

Yannis Vardakastanis: "EU Parliament lives up to the political rights of persons with disabilities in European elections"

Alejandro Moledo: "It is certain that a new EU Electoral Law will have beneficial spillover effects in national, regional, and municipal elections."

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM, EUROPE, March 30, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Tuesday the 29th of march 2022, the European Parliament Constitutional Affairs Committee adopted a resolution including a proposal for a new EU Electoral Law. The proposed Electoral Law would be a great step forward concerning the political rights of persons with disabilities in the EU, because it ensures the right to vote of all EU citizens, regardless of their legal capacity, and sets out obligations for Member States to improve the accessibility of the European elections.

“ With this report, the European Parliament shows its commitment to a stronger and more inclusive EU democracy.”

Yannis Vardakastanis

The Constitutional Affairs Committee (AFCO) adopted compromise amendments for [the resolution](#) and the [recitals](#) and [articles](#) of a Council regulation laying down the new Electoral Law. Once adopted by the European Parliament in May, it will be submitted to the Council as the final decision will ultimately be taken by Member States.

The text approved by the MEPs includes most of the European Disability Forum (EDF) proposals, namely:

Article 4 reads: “Every Union citizen from 16 years of age, including persons with disabilities regardless of their legal capacity, shall have the right to vote in elections to the European Parliament”.

Article 6 obliges Member States to ensure that people living in closed residential settings will be able to exercise their right to vote.

Article 7 on Accessibility sets out the following provisions:

- 1. Member States shall ensure that all citizens, including persons with disabilities, have equal access to relevant materials, to voting facilities, and to polling stations.
- 2. Based on their national voting systems, Member States shall put in place appropriate arrangements with the aim of facilitating the exercise of the right to vote by persons with disabilities independently and in secret.
- B. Member States shall ensure that persons with disabilities receive, at their request,

assistance in voting by a person of their choice.”

Additionally, articles 8 and 17 also set out accessibility obligations as for postal voting and the electoral campaigns respectively.

“With this report, the European Parliament shows its commitment to a stronger and more inclusive EU democracy. EDF will continue working with its European and national members to make this new Electoral Law a reality, and to ensure that all persons with disabilities enjoy the same political rights as any other citizen, including the right to vote and the right to stand as candidate”, said EDF President, Yannis Vardakastanis. The only aspect in which the Committee fell short was in article 5 on the right to stand as candidate, in which, despite a positive reference in a recital, it does not explicitly guarantee the right to stand for office regardless of legal capacity status. In most EU countries this will keep preventing persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities from becoming political candidates. Having a new EU Electoral Law in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities will inevitably have a positive spill over effect in national, regional, and local elections. EDF will liaise with its national members to advocate for the adoption of this Council regulation that makes EU elections more inclusive for 100 million persons with disabilities.”

Background

There are 14 EU countries in which certain persons with disabilities are deprived of their right to vote. This particularly affects persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities placed under total or partial guardianship. There are only 8 countries in the EU that allow all persons with disabilities without exemptions to stand for office. Besides, millions of persons with disabilities do not engage in the elections because these are not accessible to them, and they cannot vote independently and in secret or, as in two EU countries, cannot freely choose a person of trust to assist them in voting. EDF will soon publish a new issue of its Human Rights Report series bringing comparative information on the political rights of persons with disabilities, highlighting good examples as well as cases that brought substantial change in guaranteeing equal participation in political life, as enshrined in article 29 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

About the European Disability Forum

The European Disability Forum is an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of more than 100 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform that brings together more than 100 representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe. It is run by persons with disabilities and their families. EDF is a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe.

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