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[Press release](#) | 05.06.2013

Disabilities

EP political groups join forces to support persons with disabilities

Today, the leaders of the main political Groups in the European Parliament announced strong action to support the rights of persons with disabilities in Europe.

The announcement came following a high level meeting between Joseph Daul, Chairman of the EPP Group, **Hannes Swoboda**, President of the S&D Group, **Anneli Jaatteenmaki**, Vice-President of the ALDE Group, **Rebecca Harms**, co-President of the Greens/EFA Group, **Gabriele Zimmer**, President of the GUE/NGL Group, and EDF President **Ioannis Vardakastanis**.

They all signed a [declaration](#) to take up a series of important initiatives aiming at ensuring the full inclusion of persons with disabilities as well as the enforcement of their rights. Among the initiatives are:

- The European Parliament will implement and mainstream the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) through the setting up of cross-Committee;
- The European Parliament will put forward concrete proposals aiming to protect persons with disabilities from the crisis;
- In view of the 2014 European elections, the political groups will ensure the accessibility of their websites, documents and information to persons with disabilities;
- The political groups will push for a strong and ambitious EU legislation on accessibility of goods and services: What is needed is an ambitious, legally binding European Accessibility Act, with strong measures at EU level to improve the accessibility of goods and services of high quality for persons with disabilities.

The European Parliament has already shown its dedication to fight for the rights of persons with disabilities and to combat discrimination of all kinds e.g. by adopting the "Equal Treatment Directive", which is still blocked by Member States in the Council.

The Group leaders jointly expressed their groups' strong commitment:

"It is time to stop thinking that we are dealing only with financial crisis, but also with a social and human rights crisis. We have advocated this for quite a while now. While finding a cure for our ever growing national deficits and public debts, we should also bear in mind that there are millions of people behind these figures and percentages, who are the ones hit the hardest. Particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged

social groups like people with disabilities".

They also agree to hold a meeting such as today's one, including the 'European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities', during each European Parliament's legislature.

"In this time of the crisis, it's more imperative than ever that the European Parliament protects the human rights of European citizens, and especially of the most vulnerable. Persons with disabilities are hit disproportionately hard by the austerity measures in Europe, paying for a crisis they are not responsible for. It's time for the EU to fulfill its commitment to the UN CRPD and to 80 million Europeans with disabilities. Today, together with the Political Groups of the European Parliament, we take a concrete step in this direction", underlines EDF President Ioannis Vardakastanis.

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Rebecca Harms

Member

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