resources and referral facilities required in order to deliver proper care;
45. Calls for elderly women, who often live alone and are confronted with diseases that bring about disability, to receive special attention through the setting-up of a prevention and assistance programme;
46. Stresses that the introduction of austerity measures in many countries has led to the reduction of welfare benefits and essential services and that, in this regard, women with disabilities are a particularly vulnerable group; stresses also that cutting funding for disabled people and their carers – who are often women – will adversely affect the educational, social and economic needs of women with family responsibilities; therefore calls on the Member States to adopt measures aimed at removing all barriers to efficient, accessible, high-quality and affordable services for women with disabilities;
47. Points out that the lack of affordable, accessible and high-quality care and assistance services for people with disabilities in most Member States, and the fact that care work is not equally shared between women and men, have a direct negative impact on women's ability to participate in all aspects of social, economic, cultural and political life; in this respect insists that special attention be paid to people, often women, caring for people with disabilities and that their commitment be taken into account in accrediting their professional experience also stresses the need to encourage Member States to recognise, in their social security systems and when people retire, the involvement and unpaid work of the carers, generally women, of people with disabilities; stresses that particular attention needs to be paid to these women to ensure that they receive a proper salary and retirement pension; therefore calls on the Commission to come up with a legislative proposal on carers' leave (or filial leave) that allows people to take a period of leave to take care of ill, disabled or impaired family members and/or to stay in employment when taking leave in order to care for dependant family members;
48. Asks the Commission and the Member States to develop large-scale awareness-raising campaigns to make women and girls with disabilities more visible, and highlights the valuable role that mass media and the internet can play in constructing a positive image of women with disabilities and encouraging them to assert their rights;
49. Believes it is vital that Member States ensure that women and girls with disabilities enjoy equality before the law and are entitled to equality of legal protection and legal benefits, free from discrimination of any kind; believes that all discrimination on grounds of disability and gender must be banned, taking into consideration the fact that the confluence of these two factors has an exponential impact on inequality;

50. Urges the Commission, in conducting the mid-term review of its European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 and elaborating the List of Actions 2015-2020 relating thereto, to develop a more gender-sensitive approach;
51. Reiterates that Community policies on disability need to take account of gender equality from the very start, so that inequalities that already exist are not continued or increased during policy development; stresses the need to establish indicators that reflect disability and gender aspects jointly; believes that the lack of indicators makes it difficult to obtain an accurate picture of the situation facing women with disabilities; calls on the Commission to invite women and girls who have disabilities to participate in future studies on women and disability;
52. Calls on the Commission, the Council and the Member States to adopt a horizontal anti-discrimination directive aimed at removing, in all areas of EU competence, the barriers which prevent disabled people, and especially disabled women and girls, from achieving their full potential for social participation and independence;
53. Invites the Member States to support voluntary initiatives supporting human diversity and to provide adequate funding for NGOs dealing with the issue;
54. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to collect detailed and reliable gender-disaggregated statistics for targeted research on the true situation facing people with disabilities, this being imperative for efficient policy design in order to address the intersectionality between gender, disability and violence; believes that women with disabilities should be involved in the collection of such data; also considers that all studies on people with disabilities need to take the gender aspect into account, and studies on women and girls need likewise to take the disability aspect into account;
55. Stresses that diversity enriches society;
56. Notes that human dignity is inviolable and must be respected and protected;
57. Stresses the importance of adopting a gender-sensitive approach to disability in the post-2015 development agenda;
58. Calls on the Commission and the EEAS to mainstream disability in development policy and in projects in a coordinated way, and to promote a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy in the geographic programmes for women with disabilities, aiming to unlock their economic potential; stresses that land reform must ensure gender equality in land ownership, including for women with disabilities;
59. Asks the Commission and the EEAS to put in place monitoring mechanisms to evaluate the impact of their policies on women with disabilities at country level; calls on the EU to support the efforts of partner countries in drafting and implementing employment laws, in compliance with the CRPD and ILO Convention 159;
60. Calls on the Commission to promote initiatives aiming to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to effectively implement international commitments to disability-inclusive development, in line with the objectives of the CRPD; recommends that the EU promote the participation of disabled people's organisations in international and national decision-making processes;

61. Points out that hazardous situations and humanitarian crises adversely affect the safety and security of women and girls with disabilities, reducing considerably their chances of survival; emphasises that women and girls with disabilities are more vulnerable than other people before, during and after the occurrence of hazardous situations such as armed conflicts, occupation of territory, natural disasters and humanitarian crises; stresses that national and international agencies responsible for public health, disaster preparedness, emergency help and humanitarian aid need to be made aware of the rights and specific needs of women and girls with disabilities and of the need to have the human and material resources available to ensure that women and girls with disabilities benefit from universal access and equal opportunities in hazardous and emergency situations, thereby avoiding lack of care and/or unsuitable actions;
62. Emphasises that the EU and its Member States must recognise the importance of promoting international cooperation in order to support national efforts to enforce the right of women and girls with disabilities to benefit fully and on equal terms from all its fundamental rights and freedoms; stresses that international cooperation programmes must be inclusive in regard to women and girls with disabilities, for which reason organisations representing them (mixed or specific) need to be directly involved in the design, development, monitoring and evaluation of cooperation policies implemented at local, national, Community and international level, through the sharing and distribution of information, experience, training programmes and best practice;
63. Emphasises that the EU and its Member States need to promote the inclusion of gender and disability as a cross-cutting dimension in their development cooperation policies, programmes and projects, thereby ensuring that specific projects are devised that promote equal opportunities for people, and in particular women and girls, with disabilities; stresses that the Commission, Parliament, the UN, the specialist agencies and all other international, national and local donor agencies need to make funding for programmes targeting women and girls with disabilities one of their priorities, allocating funds to this in their general programmes and awarding funding to programmes or programme components that target women and girls with disabilities; considers that the EU must include the rights of women and girls with disabilities in its bilateral cooperation and in long-term third-country cooperation with local authorities, offering direct economic support through its multilateral development cooperation policies by means of financial contributions to international organisations, through co-funding with NGOs in the EU and elsewhere in the world, and through policies connected with humanitarian aid;
64. Stresses the importance of encouraging the active involvement of women with disabilities in Europe, through the organisations representing them (especially the European Disability Forum, the European Women's Lobby and their respective national member organisations), in the monitoring of international human rights treaties, supplying relevant information in alternative reports which cross-reference the situation of women and girls with disabilities with their fundamental rights and freedoms;
65. Believes it is essential to ensure that the periodic reports by the EU and its Member States under human rights treaties contain information in relation to each right on women and girls with disabilities, including the current situation de facto and de jure and information on measures to improve their situation and on the difficulties and obstacles they have encountered, especially in rural areas; believes this practice must be extended to all institutions working for the defence of human rights, both within the EU and nationally,

including organisations representing people with disabilities and their families, women in general and women with disabilities;

66. Believes that with regard to changing the situation of women and girls with disabilities, one of the main challenges lies in including disability in all programmes, measures and policies on gender, as well as devising and developing positive action measures to achieve progress for them, given that they are at a disadvantage;
67. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, to the Council of Europe and the UN Secretary-General.