

**INFORMATION NOTE TO CRPD COMMITTEE EXPERTS**

**Disability priorities at the European level**

**February 2021**

The [European Disability Forum](http://www.edf-feph.org/) is an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of over 100 million Europeans with disabilities. We are a unique platform which brings together representative organisation of persons with disabilities from across Europe. We are run by persons with disabilities and their families. We are a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe.

This briefing note aims at informing the independent experts of the CRPD Committee about the main priorities at the European level and potential regional issues that affect directly persons with disabilities in their own countries. **We highly encourage the experts to consider these issues during the review of European countries.**

A short report on the impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities in Europe has been sent separately to the Secretariat of the Committee.

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# Council of Europe

## Definition

The Council of Europe is an international organisation founded in 1949 with the aim to uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. It has [47 member states](https://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/our-member-states) which have ratified the European Convention of Human Rights and are therefore overseen by the European Court of Human Rights, an entity separate from the European Union. 46 member states have ratified the CRPD.

**Estonia is member of the Council of Europe.**

## Priorities

### Ratification of the Istanbul Convention – on violence against women and girls

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence called “Istanbul Convention” was adopted by the Council of Europe in 2011.

Thirteen (13) countries have not ratified the Convention, namely: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Slovakia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom. The European Union signed but did not ratify the Convention.

In July 2020, the Polish government announced its intention to withdraw from the Convention.

**Relevant CRPD articles: 6 (women with disabilities) and 16 (freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse)**

Suggested questions:

For States who did not ratify the Convention: Please provide information on the steps and timeframe undertaken to ensure the swift ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

For States who ratified the Convention: Please provide information on the steps and timeframe undertaken to ensure the swift implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

Suggested recommendations:

For States who did not ratify the Convention: “Recommends that the State party, without further delay, ratify and implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).” – as in CRPD Concluding Observations to Cyprus (CRPD/C/CYP/CO/1)

For States who ratified the Convention: “Recommends that the State party enact legislation, including monitoring mechanisms, to detect, prevent and combat violence within and outside the home of persons with disabilities, especially for women and children with disabilities, and that it produce an action plan to implement the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention), which specifically address women and girls with disabilities.” – as in CRPD Concluding Observations to Italy (CRPD/C/ITA/CO/1)

### Withdrawal of the draft additional protocol to the Oviedo Convention – on forced treatment and placement of persons with psychosocial disabilities

Since 2014, under the mandate received from member states of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Bioethics of the Council of Europe (DH-BIO Committee) has been working on a draft additional protocol to the Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine (Oviedo Convention) concerning the protection of human rights and dignity of “persons with mental disorders”. This protocol is based on the medical model of disability and violates the CRPD.

The CRPD Committee adopted a [statement against the draft protocol](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/Statements/StatementOviedo_CRPD20th.docx) during its 20th session. The draft additional protocol was also criticised by the Commissioner for human rights and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The disability movement strongly [opposes to the adoption of the draft protocol](https://www.edf-feph.org/edf-campaigns/).

**In November 2020, the DH-BIO Committee agreed to finalise the text that will be put for adoption in its plenary assembly in June 2021. The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is foreseen to adopt the draft protocol in the fall 2021.**

**Relevant CRPD article: 5 (equality and non-discrimination), 12 (equal recognition before the law), 14 (liberty and security of person) and 25 (health)**

Suggested questions:

Please provide information on plans to oppose to the adoption of the draft additional protocol to the Oviedo Convention of the Council of Europe, and instead redirect efforts to develop and implement voluntary measures in line with the CRPD.

Suggested recommendations:

‘Calls upon the State party to oppose to the adoption of the draft Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (ETS No 164) (Oviedo Convention) of the Council of Europe, in line with its obligations under article 14 of the Convention’, and instead redirect efforts to develop and implement voluntary measures in line with the CRPD.

(See [CRPD Committee statement against the draft additional protocol](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/Statements/StatementOviedo_CRPD20th.docx) and Concluding observations to Slovenia ([CRPD/C/SVN/CO/1](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRPD/Shared%20Documents/SVN/CRPD_C_SVN_CO_1_30546_E.docx)), paragraph 24).

# European Union

## Definition

The European Union (EU) is a unique economic and political union between 28 European countries – 27 countries after the planned exit of the United Kingdom. The Member States of the EU are: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Republic of Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden.

The EU has specific competences to adopt legislation in some areas such as common commercial policy, transport, consumer protection, environment and some aspects of social policy, and can support member states in other areas such as education, culture and tourism. The two main legislative acts that can be adopted by the EU are regulations and directives. While regulations are directly applicable in all Member States, directives need to be transposed by each of them in their national law by introducing new legislation or amending existing laws in line with the EU Directive.

## Priorities

### Accessibility

#### Transposition of the European Accessibility Act (EAA)

The [European Accessibility Act](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2019.151.01.0070.01.ENG&toc=OJ:L:2019:151:TOC) is horizontal law (directive) adopted in April 2019 with the aim of making products and services, mainly digital, more accessible for persons with disabilities. The Directive also provides a set of accessibility requirements deemed for public procurement of products and services and the use of EU funds. Member States of the EU have **until 28 July 2022 to transpose the text into national law**. It is important that Member States take an ambitious stance on the EU text, which has weaknesses especially concerning accessibility of transport and the built environment. The EU institutions should also be scrutinised regularly if they provide an adequate follow-up and use their powers to encourage Member States, for instance by starting infringement procedures in case of non-compliance.

Useful information:

* [Recording of webinar on the transposition of the EAA](https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/webinar-advocating-for-strong-national-adoption-of-the-european-accessibility-act-september-2019/)
* [EDF toolkit on transposition of EAA](https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2020/12/final_edf_transposition_toolkit_accessibility_act.pdf)

**Relevant CRPD article: 9 (accessibility)**

Suggested questions:

Please provide information on the steps and timeframe to ensure the swift transposition of the European Accessibility Act.

Are there any plans to go beyond the scope of the directive to fully implement article 9 of the CRPD? In particular, are there plans to implement the voluntary accessibility requirements for the built environment? Are there plans to make use of the accessibility requirements for products and services in national public procurement?

How is the State ensuring that persons with disabilities are involved in the transposition process through their respective organisations?

Suggested recommendations:

Recommends taking immediate measures to swiftly transpose the European Accessibility Act in its national law.

Recommend going beyond minimum accessibility requirements of the Act, expanding scope of services, and shortening application deadlines especially concerning those of under ‘transitional measures’ (e.g. accessibility of emergency communications by call centres for emergency services (PSAPs).

#### Implementation of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (Directive (EU) 2018/1808)

The Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) was adopted on 14 November 2018. Member States had to transpose it **by 19 September 2020,** [though some Member States did not meet this deadline](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2165).

The Directive creates an EU-level framework to coordinate national legislation on all audiovisual media, both traditional TV broadcasts and on-demand services (for example, Netflix, Amazon Video, Now TV). It sets out requirements concerning aspects such as prohibition of hate speech and discrimination based on disability and other grounds, commercial information on TV programs, protection of minors, independence of the national regulatory bodies that monitor audiovisual services, and the promotion of European audiovisual productions. Article 7 of the Directive specifically obliges Member States to ensure that, without undue delay, services provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction are made continuously and progressively more accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes public communications and announcements in natural disaster situations. The Directive is nevertheless very general about advancing accessibility, so specific qualitative, quantitative and temporal targets have to be decided at national level. It is therefore very important that Member States take ambitious position to advance accessibility of audiovisual media on the basis of the Directive.

Useful information:

* [EDF transposition toolkit on the AVMSD](http://www.edf-feph.org/accessibility-audiovisual-media)
* [Recording of webinar on the AVMSD](https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/webinar-towards-ambitious-transposition-of-audiovisual-media-services-directive-february-2020/)

**Relevant CRPD articles: Article 9 (accessibility); Article 11 (Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies); Article 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information)**

Suggested questions:

Please provide information on the steps taken to ensure the swift transposition of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (as required since 19 September 2020).

Please inform whether the transposition of the directive ensure that:

* Persons with disabilities are protected from any discrimination, incitement of violence and hate-speech
* Persons with disabilities have equal access to audiovisual media content, including to emergency communication and announcements in all forms of audiovisual media, including traditional TV broadcasting, and video on-demand services.

Has your State set obligatory quantitative targets for access services provided by audiovisual media services and to ensure that access services meet necessary qualitative standards when they are provided by audiovisual media services? If not, what measures are put in place to ensure that audiovisual services are made accessible to persons with disabilities?

What are the measures you have taken to ensure that provision of emergency public information through audiovisual media, including live broadcasting, is accessible to persons who are Deaf, blind, deafblind, persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, and other persons with disabilities who rely on access services to receive crucial emergency information?

Suggested recommendations:

Recommends full implementation of the transposition measures of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive in its national law.

Recommend going beyond the minimum requirements of the Directive, specifying its aims in national laws through concrete quantitative targets and quality assurance measures for access services provided by audiovisual media services.

#### Implementation of the European Electronic Communications Code (Directive (EU) 2018/1972)

The European Electronic Communications Code sets an EU-level legal framework to coordinate national legislation on electronic communications networks and services. It was adopted in December 2018 and entered into force on 21 December 2018. Deadline for transposition by Member States was **21 December 2020**.

Among the aims of the Code are to promote fair and sustainable competition, interoperability of electronic communication services, accessibility and security of networks and services for the benefit of end-users. The Code also aims to ensure the provision of good quality, affordable, publicly available services through healthy competition and choice, to ensure that end-users, including end-users with disabilities, access those services on equal basis with other users (such as businesses). For the latter purpose, the Code lays down the necessary rights for end-users. The Code also obliges Member States to ensure equal access for persons with disabilities to the single European emergency number ‘112’.

The Code recognises the right of easy and equivalent access by persons with disabilities to affordable high quality electronic communications services regardless of their place of residence within the European Union, referring to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Useful information:

* [Recording of webinar on the Electronic Communications Code](https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/webinar-european-electronic-communications-code/)
* [EDF toolkit on transposition of the Code](https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2020/12/edf_toolkit_on_transposition_of_the_european_electronic_communications_code5231.pdf)

**Relevant CRPD article: Article 9 (accessibility); Article 11 (Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies); Article 21 (Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information)**

Suggested questions:

Please provide information on the measures taken to ensure the application of the European Electronic Communications Code (as required since 21 December 2020). Has the transposition gone beyond the scope of the directive to fully implement article 9 of the CRPD?

(How) have you ensured that total conversation service and real-time text services are available and fully interoperable with an adequate level of quality, including when contacting emergency services?

Suggested recommendations:

Recommends taking measures to ensure the full implementation of the transposition measures the European Electronic Communications Code in its national law, in line with article 9 of the CRPD.

Recommends that State ensures the compliance of electronic communications services with the accessibility requirements of the European Accessibility Act (Annex I) and relevant accessibility standards.

Recommends that States ensures that specific terminal equipment such as augmentative and alternative communication devices or other assistive technologies are made available to persons with disabilities as required by the Code.

Recommends that the accessibility requirements for the single European emergency number ‘112’ are extended to national emergency numbers, missing children (116000) and child helpline (116111) hotlines, and other important numbers (e.g. COVID-19 hotlines; contact numbers for requesting assistance for passengers with disabilities).

#### Implementing and monitoring of the Web Accessibility Directive

On 22 December 2016, the EU [Directive on the accessibility of websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2016.327.01.0001.01.ENG) entered into force. Since September 2019 all new websites of public sector bodies need to be accessible following the **European Standard** [**EN 301 549**](https://www.etsi.org/deliver/etsi_en/301500_301599/301549/02.01.02_60/en_301549v020102p.pdf), and **from September 2020 all existing websites** will need to respect the standard. Mobile applications will need to be accessible **by June 2021**, also following this European Standard. EU Member States must also put in place the additional arrangements of the Web Accessibility Directive, such as adding an accessibility statement in all public sector websites and apps with relevant information for users with disabilities, including a feedback mechanism; appoint an enforcement body, and set up an enforcement and monitoring mechanism. Additionally, the Directive stipulates that Member States will need to carry out initiatives to raise awareness around web accessibility, training programmes, among others.

Useful information:

* [EDF toolkit on transposition of the Directive](https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2020/12/final_edf_web_and_apps_directive_toolkit_may_2017_0.pdf)

**Relevant CRPD articles: Article 9 (accessibility); Article 21 (freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information)**

Suggested questions:

Please inform whether all new websites of public sector bodies and all existing websites have been made accessible following the [European Standard EN 301 549](https://www.etsi.org/deliver/etsi_en/301500_301599/301549/02.01.02_60/en_301549v020102p.pdf) (as required since September 2020), and that all include an accessibility statement.

Please provide information on the steps and timeframe to ensure that all mobile applications become accessible by June 2021, and that all mobile applications include an accessibility statement.

Suggested recommendations:

Recommends to take immediate actions to swiftly implement the Web Accessibility Directive, ensuring that all websites are accessible and comply with [European Standard EN 301 549](https://www.etsi.org/deliver/etsi_en/301500_301599/301549/02.01.02_60/en_301549v020102p.pdf)by September 2020, and that all mobile applications are accessible by June 2021, including through the set-up of a monitoring and enforcement body.

#### Ongoing evaluation of regulations linked to transport accessibility

EU Regulations are legal instruments that are directly applicable in the EU Member States. It means that contrary to Directives, they do not need transposition.

The EU has just revised its [Regulation on Rail Passengers’ Rights (Regulation 1371/2007)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32007R1371) which contains amongst others the provision to provide assistance to persons with disabilities at railway stations and on board of trains. Some improvements have been achieved (lowering of pre-notification time to book assistance lowered to 24 h instead of 48 h) but it did not go far enough.[[1]](#footnote-1) Now the European Commission is evaluating the other [Passengers’ Rights Regulations](https://www.edf-feph.org/transport-5/) (for air – one specific for persons with disabilities and another general one which is nevertheless also relevant, waterborne transport, and for bus and coach transport). It is important to follow this topic closely to try and extend the provisions for persons with disabilities under those Regulations.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The EU has recently completed the revision of [Regulation 1300/2014 on the technical specifications for interoperability relating to accessibility of the Union’s rail system for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility (TSI PRM)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1461849314755&uri=CELEX:32014R1300) is an important tool to make rail travel more accessible for persons with disabilities. The Specifications ensure that all new trains and certain stations will have to be accessible to persons with disabilities. However, there are important shortcomings such as independent boarding and accessible circulation inside the trains which are not addressed yet. Another, more ambitious revision is therefore necessary as well as the implementation of the current Regulation.

­In 2021, the EU will launch the revision of [Regulation 1315/2013 on Union Guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013R1315). The Regulation governs the EU policy on transport infrastructure, which notably aims at facilitating transport flows across Member States and supporting territorial, economic and social cohesion. Article 37 on “Accessibility for all users” has particular importance for persons with disabilities as it requires transport infrastructure to “allow seamless mobility and accessibility for all users, in particular elderly people, persons of reduced mobility and passengers with a disability”.

The EU has published a new [Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0789) in which accessibility and passenger rights for persons with disabilities is highlighted as part of ensuring just transport for all passengers. EU has also declared this year as the European Year of Rail 2021 to promote rail as an attractive means of transport for passengers, including younger, older passengers, and passengers with disabilities in EU countries.

Finally, the EU is investigating whether it will re-launch its proposal to revise the Air Passengers’ Rights Regulations ([261/2004](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32004R0261) and [1107/2006](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32006R1107)) which has been stuck in Council since 2013. They are currently conducting a study but possible legislative action might be taken later this year. The problem of being denied boarding because of ones’ disability should be in the focus and the text should be revised to avoid those cases once and for all.

**Relevant CRPD articles: Article 9 (accessibility); Article 20 (personal mobility)**

Suggested questions:

Has the State allocated specific funding under the EU Recovery and Resilience Funds to invest in improving accessibility of transport infrastructure? Have organisations of persons with disabilities been consulted for this?

Is the State in favour of including unlimited airline liability for mobility equipment in the revision of Regulation 261/2004, as the file is still currently under discussion in the Council of the European Union?

How is the State implementing the [Regulation 1300/2014 on the technical specifications for interoperability relating to accessibility of the Union’s rail system for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility (TSI PRM)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1461849314755&uri=CELEX:32014R1300)? Does it have a National Action Plan to improve Rail Accessibility?

Is the legislation of the State in line with the revised [Regulation on Rail Passengers’ Rights (Regulation 1371/2007)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32007R1371) which contains amongst others the provision to provide assistance to persons with disabilities at railway stations and on board of trains? How does the State plan to extend the rights of passengers with disabilities to urban and suburban rail services?

Does the State have planned activities within the European Year of Rail where national and local organisations of persons with disabilities are meaningfully involved?

What actions does the State plan to meet the objectives of the EU’s Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy in relation to equal access to transport and protection of rights of passengers with disabilities?

Suggested recommendations:

Recommends that the national legislation and policies comply with the revised [Regulation on Rail Passengers’ Rights (Regulation 1371/2007)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32007R1371) which contains amongst others the provision to provide assistance to persons with disabilities at railway stations and on board of trains. Further recommends to ensure that national enforcement bodies (NEBs) are sufficiently funded, resourced and trained on accessibility/disability-related issues to ensure effective protection of passengers with disabilities.

Recommends that State allocate funding for improving transport infrastructure, and advancement of accessibility is done in accordance European accessibility standards, such as the [European Standard on accessibility and usability of the built environment (EN17210).](https://www.cencenelec.eu/standards/Topics/Accessibility/Pages/Builtenvironment.aspx)

Recommends that the State takes an ambitious stance on rail accessibility by implementing the [Regulation 1300/2014 on the technical specifications for interoperability relating to accessibility of the Union’s rail system for persons with disabilities and persons with reduced mobility (TSI PRM)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1461849314755&uri=CELEX:32014R1300) and even goes beyond, and pushes the EU institutions to revise the text soon to achieve independent boarding and circulation within the train.

Recommends that the State supports the unlimited airline liability for mobility equipment in the revision of Regulation 261/2004 on air passengers’ rights, which is currently being discussed in the Council.

#### Freedom of movement and the European Disability Card

The European Commission launched the European Disability Card in 2018 to allow for easier mutual recognition of rights between EU Member States. However, it was only a pilot project covering 8 Member States (Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Malta, Romania, Slovenia), of which not even all have introduced the Card yet. In 2020, the Commission did an evaluation study to decide whether a second funding round for the project could be envisaged. However, the report has not been published yet. It will be important to follow up and make this a true European Card including ALL Member States as well as extending the Card to more areas such as recognition of disability status and portability of benefits in the long run.

**Relevant CRPD article: Article 20 (personal mobility)**

Suggested question:

How will the State advocate for the extension of the European Disability Card in its country and across all EU Member States.

Suggested recommendation:

Recommends that the State support the Disability Card Project by engaging with the European Commission, commits its own resources, and promotes the use of the Card.[[3]](#footnote-3)

### Use of EU funds to promote community living and community-based services

The EU developed various funds called “European structural and investment funds” (European regional development fund, European social fund, Cohesion fund, European agricultural fund for rural development, European maritime and fisheries fund). They can be used by Member States for a wide range of measures. Although the EU monitors their use, there may be a risk that some countries use them in a way that may not comply with the CRPD, for instance to perpetuate institutionalisation.

**Relevant CRPD article: Article 19 (Living independently and being included in the community)**

Suggested question:

Please provide information on the use of EU funds, and measures taken to ensure that the funds are invested in line with the CRPD, and in particular, with the aim to promote community living and community-based services / achieving deinstitutionalisation of persons with disabilities.

Suggested recommendation:

“Calls upon the State party to re-examine the allocation of funds, including the regional funds obtained from the EU, dedicated to the provision of support services for persons with disabilities, and the structure and functioning of the small community living centres, and ensure the full compliance with the provisions of article 19 of the Convention.” - as in CRPD Concluding Observations to Hungary ([CRPD/C/HUN/CO/1](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CRPD/8thSession/CRPD-C-HUN-CO-1_en.doc)), paragraph 35.

### Use of COVID-19 recovery funds to further the social inclusion of persons with disabilities

As a result of the economic and social crisis arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU has made a considerable amount of emergency funds available to the Member States. The package of emergency funds is called “Next Generation EU”. The most considerable part of this package is a fund called the Recovery and Resilience Facility, which comes to a total of 650€ billion. This fund designed to “provide large-scale financial support to reforms and investments undertaken by Member States, with the aims of mitigating the economic and social impact of the coronavirus pandemic and of making the EU economies more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges posed by the green and digital transitions.” In order to receive the funds, Member States must present a national “Recovery and Resilience Plan” to the European Commission for approval.

**Relevant CRPD articles: Article 5 (Equality and non-discrimination), Article 6 (Women with disabilities), Article 7 (children with disabilities), Article 9 (Accessibility), Article 19 (Living independently and being included in the community), Article 24 (education), Article 25 (Health), Article 27 (work and employment)**

Suggested question:

Please provide information on how the Recovery and Resilience Plans presented by your country aim to mitigate the disproportionate social and economic impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities. Please explain how the actions foreseen to support persons with disabilities in the recovery effort will help to further the principles of the CRPD.

Suggested recommendation:

Calls upon the State party to re-examine the priorities for spending in their Recovery and Resilience Plan, and to ensure that no money goes towards furthering the segregation of persons with disabilities or any inaccessible structures.

### Women’s rights

In March 2020, the EU adopted a [Strategy on Gender Equality (2020-2025)](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en) with policy objectives and actions to make significant progress by 2025 towards a gender-equal Europe. For the first time, this Strategy makes specific references to the CRPD and women and girl, in particular in relation to combatting gender-based violence, including forced abortion and sterilisation, and gender-stereotypes.

While the Strategy mostly focuses on EU policies, it also requires Member States to take specific actions (such as to ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention or to target actions that support the specific needs of women in the asylum procedure).

**Relevant CRPD articles: Article 6 (Women with disabilities); Article 15 (Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse)**

Suggested questions:

How does the State’s national gender equality strategy include women and girls with disabilities?

Which measures will the State take to implement the recommendations directed at EU Member States in the EU Gender Equality Strategy?

Suggested recommendations:

Ensure that the rights of women and girls with disabilities are included under the national strategy on gender equality, in relation to all area of life, from combatting violence, to employment and political participation.

Take targeted measures to implement the recommendations directed at EU Member States in the EU Gender Equality Strategy.

### Victims and offenders’ rights

In 2012, the European Union adopted a [Directive on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1421925131614&uri=CELEX:32012L0029). EU countries had to implement the provisions of the Directive into their national laws by 16 November 2015. The European Commission has issued a [guidance document](https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/dg-justice-guidance-document-related-transposition-and-implementation-directive-2012-29-eu_en) to assist EU countries in this process.

The directive establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims and ensures that persons who have fallen victim of crime are recognised and treated with respect. They must also receive proper protection, support and access to justice. It specifically requires States to ensure the needs of victims with disabilities are met when ensuring their rights to:

* understand and be understood
* information
* support
* participate in criminal proceedings
* protection and individual assessment

For certain groups of victims, the EU adopted specific rules. These rules build on the victims' rights directive but respond more directly to the specific needs of some victims. The EU legislation exists to provide protection and support for

* [victims of human trafficking](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/index_en.htm)
* [child victims of sexual exploitation and child pornography](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/organized-crime-and-human-trafficking/index_en.htm)
* victims of terrorism

In a similar way, the EU adopted several directives to protect the rights of suspect and accused, that should be implemented by States without discrimination on the grounds of disability. More specifically, the EU established rules on:

* the [right to information](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1450448411428&uri=CELEX:32012L0013) which applies across the EU since 2 June 2014,
* the [right to interpretation and translation](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1450446951753&uri=CELEX:32010L0064) which applies across the EU since 27 October 2015,
* [Right to have a lawyer](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1450449360102&uri=CELEX:32013L0048), which applies across the EU since 27 November 2016,
* the right to be [presumed innocent and to be present at trial](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1503680060752&uri=CELEX:32016L0343),
* special [safeguards for children suspected and accused in criminal proceedings](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1503680152962&uri=CELEX:32016L0800)
* the [right to legal aid](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1503680234594&uri=CELEX:32016L1919)

To support the implementation of EU laws on Victims’ Rights, the European Commission has adopted a [Victims’ Rights Strategy (2020-2025)](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/criminal-justice/protecting-victims-rights/eu-strategy-victims-rights-2020-2025_en) in 2020. The Strategy requires States to ensure that support services for victims are accessible to victims with disabilities.

An [EU Handbook on Victims of Terrorism](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/law/eu_handbook_on_victims_of_terrorism_2021_01_15_en.pdf) published in January 2021 also requires accessibility of support services for victims with disabilities

**Relevant CRPD article: Article 19 (access to justice); Article 15-16 (violence, torture and ill treatment)**

Suggested questions:

Please provide information on measures taken to ensure that the rights of victims with disabilities and people with disabilities suspected or accused of an offence is fully fulfilled.

Inform on how the EU Directive on victim rights was implemented to ensure all rights are recognised and applied to victims with disabilities; also in light with the EU Victims Rights Strategy (2020-2025).

Inform on measures taken to ensure that women and girls with disabilities victims of domestic and gender-based violence can access shelters and other services available to victims.

Suggested recommendations:

Take measures to ensure that the right to access to justice of victims with disabilities and people with disabilities suspected or accused of an offence is fully fulfilled, in accordance with the CRPD and obligations of the State under EU law, including the EU Victims’ Rights Strategy (2020-2025). Support to victims must include - the provision of accessible shelters and services for women and girls with disabilities victims of domestic and gender-based violence.

### International cooperation

#### European consensus on development

On 19 May 2017, the Council adopted a new [European Consensus on Development](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/sites/devco/files/european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf). This joint statement by the three European institutions (European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council) sets out a framework for development cooperation for the EU and its Member States. The document is a direct response by the EU to the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, when it comes to international cooperation.

The explicit reference to the rights of persons with disabilities within the EU Consensus on Development symbolises an outstanding improvement for accelerating the implementation of a rights-based approach to development cooperation. The EU Consensus embraces a rights-based approach that strengthens links between SDGs and the rights of persons with disabilities. This framework shows that a disability inclusive EU external action plan is crucial to strengthen the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide. It mentions that persons with disabilities will not be left behind and multiple discrimination towards vulnerable individuals will be specifically addressed.

#### Gender equality

Gender equality is placed at the heart of the EU agenda for achieving the SDGs in order to promote women’s rights, gender equality and empowerment of women. However, women and girls with disabilities are also not systematically reached in international cooperation. At the international level, the EU and the United Nations (UN) embarked on a global, multi-year initiative focused on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG) - the [Spotlight Initiative](https://www.spotlightinitiative.org/). The EU invested initially 500 million Euros, but women and girls with disabilities are not specifically included. It is also unclear how they are included pragmatically in the new [EU Gender Action Plan III](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2184).

#### COVID-19

In the global response by the EU to COVID-19[[4]](#footnote-4), “Team Europe” (including the EU and its Member States) was launched in April 2020 with a package of 38.5 billion euros[[5]](#footnote-5). The budget has been mobilised to support the Response Plans of international organisations, providing immediate humanitarian relief in the most affected countries, organising logistics, supplying healthcare devices, and delivering essential goods, food, and water.

**Relevant CRPD article: Article 32 (international cooperation)**

Suggested questions:

Please provide information on the steps and timeframe to ensure the implementation of the European Consensus on Development and further advance the rights of persons with disabilities, including women and girl with disabilities, in international cooperation.

Which measures will the State take to actively reach women and girls with disabilities in international cooperation by using the new EU Gender Action plan III?

Suggested recommendations:

Call the State Party to train its staff in EU delegations on the use of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development- Development Assistance Committee ([OECD DAC) disability marker](https://one.oecd.org/document/DCD/DAC/STAT(2020)48/en/pdf), to track development finance in support of persons with **disabilities**.

Interrupt any international development funding that is being used to perpetuate the segregation of persons with disabilities, and re-allocate such funding towards projects and initiatives that aim at compliance with the Convention.

Ensure to actively reach women and girls with disabilities in international cooperation by using the new EU Gender Action plan III, as well as proactively support the engagement of organisations of persons with disabilities in programmes and projects.

Ensure the Team Europe global response to COVID-19, as well as all future Team Europe joint programming, implementation and vaccination plan, is inclusive of persons with disabilities.

### Humanitarian action (including Disaster Risk Reduction, DRR)

#### Humanitarian action[[6]](#footnote-6)

The EU committed to 'strong progress' on each of the five core responsibility areas of the 2017 [World Humanitarian Summit](https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/summit) in Istanbul. The [Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](http://humanitariandisabilitycharter.org/) (which can be seen as a ‘tool’ to implement the CRPD in situations of risk and humanitarian emergency) was launched at the summit, and has since been endorsed by the EU and (currently) 14 of its Member States[[7]](#footnote-7).

In June 2019, the EU Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operation (ECHO published a [Guidance Note on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/2019-01_disability_inclusion_guidance_note.pdf) (that will apply to the Member States of the EU where they are involved in humanitarian projects funded by the EU). This guidance note is related in purpose to the UN [IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-inclusion-persons-disabilities-humanitarian-action/documents/iasc-guidelines) which were launched at the end of 2019.

In 2020 EDF provided input to the ECHO ‘EC Communication on EU humanitarian aid’ and into the review of the [ECHO ‘Single Form’ Guidelines](https://www.dgecho-partners-helpdesk.eu/download/referencedocumentfile/161). These Guidelines now contain some specific reference to disability inclusion, including data disaggregation, reference to the Washington Group short set of questions and the need for DPO participation, and apply to member states where they are involved in projects funded by the EU.[[8]](#footnote-8)

#### Civil protection

The European single emergency number 112 is still not fully accessible across the EU. In 2019, infringement procedures have been launched against Croatia, Czechia, Germany, Greece, and Spain [for failing to ensure equivalent access to the 112 emergency number to persons with disabilities](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/INF_19_4251). At the moment there are great differences on how persons with disabilities can call the emergency number across EU countries, even in some cases requiring pre-registration. This situation hinders the safety and free movement of persons with disabilities when traveling across the Union. In many cases, these solutions only cater specific disability groups. The European Accessibility Act aims at solving this situation by adopting a harmonised approach to the accessibility of this emergency number through common technical standards (see section on Accessibility above).

#### Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

In 2015, the EU and its Member States participated in development of the [Sendai Framework](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf), which was relatively inclusive of persons with disabilities and was the first of the 2030 Global Agenda initiatives. Throughout 2016 EU also participated in development of terminology and indicators for Sendai implementation, although its interventions supported weakening/removal of the Sendai framework requirement to disaggregate data by disability. Also in 2016, the EU developed an [Action Plan on Sendai implementation](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/sites/echo-site/files/1_en_document_travail_service_part1_v2.pdf), which helps the EU to support Member States in implementation of Sendai. EU Member States individually report progress on DRR primarily through the European Regional Forum (EFDRR) which next takes place in November 2021. At EFDRR 2021 the current roadmap[[9]](#footnote-9), including progress so far by all European nations (including 27 EU states) will be reviewed and updated.

**Relevant CRPD Article: 11 (Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies)**

Suggested questions:

Please provide information on the steps and timeframe that are planned to ensure the development and implementation of a national humanitarian action plan that is inclusive of Persons with Disabilities by adhering to obligations under UN CRPD Article 11 applying the IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.

Similarly, please provide information on the steps and timeframe that are planned to ensure the development and implementation of a national Action Plan on the Sendai Framework, in line with global [monitoring of the Sendai framework](https://sendaimonitor.undrr.org/) and the [European DRR roadmap 2015-2020](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/57664_efdrrroadmapreview.pdf) (to be revised and renewed at EFDRR in 2021).

Please explain how the State ensure that the 112 emergency number is fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

Suggested recommendation:

In future development and improvement of EU humanitarian and DRR policies and frameworks, ensure meaningful participation and full inclusion of persons with disabilities by prioritising adherence to CRPD articles 4.3, 11 and 32, the Sendai framework and in full synergy with the IASC guidelines.

As well as supporting activities that address the specific requirements of persons with disabilities, it is essential to ensure that all mainstream humanitarian services are fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

Implement the OECD DAC marker in humanitarian projects and programmes.

Ensure that the emergency number 112 is fully accessible to all persons with all types of disabilities in all EU countries.

Mainstream disability in its migration and refugee policies, and to issue guidelines to its agencies and member States that restrictive detention of persons with disabilities in the context of migration and asylum seeking is not in line with the Convention.

**For questions or more information, please contact: Marine Uldry at** [**marine.uldry@edf-feph.org**](mailto:marine.uldry@edf-feph.org)**.**

1. A general “turn-up-and-go” principle would have been more in line with the CRPD but this opportunity was missed. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. To learn more about the passengers’ right regulation and their relevance for persons with disabilities you may view the recording of our webinar on the EDF website: <https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/passenger-rights-march-2020/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Estonia prepared the Card but not distributed it physically yet because they lack funding. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. European Commission, [EU global response to COVID-19](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/topics/eu-global-response-covid-19_en) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. EEAs, [Team Europe](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/76341/coronavirus-latest-news-eu-actions-repatriation-efforts-and-solidarity-stories-around-world_en) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. More information on the EU and humanitarian aid: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/164/humanitarian-aid>. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Belgium, Bulgaria, Republic of Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. But major gaps still remain, including specific and effective indicators on disability inclusion, reference to the OECD disability DAC marker and regular disability inclusion training of all ECHO and partners’ staff. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://www.preventionweb.net/files/57664\_efdrrroadmapreview.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-9)