

EU failing to guarantee freedom of movement for all

Written by Marian Harkin on 1 December 2014 in Opinion
Opinion

More must be done to stop disabled persons from being denied a fundamental freedom, argues Marian Harkin.



One of the core freedoms available to EU citizens is the right to travel to find work in another member state. Indeed more and more emphasis is being placed on mobility of workers as a factor in combating unemployment in the EU.

When an EU citizen makes the choice to travel to another member state in search of employment there should be no barriers preventing that freedom of movement. However, if you are a person with a disability, it can be hugely challenging and often impossible to exercise your right to free movement. The barriers include various definitions of disability in different member states, very significant difficulties in accessing support packages in different member states and crucially the non-portability of personal assistance in order to allow the disabled person to live independently.

The bottom line is, if you are a person with a disability, one of your fundamental freedoms is denied to you. So how do we deal with this issue? Most member states have signed up to the UN convention on

the rights of persons with disabilities and article 19 of that convention guarantees "living independently and being included in the community". Signing up to the convention is one thing but implementing it is another and many member states are only in the initial phase of implementation. If the UN convention is to have a significant impact on the lives of persons with disabilities in the EU, it must support their right to free movement.

It will certainly be challenging to unravel all the different aspects of independent living in different member states, for example, benefits, direct payments, equipment, personal assistance and to look at the portability of each. If we do not begin to address the matter then the promise of free movement in Europe will essentially not apply to disabled people. Perhaps the possible revision of the EU regulation on coordination of social security systems might be an opportunity to look at this issue again. It remains to be seen if it will open the door for free movement of disabled persons or firmly shut it in their faces.

Other possible approaches include bilateral agreements between regions and between member states, pilot projects or strategies to increase the mobility of persons with disabilities both within and between member states and the introduction of a disability card that would in itself confer certain rights.

None of this is simple, but in the EU disability strategy 2010-2020, the commission said that it will work to 'overcome the obstacles to the mobility of people with disabilities'. So far there have been no substantial improvements in the ability of personal assistance users to move freely for work or study within the EU.

Next September the 'freedom drive', which comprises several hundred disabled people from all over the EU, will visit Brussels. They visit every two years and as their name suggests they want to exercise their fundamental right to free movement. I hope then we can at least point to some real progress when it comes to the freedom of movement to access employment.

About the author

Marian Harkin is a member of parliament's employment and social affairs committee

Tags

[Employment and Social Affairs](#) [1]

[Justice and Rights](#) [2]

Categories

[Public order, justice and rights](#) [3]

[Society and welfare](#) [4]



Site Sections

- [Home](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Policy](#)
- [Magazines](#)
- [PM+](#)
- [Thought Leader](#)
- [EU Elections 2019](#)
- [Editorial Calendar](#)
- [Policy Events](#)
- [Event Coverage](#)
- [MEP Awards 2019](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

Services

[Dods PeopleDods](#)
[MonitoringDods](#)
[ResearchDods](#)
[EventsDods](#)
[Training](#)

Media & publishing titles

[Politics HomeThe](#)
[HouseThe](#)
[Parliament](#)
[MagazineHolyrood](#)
[Total PoliticsPublic](#)
[Affairs NewsCivil](#)
[Service](#)
[World](#)
[PublicTechnology](#)
[Training](#)
[JournalDods](#)
[Parliamentary](#)
[CompanionVacher's](#)
[Quarterly The](#)
[European Union and](#)
[Public Affairs](#)
[Directory](#)

Dods events

[Westminster](#)
[BriefingDigital](#)
[Health & Care](#)
[ScotlandMEP](#)
[AwardsThe Skills](#)
[SummitScottish](#)
[Public Service](#)
[AwardsPublic Sector](#)

[Procurement SummitPublic Sector ICT SummitCyber Security SummitCyber Security 2017Training Journal Awards](#)

Partnership events

[The Health and Care Innovation ExpoCivil Service LiveCivil Service AwardsChief Nursing Officer for England's SummitWomen into LeadershipThe Youth Justice ConventionSocitm Spring ConferenceNHSCC Annual Members' EventDods at Party Conference](#)

[Privacy PolicyTerms & ConditionsAdvertisingSponsorship Subscriptions](#)

Source URL: <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/articles/opinion/eu-failing-guarantee-freedom-movement-all>

Links

- [1] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/employment-and-social-affairs>
- [2] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/tags/justice-and-rights>
- [3] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/public-order-justice-and-rights>

[4] <https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu/categories/society-and-welfare>