

(English version)

**Question for written answer E-000832/26
to the Commission
Giuseppe Antoci (The Left)
(27 February 2026)**

Subject: Serious shortcomings in access to social, health and educational services for persons with disabilities and autism spectrum disorder in Sicily

In Sicily, persons with disabilities and autism spectrum disorder still face systemic shortcomings in access to essential services: splintered division of competences among bodies, delays in diagnosis and care, shortages of specialised staff, therapy discontinuity, insufficient availability of independence and communication support assistants, along with disruptions to transport and school support services. Those shortcomings undermine individuals' continuity of care, ability to live independently and right to educational and social inclusion.

This state of affairs appears to be at odds with Article 26 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and with obligations arising from the UN's CRPD ⁽¹⁾, to which the EU is a party. It also runs counter to the objectives of the EU strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 and the coordination actions planned through the disability platform and its monitoring framework.

The European Parliament has pointed out the need to step up protections for individuals with autism in the EU.

In the light of the above:

1. Is the Commission aware of the problems described in the Region of Sicily and will it request information from the competent authorities ⁽²⁾ on regional misalignments in the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities and autism?
2. What steps will it take to activate the tools available at EU level, in particular the 20 November 2024 guidance ⁽³⁾ on independent living in the context of EU funding?

Submitted: 27.2.2026

**Answer given by Ms Lahbib on behalf of the European Commission
(23 April 2026)**

The Commission supports the rights of persons with disabilities through the implementation of the EU Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 ⁽¹⁾ (the strategy), which takes into account multiple forms of disabilities, including so-called invisible disabilities, such as intellectual disabilities or autism.

The upcoming Communication on enhancing the strategy up to 2030, announced in the Commission Work Programme 2026 ⁽²⁾, will aim to reinforce action to guide the EU and Member States in their joint engagement to promote disability rights, including to support implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to which the EU and all Member States are parties ⁽³⁾.

The strategy promotes inclusive education and accessible environments and calls on Member States to implement good practices of deinstitutionalisation, transitioning from institutional care to community support services, in line with the approaches reflected in the Commission Guidance on independent living in the context of EU funding ⁽⁴⁾.

The Guidance serves as a benchmark for transitioning from institutional care to community-based inclusion, providing guidance for doing so when using EU funds.

The organisation of social protection, healthcare and education systems, including assessment of disability status and allocation of related benefits, are matters under the national competence of Member States.

¹ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

² Within the framework of the disability platform strategy 2021-2030 and its monitoring framework.

³ Push for investment and the reorganisation of regional services in a manner consistent with the UNCRPD and the Charter; ensure that EU resources are not financing non-inclusive action; support, including through dialogue with managing authorities and targeted checks, measures leading to continuity of care, sufficient availability of qualified staff and effective educational support (including independence and communication support assistants and transport).

⁽¹⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/disability/union-equality-strategy-rights-persons-disabilities-2021-2030_en.

⁽²⁾ https://commission.europa.eu/publications/2026-commission-work-programme-and-annexes_en.

⁽³⁾ <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>.

⁽⁴⁾ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52024XC07188&qid=1733304137184>.

The Commission has made available EU funding under shared management programmes to address the shortcomings listed in the question and offers mutual learning and technical assistance to managing authorities to implement the approaches contained in the Commission Guidance.
