Towards inclusive cities: Making UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 a reality in Europe

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About EDF

The European Disability Forum is an independent NGO that represents the interests of 80 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisation of persons with disabilities from across Europe. EDF is run by persons with disabilities and their families. We are a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe.

Acknowledgement

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Introduction

In 2015, a new universal ambition was agreed on by world leaders with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This Agenda includes in its Vision the commitment to *'a just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met[1].'*The 2030 Agenda is a unique political commitment, since it calls for action *by all countries* to promote sustainable development.

At the core of the 2030 Agenda are a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets all designed to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure global prosperity. The SDGs started in 2015 and they will the guide the world until 2030. The SDGs promote universal respect of human rights, human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination, with the objective to "leave no behind".

Through the SDGs, the 2030 Agenda provides a clear policy framework for regulatory actions. These actions must be implemented and monitored at national, regional and international level with all governments expected to set up political agendas that are in line with the SDGs. Persons with disabilities are mentioned in seven SDGs:

- SDG 1: No poverty
- SDG 4: Quality education
- SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth
- SDG 10: Reduced inequalities
- SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities
- SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals

It is also required in the SDGs to disaggregate targets and indicators by disability, where relevant.

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs are unique opportunities to align the implementation and monitoring of the United Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) with global development initiatives since the 2030 Agenda applies to all the UN Member States (193 countries).

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[1] A/RES/70/1 UN General Assembly. p3/35

Sustainable Development Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

SDG 11 encompasses a wide range of urban focused human development issues. These include: housing, transport, cultural heritage, resilience to natural disasters, air quality, green spaces, infrastructure and planning processes. What is significant about SDG 11 is its ambition to create safe, inclusive, sustainable and resilient communities which goes well beyond simply planning for physical access. It also encompasses a commitment to respect inherent dignity and supports the right to individual autonomy, independence and choice as well as opportunities to participate in the governance and decision-making that happens in managing urban communities.

The presence of disability markers within SDG 11's targets and indicators is highly significant because it provides an opportunity to systematically measure progress in relation to persons with disabilities. If there are gaps in progress, then it becomes much easier to identify and promote measures to reduce inequalities. The wide scope of SDG 11 means there is considerable overlap with articles from the CRPD (see **Figure 1**). In fact, the work around SDG 11 has the potential to promote implementation of a wide range of CRPD articles and make important contributions towards increasing participation of persons with disabilities in their communities.

Figure 1: Targets and indicators inclusive of persons with disabilties in SDG 11, against relevant articles from the CRPD

Sustainable Development Goal	Target	Indicators	CRPD articles
Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable	11.2: By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, ***persons with disabilities*** and older persons	11.2.1: Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and ***persons with disabilities*** 11.7.1: Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and ***persons with disabilities*** 11.7.2 Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual	**Article 9**: Accessibility **Article 11**: Situations of risk & humanitarian emergencies **Article 19:** Living independently and being included in the community **Article 29**: Participation in political and public life **Article 30**: Participation in cultural life, recreation. leisure and sport

	11.7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and *persons with disabilities*	harassment, by sex, age, *disability status* and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months	

The New Urban Agenda

The New Urban Agenda adopted in 2016 at UN Habitat III is also an opportunity to influence the development of disability inclusive urban development. The New Urban Agenda is a set of global standards for sustainable and inclusive urban development, designed to encourage the application of appropriate legislation and enforcement mechanisms to ensure urban planning and design are both affordable and participatory. It encourages moving away from planning on a sector by sector basis to one that treats urban development holistically with comprehensive and overarching policy platforms that can promote sustainable and inclusive development of cities. Here then is a significant opportunity to ensure accessibility and universal design principles are being used to guide development of towns and cities, working with SDG 11 and relevant CRPD articles to mobilise support.

Challenges and opportunities in urban development

The world is becoming increasingly urban with just over 50% of the global population now living in towns and cities. This shift from rural to urban living is set to continue with estimates predicting that 6.5 billion people, or ⅔ world's population, will live in urban environments by 2050[2]. Given that at least 15% of the global population is estimated to have a disability, it means at least 1 billion people with disabilities will be living in towns and cities by 2050[3].

In Europe, 40% of the population now live in cities although ¾ of EU population actually live in urban areas (includes towns, cities and suburbs)[4]. This is projected to rise to 80% of EU citizens by 2050, so it is clear that cities are increasingly integral to life as a European.

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[2] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/goal-11

[3] WHO/World Bank, 2011; CBM, **The Inclusion Imperative:** *Towards Disability-inclusive and Accessible Urban Development*. www.cbm.org/Publications-252011.php

[4] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=SDG_11__Sustainable_cities_and_communities&oldid=364085

Cities provide the potential for driving economic growth, acting as hubs in which innovations can thrive and new ways to deliver cost effective basic services at scale can be developed. In fact, cities now account for more than 80% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as ideas and people come together leading to increased productivity[5]. They offer citizens increased quality of life with economic opportunities, access to education, health, and leisure facilities on an unprecedented scale and with the increased use of ICT, more efficient ways to deliver public services.

Cities are also places in which there is significant potential to realise the economic and social participation of persons with disabilities. Well planned infrastructure and accessibly designed public services and spaces can play a role in equalising opportunities for a wide range of people at risk of vulnerabilities including persons with disabilities and older people. Through the development and implementation of accessibility standards, new systems of transportation, and the harnessing of new information and communication technology, there is a unique opportunity to reduce barriers and promote the inclusion of everyone.

However, cities also come with the potential for increased social challenges and inequality. Extreme poverty can also be concentrated in urban spaces with national and city administrations unprepared for rapid population increases leading to a rise in unplanned settlements and urban sprawl. With increasing populations can also come increases in levels of pollution, traffic, crime and deficits in housing which have a negative impact on wellbeing and push towards more polarised communities.

Moreover, the continued exclusion of marginalised people from urban planning, governance and decision-making processes means that their needs can continue to go unmet. Barriers in information, communication, urban spaces and infrastructure can lead to denial of access by people with disabilities and older people to basic public services from housing, roads, transportation and public spaces to health, education and disaster response mechanisms[6].

Whilst urban development, especially cities offer considerable opportunities for inclusive growth, it also requires more holistic planning and management strategies. Accessibility and Universal Design are key components in the creation of inclusive cities. Clearly given the universal presence of persons with disabilities in cities and towns, there is significant need to ensure that any barriers to their full and equal participation are removed. Accessibility is one of the CRPD's general principles and underpins the ability to live independently, and to realize the full range of rights[7]. However, inclusive cities are unlikely to emerge unless persons with disabilities are included at all stages of urban development, from planning, through implementation, to management and monitoring.

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[5] UN Habitat, 2016

[6] HLPF 2018, Submission on behalf of the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities. *Inclusive, safe, reliant and sustainable societies and persons with disabilities.*

[7] CRPD, Preamble (v); CRPD /C/GC/2 General comment No. 2 (2014) Art. 9 Accessibility

Barriers to inclusion in urban settings

For persons with disabilities, there are considerable barriers to full participation in urban settlements.

In a recent submission to the High Level Political Forum 2018, the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities identified a significant number of challenges in relation to the implementation of SDG 11 around accessibility. Despite the fact that more than half of all persons with disabilities and older persons live in urban settings, it is still rare to find these environments accessible. Some of the key barriers are to be found in relation to the built environment, transport and in the provision of information and communication. This can mean persons with disabilities face discrimination in accessing basic urban services such as housing, transportation, public spaces, health, education and emergency response mechanisms.

Back in 2014, the CRPD Committee pointed to the need for *"(…) strict application of universal design to all new goods, products, facilities, technologies and services (…)"*[8] to enable *"(…) the creation of an unrestricted chain of movement for an individual from one space to another, including movement inside particular spaces, with no barriers."*[9]. This emphasizes the fact that the creation of inclusive cities will not come about by only considering environmental barriers at individual locations but that it needs to encompass the urban space as a whole. Moreover, it also needs to ensure that new goods, products and technology are designed with access and compatibility features from the start.

Key developments in the European Union

The European Union (EU) has a **Disability Strategy (2010-2020)** to guide its operations in relation to inclusive development. Part of the strategy is focused on finding ways to implement the CRPD at EU level. A key area of focus in this respect is around accessibility.

The proposed **European Accessibility Act (2015)**[10] is a key framework aimed at harmonising the accessibility standards of goods and services across Member States. Currently, there are a variety of different national level accessibility rules and standards which create barriers within the internal market to those using and producing goods and services. The Act aims to remove these barriers by harmonising legislation across the EU to ensure producers and suppliers adhere to the same accessibility standards. For persons with disabilities, this should mean more accessible products and services at competitive prices as well as increased access to education and employment across Member States.

The European Commission (EC) works to create greater harmonisation across the internal market by using European Standardisation Organisations (ESOs). The EC

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[8] CRPD/C/GC/2, page 5, para 15.

[9] op cit.

[10] This has not yet been adopted but is currently at trialogue stage (Commission, Parliament & Council) being scrutinized for common agreement.

tasks ESOs with creating written voluntary agreements which establish key criteria in the development of products, services and processes which become known as Standards. At the moment, ESOs are working on a number of Standards which should help to increase accessibility across the EU to a range of goods and services. For example:

- **EN 301 549 and M/554 on standardisation of ICT** is working towards ensuring that the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies are fully compliant with accessibility criteria. It is also ensuring standard levels of service in relation to telecommunications, TV and broadcasting as well as new and emerging technologies. In practice, that would mean for example ensuring EU citizens can expect the same level and quality of subtitling and audio description in broadcast media. The work on emerging technology is particularly interesting because it covers both mainstream and assistive technology. Part of what this standardisation is working towards is ensuring interoperability between new mainstream and assistive technology. That means for example ensuring mobile phone technology is designed with the capacity to link seamlessly with hearing technology such as Cochlear Implants or hearing aids.

- **M/420 and M/473 on the built environment and on mainstreaming the Design for All principles.** The focus of these tasks is on creating standards that would ensure buildings, ICT, environment, transportation, packaging, goods and services are designed in ways which take account of the diversity of the human population. So that means ensuring that everyone, including persons with disabilities and older persons can make use of goods and services independently by adopting a *Design for All* approach (see box on the next page for a definition of Design for all).

The Accessibility Act however recognizes that whilst voluntary standards are important, the process of gaining EU wide harmonization can be lengthy and national standards can remain in place. Hence the Act calls for a level of regulatory interventions to underpin the voluntary codes of practice for a list of products and services which are key to inclusion. Furthermore, the development of European Standards is dominated by industry and therefore often excludes DPOs, which means that the Standards do not always reflect the real needs of persons with disabilities.

Procurement is also an area which can act as a powerful driver for facilitating inclusive cities. Universal Design principles can be implemented and regulated if laws on public procurement require accessibility standards to be met in areas like infrastructure, transportation and information and communication technologies. A good example of this is Article 42 of the Public Procurement Directive which states: "*For all procurement (…) the technical specifications shall (…) be drawn up so as to take account accessibility criteria for persons with disabilities or design for all users.*"[11] It then becomes important to ensure that in practice persons with disabilities have the opportunity to contribute towards the design and implementation of such standards.

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[11] Directive 2014/24/EU (2014) on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC. P 58
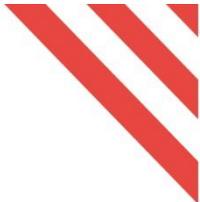
It is worth referring to developments being promoted by the Smart Cities initiatives. Whilst new technology is part of the Smart City ideology, it also encompasses the participation of people (as space users) and governments (as providers of services and standards). The growth of new technology is offering a range of opportunities around the real-time use of information and communication systems including the chance for users of public spaces, goods and services to interact directly with designers, planners and the government. Theoretically this should provide persons with disabilities with an excellent platform through which to provide lived experiences on use of urban spaces and facilities. However more needs to be done to investigate the extent to which persons with disabilities are being enabled to engage in this way[12].

What is Design for All?

Design for All, or Universal Design, is a set of design principles which take account of *"human diversity, social inclusion and equality."* (M/473 Standardisation Mandate, p.2).

The 2015 EU Accessibility Act takes the article 2 of the CRPD on definitions as its reference: *"Universal design" referred to also as "design for all" means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design; "universal design" does not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with functional limitations, including persons with disabilities where this is needed.*"

In practice, this means everything needs to be designed with all users in mind from the start. This requires close attention is paid to consulting with different user groups and ensuring that the final design is safe, accessible and independently useable by anyone. Combined with targeted use of specific assistive technology, Design for All can promote effective inclusion and participation for all.

EDF focus areas

Sustainable and accessible public transport can make a significant difference to quality of life experiences. It can help lower overall traffic levels, reduce pollution and make it easier and more affordable to travel to work, access public services or enjoy leisure time. If it is well planned and managed, a good transportation system can help stimulate economic growth and promote social inclusion by improving access and mobility for everyone. Cities in particular offer opportunities for creating accessible and affordable public transport systems where high-density populations make the expansion of private vehicles problematic[13].

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[12] Rebernik, N., Osaba, E., Bahillo, A., Montero D., (n.d.), *A vision of a Smart City addressing the needs of disabled citizens*

[13] See NCE Cities – Paper 03 *Accessibility in Cities: Transport and Urban Form*, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2014

EDF is particularly focused on supporting the development of accessible transport vehicles (for example, regulation on rail accessibility) as well as multi-modal terminals for public transportation. These are spaces in which passengers change between one form of transport and another. At its simplest, it could be the change between a train and a bus but they can include very complex environments where all transport modes are accommodated (airport terminals for example where you have potential connections to all forms of transport from walking to trams and private vehicles). In these situations, there is need to ensure both the modes of transport and the space itself are fully accessible.

Multi-modal terminals offer a good opportunity to promote seamless accessible travel alongside goods and services, because all service providers are present in the one place and can more easily be brought together for the purpose of planning and monitoring accessibility. With holistic planning, we can ensure consistent accessibility signage, way marking and route finding as well as access to ticketing machines and automated equipment in general; combined assistance where one service provider covers assistance across all modes of transport; easy access to shops, restaurants and other leisure facilities; and a single point of reference for complaints, comments and suggestions.

There are two key areas of EU legislation that cover accessibility in relation to transportation:

- **Passenger Rights Regulations**[14] covering all modes of transport, focusing on non-discrimination and the provision of assistance for persons with disabilities and those with reduced mobility.
- **Accessibility of passenger transport vehicles** including for example specifications around low platform buses[15], rolling stock,[16] and waterborne transport[17] along with accompanying technical standards.

Overall, these aim to create a multi-modal travel chain and ticketing system that will enable persons with disabilities and older persons to travel across the EU independently, spontaneously and without facing any barriers. That requires both the means of transport and all related infrastructure to be accessible to everyone, taking into account a range of issues including functional limitations and the specific needs of women and girls. This means not just considering physical mobility but also sensory and cognitive limitations.

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[14] e.g. Regulation 1371/2006 on rail passengers' rights and obligations, http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32007R1371; and Regulation 1107/2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air.

[15] Regulation (EC) No 661/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 July 2009 concerning type-approval requirements for the general safety of motor vehicles, their trailers and systems, components and separate technical units intended therefor (OJ L 200, 31.7.2009

[16] Directive 2008/57/EC of 17 June 2008 on the interoperability of the rail system within the Community (Recast) (OJ L 191, 18.7.2008; and Commission Decision 2008/164/EC of 21 December 2007 concerning the technical specification of interoperability relating to 'persons with reduced mobility' in the trans-European conventional and high-speed rail system (OJ L 64, 7.3.2008

[17] Directive 2009/45/EC on safety rules and standards for passenger ships, OJ L163 of 25.6.2009

It is a complex challenge however not least because of the relatively long lifespan of infrastructure and the costs associated with upgrading and retrofitting accessible features. However, where new systems are planned, there are opportunities to ensure the principles of *Design for All* are applied and that all end users are represented during planning processes from the very beginning. Even once a commitment to *Design for All* has been established, there is still need for continuous monitoring because the management of the space also needs to pay attention to access features – inclusive design can be instantly negated by shopkeepers that position displays in accessible walkways; by lifts that are out of order; by faulty passenger information boards; or by accessible toilets that are locked or used as storage spaces.

Access City Awards

A good example to ensure equal access to a full city life for persons with disabilities is the Access City Award by the European Commission and the European Disability Forum. The prize is awarded each year to an European city which proactively support accessibility for persons with disabilities and take exemplary steps to improve accessibility in the urban environment. The city of Chester (UK) was awarded first prize in 2017 for its dedication in ensuring that the city and its beautiful medieval walls can be enjoyed by as many people as possible. More information is available on the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1141

Recommendations

The recommendations are addressed to policy-makers, city managers, urban planners, designers, disability rights advocates, scholars, and anyone else who is involved in urban development or accessibility.

- **Include accessibility fully in all relevant policies and initiatives.** Accessibility is a right (as articulated in the CRPD, the 2030 Agenda and in the Sendai Framework) and is fully incorporated into the aims of SDG 11. It should therefore form the core advocacy focus for any consultation in relation to urban development – from housing, transportation and infrastructure, green areas and public open spaces, road safety and emergency planning to information and communication technology and disaster resilience planning.
- **Ensure that the principles of *Design for All* are well understood and communicated,** particularly in relation to consultations around the design of new goods and services.
- **Promote the use of public procurement standards** that use *Universal Design* principles and ensure that persons with disabilities are able to participate in the setting and monitoring of these standards.

- **Use existing accessibility standards,** like for ICT the European Standard EN 301 549 so as not to duplicate the work.
- **Develop an integrated, cross-sectoral, and sustainable strategy on accessibility in cities** (such as the EU initiative on "Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans, which currently doesn't include accessibility). Currently, the focus is only on specific aspects such as digitization or transport, but a full strategy/vision is needed.
- **Promote the development of Smart Cities** that take full account of the needs and participation of persons with disabilities and consider supporting the development of a global policy on accessibility using the current EU Access City Award criteria.
- **Develop a clear concept/vision on how to ensure a multimodal, accessible travel chain** and provide the relevant funding, especially to invest in infrastructure.
- **Consult with representatives of the disability movement** on the implementation of accessibility on a local level.

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