



**To:**

President Ursula Von Der Leyen  
European Commission

President Roberta Metsola  
European Parliament

**CC:**

Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli  
European Commission

**Brussels, 16 August 2022**

Ref. EDF-22-34-YV-AM

**Subject: Ensuring the address on the State of the European Union is accessible to persons with disabilities.**

Dear Presidents,

The State of the European Union is a crucial address to ensure that European citizens are informed about the priorities and plans of the European Union. We applaud your continued commitment to it.

However, this important debate is not accessible to millions of persons with disabilities. Thus, to ensure that the event is inclusive and reaches all EU citizens, we request that you implement additional measures to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. These measures will guarantee that the contents of the address reach an often-excluded part of the population and will symbolise the goal of a Union of Equality.

As already stated in the [European Parliament's Disability Intergroup statement](#) of 2021 and the [recent letter on the SOTEU from Social Platform](#), the State of the European Union still misses key accessibility provisions, notably:

- Real-time interpretation in international sign language;
- Human-generated live captioning with, if feasible, the possibility of automatic translation in other languages;
- An "Easy to Read" summary of the speech.

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We thank you for providing a text version of the speech every year, which is essential for persons with disabilities and those unable to follow the live event.

In this vein, we welcome the European Commission's developments in accessible communication, notably the increase in materials translated into "[Easy to Read](#)" and the number of videos and live addresses with international sign interpretation. Likewise, we also applaud the Parliament's efforts to improve its accessibility.

However, much more must be put in place by the EU to guarantee equal access to information for persons with disabilities – and prioritising accessibility in such an important debate will represent an excellent step forward. The measures will ensure that the EU respects its commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They will specifically advance the implementation of Article 9 (on accessibility) and Article 29 (on participation in political and public life).

We stand ready to support the institutions in finding the appropriate providers, as we did during 2019's "Spitzenkandidaten" debate in the European Parliament. It was the first major EU public event which provided international sign interpretation and live captioning. We ask you to continue its legacy and ensure the accessibility of the debates about the State of the European Union.

Yours sincerely,



**Yannis Vardakastanis**  
EDF President