



Discussion on the Future of the European Disability Card Summary Report

Introduction

- EDF started first campaigning for the introduction of a European Disability Card (then known as “European Mobility Card”) in 2011
- The core demand of EDF’s campaign was to establish a Card which is recognized throughout the EU and gives its holders the same disability related rights and discounts as a national of the Member States that the person is visiting
- In 2015, we came closer to putting the idea of a European Disability Card into practice when the European Commission published a call for proposals for a pilot project. 8 EU Member States participated: Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Malta, Romania, and Slovenia.
- The European Commission indicated that the following areas can be included: Culture, Leisure, Sport, and Transport (as previously agreed by the preparatory Project Working Group, where interested Member States representatives together with the European Commission and EDF were discussing the pilot project).
- In March 2021, the new Disability Strategy was published and mentions the European Disability Card as a “Flagship” to be adopted by 2023.

Opening by Ms Emmanuelle Grange, Head of Unit D3, DG EMPL

- European Disability Card is part of new Disability Strategy, the aim is mutual recognition of disability status to facilitate freedom of movement
- The EU Disability Card pilot project was quite successful as confirmed by the [pilot project assessment study](#)
- Recommendations: all sectors in scope should be covered, participation of service providers should be mandatory and follow clear standards; use of card should be monitored; harmonized information about the Card should be ensured; the Card should be complemented with common guidelines on service accessibility; strong identification of participant service providers should be encouraged.
- EU Parking Card: flagship refers to it and it should not be forgotten in the discussion, despite its limits and that technology has hugely progressed, the Parking Card remains a success. It should be kept in mind when considering all options on the Disability Cards. There is no Study on the Parking Card.
- Commission is still in the reflection and analysis phase. Complex initiative because cross-border provision of benefits and services falls under several areas of EU Treaties: anti-discrimination, Freedom of movement of persons and services, Internal Market, Transport, etc.
- Before the 2023 proposal we will have to analyse different options with regards to the EU legal context.

- Possible legislative options
- 1. Combination of Disability Card + Parking Card in a Council Regulation
- 2. Combination of Disability Card + Parking Card in a Commission or Council Recommendation
- 3. Leaving 2 separate Cards and issue Commission or Council Regulation to extend the Disability Card to all Member States
- None of these options should put the Parking Card at risk; another option could be to propose a Regulation for the common model of the Parking Card and a Recommendation on the Disability Card to keep 2 separate cards
- Not sure yet when the proposal will be published and whether there will be an internal Impact Assessment or an external study
- Collecting now information from civil society

Summary report of Session 1 – What areas should the Card cover?

Speakers: Mr Kamil Goungor, Chair of EDF Youth Committee; Ms Anne-Laure LeMerre, International Association of Public Transport (UITP); Mr Goran Kustura, NSIOS

- The Card should cover all aspects of a persons' life, including education, employment, transport, culture, sport, etc.
- The Card should be seen as a tool to implement Human Rights rather than handouts so it can be more ambitious
- Major concern is coordination, i.e. that everyone understands what the Card covers and that communication and information is clear and consistent, and that there is good coordination between economic actors concerned, national and local authorities
- The current scope should be extended to also cover medical care and the transferability of disability benefits
- Commercial benefits could be an add-on at some stage, but not a key criterion in the beginning
- Potential extra benefits for travel, but also parking issues: better to have 2 separate Cards because parking card needs to stay in the vehicle
- Card will be a door-opener
- Needs for subsidies
- Rather positive experience in Belgium with the pilot project

Summary report of Session 2 – What should the Card look like and what have we learned from other Cards?

Speakers: Ms Marthese Mugliette, Malta Federation of Organisations of Persons with Disability; Mr Carlo Castellano, Expert on the European Parking Card, PARK4DIS; Ms Gabriela Humar, Expert on the European Health Insurance Card, DG EMPL, European Commission; Mr Manel Sánchez, European Youth Card association

- In Malta, the pilot project has led to the fact that the national Card is slowly disappearing but in general we found that the European Card should complement the national Card, not substitute it
- Parking Card: It is important to have a solution that can detect and prevent fraud – digital format can be the solution for checking the validity of the card, while an European database of users and an identification system can be the solution for identifying owner

- Health Insurance Card (EHIC): relies on 2 Regulations; coordination between Member States led by the Commission; expert committee developed the concrete format of the Card
- Youth Card: not like the EHIC but it is purely a mobility tool, no legal base. But they have more independence when designing it; eligibility criteria are more flexible – example how a common approach with some flexibility can help to develop a Card for more than 40 countries

Summary report of Session 3 – What is needed to make the Card a success? And how will it be promoted?

Speakers: Ms Saša Mlakar, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Slovenia; Ms Antonia Pavli, Researcher at Observatory on Disability Issues, National Confederation of Disabled People – NCDP; Ms Sotiroula Kythreoti, User of the European Disability Card, Cyprus

- Slovenia: pilot project until 2017, identified needs for continuation. Follow-up project has been launched with funding from the national budget + EU funding and implemented by the National Disability Council of Slovenia (NSIOS) with the Urban Planning Institute. Objectives: operate the website and mobile app, increase number of service providers that use the card, analyse the physical accessibility of the services provided (survey), seminars for service providers, card holders, media, and general public on local, regional, and local level.
- Study on the implementation of the Disability Card: main important elements are the eligibility criteria, cooperation with national DPOs, collaboration of different state agencies and services, application procedure to make it easy for users, which benefits are provided (scope), raising awareness to Persons with Disabilities and service providers, accessibility of the website of the service providers
- User perspective: learned about the Card in an agency that assesses disability, easy to get the Card, took about 4 weeks to apply.
- All MS have ratified the CRPD so they should use the Card to drive inclusion forward; Working together with DPOs to make it a success
- How to promote the Card: accessible website with comprehensive and specific information, promotional events with DPOs, service providers, government agencies etc.; information campaigns;
- Information needs to be clear also when travelling abroad so every country should have website available not only in national languages but also other more commonly spoken EU languages
- Important to raise awareness of invisible disabilities
- Example from Finland: service providers also appreciate the Card because it makes the service provision smoother

Conclusion by Ms Gunta Anča, Secretary General, European Disability Forum

- Important to look at the experiences from the different countries and learn from them, there were a few good practice examples but also what we should avoid
- Cooperation is very important on different levels: of the different Member States, between the different services within the national governments, and between the Disabled Persons' Organisations
- Need to raise awareness of the Card both with users and service providers

- We have gotten a lot of food for thought and we will take this back to the drawing board to draft our position for the next 2 years
- If you are involved in discussions on national level you can take back those recommendations to your country but please also report back to us
- You can also contact your local Member of the European Parliament to get political support for the Card
- Also ask friends and other Persons with Disabilities to apply for the Card where it is available
- All of this will help to make the European Disability Card a reality!

Questions and comments

This is a summary of the questions we received during the meeting via chat that we could not answer due to time restraints. If you feel that your question has not been answered you can contact us directly via e-mail and we will reply to you directly (see contact details at the bottom of the document).

In my opinion there should be a discussion about the level of “visually impaired” I think there will be a relation between this and the benefits (scope) of the card: how many people are disabled? So what does it cost?

- ➔ The discussion about eligibility and “levels” of disabilities will definitely be a core point when developing common criteria.

What I worry about is the risk of creating exclusion. Making a card mandatory in order to be able to make use of services has the risk to create exclusion. Eligibility can be a problem. And how do we deal with people with disabilities from outside Europe that travel to Europe?

- ➔ Indeed, we do not want to have a situation where the Disability Card will be mandatory or exclude anyone from advantages they usually have. We will have to formulate this carefully in the recommendations and the Card should have some built-in safeguards to prevent this.

To what Anne-Laure about the Scandinavian approach, for me it is the ideal approach, since everyone is treated equally and you don't have special cards etc., but unfortunately at the moment for various reasons this cannot work in the whole EU. So until we get there, the card will play a role. It's like with PA, it would be great to get it everywhere but realistically Europe has work to do in this direction.

- ➔ Yes, this is true. Hopefully, in a distant future, we will not need any “special” advantages or Cards. But for the short and medium term, this will hopefully help many persons with disabilities in their daily lives.

I am a card user in Finland. I see a few problems with the card as a wheelchair user. The card is mainly benefiting those with invisible disabilities here, not all people with

disabilities. There needs to be more of a requirement for cooperating parties to have a certain level of accessibility in order to become a partner (visitor location).

- Agreed. We have seen a good approach in Slovenia with the collaboration with the Urban Planning Institute and we will encourage this also to become part of the European Card scheme. Accessibility is absolutely key, otherwise the Card will be meaningless for many persons with disabilities. But we also hope it will raise awareness of the lack of accessibility in many places such as cinemas, swimming pools, or leisure parks.

What about a public information campaign in conjunction with the EBU - European Broadcasting Union to educate the public about the EU disability card?

- Excellent idea, we have not approached them yet but we will keep this in mind.

I was just thinking about the health insurance card when you were talking about the local disability card and the EU disability card. Maybe it would be an idea to use one side of the card for the EU print and the other side for the local disability card information.

- This can indeed be done, we will keep this suggestion in mind.

The service providers should be educated on physical and digital accessibility and what it means to be a provider of benefits for the card owners with DIFFERENT disabilities

- Agreed. There are some good practice examples on training sessions for service providers and this should also be included on EU level.

I had no possibility to take the floor in the sub-group, so I'll do it through this. BDF was at the origin of this EDC process. At the time, the context was different but the card is still needed to improve mobility across Europe. We are happy to hear that the commission is motivated. From the experience of other card systems, we understand that there are a lot of experiences that are partly similar. The Commission has plenty of examples to use as base in order to design a very efficient tool. Practical solutions are moving fast now. In this prospect digitalization could prove to be efficient, especially on communication in various mode of expressions. According to BDF, a regulation would be the ideal solution and, definitely, It must be a different card from parking card. From Belgian experience, the main problem is that there was not enough promotion among service providers up to now : having a lot of EDC holders and not a lot of service providers is disappointing for the users.

- The points on preferring a Regulation, keeping 2 separate cards (EU Parking Card and Disability Card) and on promotion of the Card are noted.

We should also think about language barriers - how will a card owner from Finland find and use benefits in Malta if he or she only speaks Finnish? Some persons with disabilities often have trouble with learning other languages, let's not forget about the deaf community.

- Indeed, this will be part of our recommendations. For a truly European Card, understanding the information when travelling to another country is of course

key. The EU Disability Card should include the info in the national language, which provides the card AND in English. Plus if the card includes digital means, this can easily be recognisable by authorities in all the countries.

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