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Empowering Inclusion in Europe

Some people are born with one. Some encounter one during their life. Being disabled is a struggle, a process. First, you have to accept it, you must adapt to the conditions and then your surroundings, family, friends and your environment needs to adapt to your disability. Living with a disability is not easy, but feasible somehow. Much has been done to facilitate disabled people's everyday life but there is still room for improvement. It is the duty of us, politicians, to ensure equal chances for everyone so, of course, also for persons with disabilities.

Disabilities are very diverse and nuanced and so are the needs of those concerned. As an Intergroup in the European Parliament, it is our task to represent them, their interests and to fight for their rights and needs. Even though we are from different political parties, parliamentary Groups and Member States, we stand together for this purpose, being the voice of people with disabilities in the European Parliament. We do not just talk, we act.

The Intergroup Commitment

We, the Members of the Disability Intergroup, are engaged in advocating for persons with disabilities. We ensure that their needs and claims are considered in all legislative proposals and in all areas, whether they are directly addressed to people with disabilities or not.

There are more than 100 million people with disabilities in the EU. Some disabilities are visible, and some are not, and we dedicate our efforts to all of them. As Members of the Intergroup, we scrutinise

proposals to see if they are disability-friendly, we organise debates between colleagues and exchanges with other European institutions, submit amendments to European Parliament legislative reports and files, organise and participate in events on disability issues all over Europe.

We meet quarterly but we are in constant contact with each other, with other Members of the European Parliament, with staff and with the European Disability Forum, with whom we work closely.

The Intergroup focuses, among other aspects, on accessibility, that we believe is of high importance. We work to ensure that people with disabilities have guaranteed access to any relevant information, may it be from public institutions or from the private sector. Because, without accessible information, people with disabilities might find barriers to their rights and obligations as a citizen, for example, certain persons with disabilities are deprived of their right to vote in more than ten EU countries.

In general, the Disability Intergroup deals with issues of improvement and change in areas such as health, equal opportunities and rights, social policies and youth. Currently, our main guidance is the European Disability Strategy 2021-2030, a plan that wants to ensure that all people with disabilities can enjoy their rights and have the same opportunities in life as everyone else.

Facilitating Free Movement and Beyond

We are now starting negotiations on the proposal for a European Disability Card and Parking Card. This proposal will facilitate that people with disabilities can fully use their right to free movement in the EU. Each Member State will have to recognise the card issued by another Member State and provide the same treatment, access to services and facilities to the holders of this common EU disability card. However, the Commission's proposal remains limited to people travelling for less than three months. This is not enough. We, as Intergroup, want to go further. We claim that the card grants longer stays, for example for work or when moving to another EU Member State. This is a point that the Intergroup and I would like to improve from the initial proposal.

What is important for me as an MEP and a person with a visual disability myself, is raising awareness, so everyone can understand better what it is like to live with any kind disability and how to cope with them, and at the same time tackle stereotypes and clichés.

Therefore, awareness is key. We believe that it is very important to reach out to the public and explain about the challenges and rights of people with disabilities, and I care a lot about it personally. From

social media to participating in events, disseminating information to combat stereotypes and biases and liaising with media outlets, we take on all actions possible.

Advancing Inclusive Governance

Representation matters as well. Having persons with disabilities in public office and media can influence other persons with disabilities' careers, their engagement with organisations and institutions and their aspirations in general. It all has to start with equal rights in every Member State, in order to enhance their active participation in civil society and politics.

Political parties are in duty as well. They should promote diversity by having a more intersectional approach while setting up their electoral lists. This is what I want for the next European Elections 2024 and any elections, whether local, regional or national. Giving the spotlight to people with disabilities can encourage others to reach institutions, governments and become role models for the generations to come.

This is why it is the duty of us, politicians and Members of the Disability Intergroup, to listen to people with disabilities, find out what their needs are and, I repeat, to be their voice in the European Parliament, so their rights are respected and their inclusion and equal access in all sectors is guaranteed.

As a politician and decision-maker myself, I want to make my contribution to a fairer and more inclusive European Union that guarantees equal opportunities for everyone, and I wish the next mandate continues with all the progress we achieved. We must create an environment of equal treatment, rights, opportunities and chances for people with disabilities and for all, and I will do it for as long as I have the power to.

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active in promoting equal rights, diversity and combating racism across Europe and the EU Institutions and has inclusion and intersectionality as priorities during her mandate.

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