TITLE I – INTERNAL RULES

Article 1 – Purpose of the Internal Rules

These internal rules (hereafter “the Internal Rules”) are supplementary and subordinate to the statutes of the international non-profit association “European Disability Forum” (hereafter “the Association”). In case of a contradiction between the Internal Rules and the statutes of the Association, the latter shall prevail.

Amendments to the Internal Rules shall be made in accordance with the statutes.

Article 2 – Scope of action

The Association is an instrument for the development and monitoring of policy. It is also an interface for information exchange and dissemination. The Association’s direct role is not to manage core projects, which is primarily the domain of individual NGOs.

The Association shall not take the place of individual NGOs representing specific interests in relation to their respective constituent groups, but rather it focuses on common actions, initiatives and issues which may be of concern to all or a majority of its membership.

The Association has a responsibility to defend the interests of its member organisations, and their members, when called upon by them to do so.

Article 3 – Guiding principles

Article 2 of the Statutes outlines the aims and objectives of the organisation.

The internal rules underpin these aims and objectives. The guiding principles of the Association include commitment to the following:

- the implementation of the UN Standard Rules and EU legislative instruments on equalisation of opportunities and non-discrimination for people with disabilities, notably the Treaty on the European Union;
- the promotion of a rights-based approach to disability;
- the solidarity principle across the disability movement at EU and world-wide level;
- the promotion of equal opportunities in relation to disability, gender, race, age, religion or belief, and sexual orientation;
- the achievement of a gender balance with regard to all aspects of the Association’s work. This includes the composition of all governing bodies, staff, Committees and representations;
- the accessibility of information by all, the use of alternative media and accessible language;
- political independence;
- the establishment of partnerships with other organisations defending the rights of people facing discrimination and at risk of social exclusion.

TITLE II - MEMBERS

Article 4- Rights of Full and Ordinary members

Full and Ordinary members have complete ownership of the Association. Full and Ordinary members set the guidelines and the priorities of the Association and make an ongoing contribution to its activities.

Without prejudice to any additional right that may be laid down in the statutes, full and ordinary members enjoy the following rights:

- Full and Ordinary member shall have voting rights at the General Assembly in accordance with the statutes. The expenses of official delegates representing full and ordinary members relating to their attendance at the meetings of the General Assembly shall be paid by the Association, in accordance with the Association’s guidelines on reimbursement of expenses.
- If elected as members to the Board, the expenses related to their participation at the Board meetings, shall be paid by the Association, in accordance with the Association’s guidelines on reimbursement of expenses.
- In line with paragraph 3 of article 20 of the statutes, the expenses of Board observers shall be paid by the Association, in accordance with the Association’s guidelines on the reimbursement of expenses.
- Each Full and Ordinary member shall be informed and consulted on an ongoing basis about the activities of the Association. The Association, and all its organisational structures and the Secretariat, shall ensure that the interests and positions of full and ordinary members shall be taken into account in all the activities of the Association.

Article 5- Rights of Observer and Associate members

Without prejudice to any additional right that may be laid down in the statutes, observer and associate members enjoy the following rights:

- Each Associate and Observer member shall be informed on an ongoing basis about the activities of the Association.
- Observer members may attend the Board meetings with no voting rights. The expenses of observer members from accession countries related to the participation at Board meetings, if allowed by the financial rules that govern the funding the Association receives, shall be covered by the Association, in accordance with the Association’s guidelines on reimbursement of expenses.
- Associate and Observer members may attend the General Assembly with no voting rights. The expenses of observer members from accession countries related to the participation at General Assembly meetings, if allowed by the financial rules that govern the funding the Association receives, shall be covered by the Association, in accordance with the Association’s guidelines on the reimbursement of expenses.

Article 6 - Obligations of members

Without prejudice to any additional obligation that may be laid down in the statutes, the Association’s members incur the following obligations:

- All members shall appoint a representative (who must be a physical person) to be its organisation’s contact with the other members of the Association and with the
Secretariat of the Association. Each member shall forthwith inform the Association in writing of the identity of the representative it appoints and, as the case may be, of the change in identity of its representative. Each representative shall have the power towards the Association to bind the member he/she represents.

- Each representative provides the link between the Secretariat of the Association and the member of the Association that he/she represents; he/she informs and consults the member that he/she represents on a regular basis on the activities of the Association and on the decisions taken by the organisational structures of the Association.

- Members contribute to the aims of the Association by contributing to the policy work, and to specific campaigns, and by disseminating the information received from the Association.

- Members contribute an annual membership fee, the amount of which is determined by the General Assembly in accordance with the statutes and the Internal Rules. If a member does not pay in time its membership fees, its participation at the General Assembly and Board shall be suspended until the payment of all amounts due.

Article 7 – Membership criteria and application procedure

Article 7.1 – Membership criteria

The membership criterion defined under 10.1 of the Statutes shall be interpreted on the basis of the following rules. The rules for National Councils apply both for National Councils in EU/EEA countries (full members), as for National Councils from outside the EU/EEA (observer members).

National Councils of Disabled People

Criterion number 1: This will require that the National Council is established under any legal form accepted in its country and that it can prove that it is independent from any public authority.

Criterion number 2: National Councils of Disabled People must be open to any representative national organisation of disabled people and parents of disabled people unable to represent themselves. In case of more than one National Council applying for full membership of the Association, the level of representativity of the different members needs to be evaluated. In this respect, the number of members (individuals or organisations), the geographical coverage and their membership in European Non-Governmental Organisations of disabled people will be taken into account.

Criterion number 3: At least, 51% of the member organisations of the National Council must be organisations of disabled people or organisations of parents of disabled people unable to represent themselves. Moreover, also three quarters of the members of the Governing bodies, whether they are individuals or organisations, must be or represent disabled people or parents of disabled people unable to represent themselves.

European Non-Governmental Organisations

Criterion number 1: European Non-Governmental Organisations must be formally constituted under the law of one of the EU/EEA countries.

Criterion number 2: They need to have members in at least half plus one of the EU/EEA countries and be open to organisations from any EU/EEA countries.

Criterion number 3: At least, 51% of the member organisations of the European Non-Governmental Organisation must be organisations of disabled people or organisations of parents of disabled people unable to represent themselves. Moreover, also at least 51% of
the members of the Governing bodies, whether they are individuals or organisations, must be or represent disabled people or parents of disabled people unable to represent themselves.

Criterion number 4: Their objectives, as stated in their statutes or other documents, shall refer to co-operation at EU and/or European level on disability and should be in agreement with the purpose of the Association as stated in article 3 of the statutes of the Association.

**Disabled people unable to represent themselves and organisations of parents of disabled people unable to represent themselves**

Whenever the statutes or the internal rules of the Association refer to this, it should be understood as follows:

Disabled people unable to represent themselves are those that, when in adult age, cannot represent themselves, as well as disabled children.

Organisations might be constituted of both parents of disabled people unable to represent themselves and of those adult disabled people of the impairment category they represent that, to some or to full extent, can represent themselves. Adult disabled people that can fully represent themselves shall not be represented by their parents.

Organisations which meet these criteria will be considered as organisations of disabled people and parents of disabled people unable to represent themselves.

Article 7.2 – Membership application procedure

The application for admission as a member shall be addressed to the Association by any means of communication set forth in the Internal Rules. The applicant must specify in its application whether it wants to become a Full, Ordinary, Observer or an Associate member and it must demonstrate its compliance with all the relevant membership criteria. The application will be presented according to the format established by the Association’s Secretariat, and must be accompanied, except for those that are applying as individual members, by the following documents:

- the updated statutes of the applicant, respectively the act of constitution of the applicant and all modifications thereto, respectively the updated articles of association of the applicant, respectively the instrument of registration of the applicant and all modifications thereto;
- a list of the member organisations of the applicant and of their addresses;
- the report of activities of the applicant’s organisation for the preceding year;
- a declaration whereby the applicant commits to the Association’s principles and values, to adhere to its Statutes and the Internal Rules, to respect and support the full range of human rights of disabled people (civil, political, cultural, social, and economic rights), and the equalisation of opportunities for all in accordance with the principles of non discrimination, in all the dimension of its external and internal policies and activities, and in its working practices.

The Membership and Credentials Committee is entitled to ask the applicant any additional information it estimates necessary in order to issue its recommendation to the Board. When issuing its recommendation regarding membership to the Board, the Membership and Credentials Committee may rely on any information, including information obtained from third parties. For any application for membership for non profit and corporate associate membership, the membership and credentials committee will require a recommendation letter from the National Council of the country from which the applicant organization is issued.
or from a full member European non governmental organisation if the applicant organization is active in the field of a specific impairment group or in a specific sector of activity.

If the Board approves an application for membership, the applicant will pay the full annual membership of the financial year during which the decision is taken.

Article 8 - Change in membership status

Members of the Association might request a change in their membership category. This request will be revised by the Membership and Credentials Committee, which will issue an advice to the Board, which will take the final decision.

The change in the membership category will have effect at the time the Board takes its decision.

A special provision is foreseen under article 10.3 of the statutes for Observer members who intend to become full members of the Association.

Article 9 – Resignation - Exclusion of a member

If the Executive Committee, by majority voting, is of the opinion that a member should be excluded from the Association in accordance with the statutes, it shall make a written recommendation to the Board to this effect, setting out the reasons for the proposed exclusion.

If a member has not paid its membership fee for two consecutive years without providing an acceptable explanation to the Association, the Executive Committee may propose to the Board to exclude the organisation.

If the Board supports the recommendation from the Executive Committee, the General Assembly shall decide on the recommendation for exclusion after having heard the member concerned. The General Assembly shall take its decision in accordance with the statutes. The minutes of the General Assembly shall set out the reasons for the exclusion. The excluded member shall receive, by any means of communication set forth in the Internal Rules, a copy of the minutes of the meeting or, a written statement of the reasons of the decision.

As of the day that the General Assembly approves the exclusion, the excluded member shall lose all the rights it had as a member of the Association. The annual membership fee relating to the year that the exclusion takes place remains due for its entire amount. The excluded member shall remain liable for any amount that it owes the Association at the time of the exclusion.

An excluded member may only submit a new application for membership after the expiration of two years following the decision of the General Assembly.

TITLE III – ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES. SECRETARIAT

Article 10 – General Assembly


The General Assembly shall take place once a year in a Member State of the European Union or of the European Economic Area. It shall be announced in writing to the members of the Association 6 months in advance of the meeting.
Delegates representing full members to the General Assembly shall be appointed 2 months in advance of the General Assembly. Each National Council will appoint two representatives and each European Non Governmental Organisation of disabled people will nominate one representative according to provisions defined in article 13 of the Association’s statutes. In case of exceptional circumstances, these delegates might be replaced until one month before the date of the General Assembly.

Delegates representing ordinary members to the General Assembly shall be elected by the European Non Governmental Organisations for disabled people through an election process managed by the Association’s Secretariat and supervised by the Membership and Credentials Committee. The thirteen most voted delegates will attend the General Assembly as official delegates. The process shall be finalised two months in advance of the General Assembly. Elected delegates may not be substituted. If an elected delegate, for whatever reason, cannot attend the meeting of the General Assembly, he/she might choose either to give a proxy vote to another General Assembly delegate from the same membership category, or to withdraw completely, in which case the most voted candidate among those not initially elected will be invited to attend the General Assembly.

Board members shall attend the General Assembly as delegates with their own voting rights.

10.2. Procedures

The invitations to the General Assembly referred to in the statutes shall be sent to the members by the intermediary of the Secretariat.

The agenda of the General Assembly is prepared by the Executive Committee and agreed by the Board.

It will be sent to the delegates two months in advance of the meeting. Delegates to the General Assembly may request for items to be added to the agenda until two weeks before the meeting. They shall support this request with a note presenting the issue and justifying the need to include it in the agenda of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly will be chaired by the President, assisted by the two Vice-Presidents. In the absence of the Association’s President, the longest serving Vice-President will chair the General Assembly.

10.3 Elections of President and Board. The Scrutiny Committee.

Every four years a new President and a new Board of Directors are elected.

To undertake the election process, an ad hoc Scrutiny Committee will be appointed at the beginning of the General Assembly. The Scrutiny Committee will be in charge of counting the votes and informing the General Assembly of the results of the vote. The Scrutiny Committee will be composed of two representatives from member organisations not taking part as candidates in the election process and two members of the Association’s Secretariat.

Organisations, who apply for a position in the Board of the Association, will send an expression of interest, a description of the organisation, and the curriculum vitae of the candidate to represent the organisation on the Board to the Association’s Secretariat at least two months before the General Assembly. The Secretariat of the Association will send information on candidates to the General Assembly delegates according to their membership category.
Delegates may only take part in the election of Board members representing their respective membership category. Each General Assembly delegate with voting right may vote up to the number of positions to be covered for each membership category.

Individuals who want to apply for the position of President of the Association will need to be proposed by a full member of the Association and must be disabled or a parent of disabled people unable to represent themselves. Candidatures, including an expression of interest and a Curriculum Vitae, must reach the Secretariat of the Association at least two months before the relevant General Assembly.

All delegates with voting rights will take part in the election for the President of the Association.

Before the election will take place, each candidate will be asked to present him/herself to the delegates of the General Assembly. The most voted candidate will be elected as President.

All delegates will jointly elect the four people to join the Secretary of the Association on the Membership and Credentials Committee. The two most voted people from National Councils of disabled people and the two most voted people from European Non-Governmental Organisations of disabled people will be elected.

All delegates will jointly elect the four people to join the Treasurer of the Association on the Finance Committee. The two most voted people from National Councils of disabled people and the two most voted people from European Non-Governmental Organisations of disabled people will be elected.

If, for whatever reason, a Board member organisation has withdrawn from the Board, an election will take place among the delegates from the relevant membership category at the next General Assembly.

If, for whatever reason, the President has withdrawn from his/her position, an election for President will take place at the next General Assembly. The President’s mandate will in any case coincide with the term of the other members of the Executive Committee.

10.4 Resolutions of the General Assembly

Proposals for resolutions at the General Assembly should be submitted to the Association’s Secretariat at least 6 weeks before the General Assembly’s official opening. The draft Resolution will be sent out to all General Assembly delegates. Amendments to the draft resolutions should be sent to the Association at the latest two weeks before the opening of the General Assembly. A final version of the documents and amendments will be sent by the Secretariat to the delegates one week before the opening of the meeting.

The authors of the resolutions will have the possibility to present briefly their proposals at the General Assembly, before the Assembly proceeds to a discussion and vote. In case of unforeseen events, emergency resolutions may be adopted. The procedure to adopt an emergency resolution will be as follows:

- The General Assembly, when adopting the agenda, will decide whether to accept to discuss an emergency resolution. If accepted, the draft resolution will be discussed at the end of the meeting under agenda item “Any Other Business”.
- If it is accepted to discuss the resolution, a drafting Committee will be appointed which will work on the text of a draft Resolution and which will present the text to the General
Assembly. All efforts will be made to distribute the text prepared by the drafting Committee in written and alternative means to the delegates of the General Assembly with sufficient time for their consideration.

10.5. Extraordinary General Assembly

An Extraordinary General Assembly may be convoked by the President, or in his of her absence, a Vice-President, upon the request of one third of the full and ordinary members of the Association or upon request of two thirds of the members of the Board. This invitation must be sent to the members, by any means of communication set forth in the Internal Rules, within 10 working days following the receipt of the aforementioned request.

Article 11 – Board

11.1 Procedures

The Board will meet ordinarily three times a year.

The agenda of the Board shall be prepared by the Executive Committee.

The agenda of the meeting and supporting documents will be sent to the Board members one month in advance of the meetings. Board members may request in writing the inclusion of additional agenda items until one week before the Board meeting. They shall support this request with an explanatory statement.

The Board will be chaired by the President of the Association or, in her/his absence, by the longest serving Vice-president.

The Board will be validly constituted if more than 50% of its members are present.

If so decided by the Executive Committee or requested by one third of the Board members, an extraordinary Board meeting will be held. The information related to the venue and date of this extraordinary Board meeting will be sent out to Board members one month in advance of the meeting.

In exceptional cases, and when the urgency of the matter so requires, the Board may take decisions by a written procedure. To that effect, the Executive Committee, with the assistance of the Secretariat, shall send, by any means of communication set forth in the Internal Rules, the proposals for decision to all the members of the Board. The proposals for decision shall be deemed adopted if within ten working days, the number of responses of the members of the Board meets the quorum and voting requirements set forth in the statutes and the Internal Rules.

11.2. Election of the Executive Committee

An extraordinary Board meeting will be held during the General Assembly that will have elected the new Board, in order to proceed to the election of the members of the Executive Committee.

All Board members will vote for all positions in the Executive Committee and will cast up to one vote per position.

The elections will take place in the following order:
- election of the two Vice-presidents;
- election of Secretary and Treasurer;
- election of the remaining Executive Committee positions;

Candidates may run for different positions in the Executive Committee. In case of being elected to a position, their candidature to the other positions will be withdrawn.

In order to ensure parity between both full membership categories, the following voting procedure will apply:

The most voted candidate among candidates from National Councils of disabled people for the position of Vice-president and the most voted candidate among candidates from European Non-Governmental Organisations of disabled people for the position of Vice-president will become Vice-presidents of the Association.

The positions of Secretary and Treasurer will be voted jointly:

- if for the position of Secretary there are only candidates from one of the two full membership categories (either from a National Council or a Non Governmental Organisation of disabled people), the candidatures to the position of Treasurer coming from the same full membership category, will be withdrawn. A vote will then take place and the most voted candidates for each of the positions will become Secretary and Treasurer.

- if for the position of Treasurer there are only candidates from one of the two full membership categories (either from a National Council or a Non Governmental Organisation of disabled people), the candidatures to the position of Secretary coming from the same full membership category, will be withdrawn. A vote will then take place and the most voted candidates for each of the positions will become Secretary and Treasurer.

- if for the position of Treasurer there are only candidate (s) from one full membership category and for the position of Secretary, there are only candidates from the other full membership category, the most voted candidates for each of the positions will become Treasurer and Secretary.

- if there are candidates for both the positions of Secretary and Treasurer from both full membership categories, the candidate receiving the greatest number of votes, will be elected to the position he/she had submitted his/her candidature. The remaining position will be assigned to the candidate to that position that has received the greatest number of votes from the other full membership category.

For the remaining six seats on the Executive Committee, the three most voted candidates from National Councils of disabled people, the three most voted candidates from European Non-Governmental organisations of disabled people will be elected.

If, for whatever reason, an Executive Committee member, with the exception of the President, withdraws from his/her position, an election will take place at the next Board meeting among candidates coming from the relevant membership category.

**Article 12 – Executive Committee**

12.1. Resignation and replacement
If a member of the Executive Committee is absent from three consecutive meetings of the Executive Committee without good cause, he or she shall be deemed to have resigned. In case of a vacancy within the Executive Committee, the Executive Committee shall be validly composed of the remaining members of the Executive Committee until the next Board takes place. In case of vacancy of the President, the longest serving Vice-president will take over the role of President until the next General Assembly. The term of office of a member of the Executive Committee, who is appointed following a vacancy, will coincide with the term of office of the other Executive Committee members. This rule also applies to the President.

12.2. Procedures

The Executive Committee shall be convoked by the President, by the intermediary of the Secretariat, whenever the interests of the Association so require or upon the request, by any means of communication set forth in the Internal Rules, of one third of the members of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will be chaired by the President of the Association or, in her/his absence, by the longest serving Vice-president.

The Executive Committee shall be validly constituted if at least six of its members are present. A meeting of the Executive Committee shall be validly constituted even if all or some of the members are not physically present or represented, but participate in the deliberations via a conference call or video conference, provided that all the accessibility requirements of all other members of the Executive Committee are met. In such a case the member shall be deemed present.

The agenda of the Executive Committee will be prepared by the President of the Association and, by the intermediary of the Secretariat of the Association, sent to the members of the Executive Committee at least two weeks before the meeting, together with all relevant supporting documents.

The minutes of the meetings of the Executive Committee shall be kept by the Secretariat. They shall be at the disposal of the members of the Association at the registered office of the Association.

In exceptional cases, and when the urgency of the matter so requires, the Executive Committee may make decisions by a written procedure. To that effect, the President, with the assistance of the Secretariat, shall send, by any means of communication set forth in the Internal Rules, the proposals for decision to all the members of the Executive Committee. The proposals for decision shall be deemed adopted if within five working days the number of responses received by the President, care of the Secretariat, from members of the Executive Committee meet the quorum and voting requirements set forth in the statutes and the Internal Rules.

Article 13 – Committees

In its work, the Association will be supported by Policy, and specific Target Committees. Each Committee will receive the support of a member of the Executive Committee.

Policy Committees are established by the Board every four years according to the main fields of work, priorities, and goals of the Association.
Specific Target Committees have the task to ensure that interests on specific issues such as multiple discrimination, are adequately taken into consideration in EDF’s work. These include disabled women and mothers of children with disabilities, young disabled people, people with complex dependency needs, and elderly people with disabilities. Preferably, representatives of network organisations focusing on those issues will be selected as members to these committees. Target Committees may also represent the Association, pending approval of the Board, within external European organisations representing their constituency, in order to promote disability issues in their work.

The Board will be responsible for decisions on the management of Committees. This includes decisions on the composition of Committees, the establishment of a formal mandate through the adoption of the terms of reference of the Committees. The Board will also carry out periodically a review of their work.

The Executive Committee members responsible for the different Committees will provide information to the Board on the work carried in their respective area of competence.

Article 14 – The Finance Committee

The role of the Finance Committee includes:

a) monitoring the financial management of the Association;

b) making proposals to the Executive Committee on financial issues, including membership fees and guidelines on reimbursement of expenses;

The Finance Committee shall have five members, including the Treasurer, who shall chair the Committee.

The four remaining posts will be allocated as follows: (i) two members shall come from the National Councils of Disabled People; (ii) two members shall come from the European Non-Governmental Organisations Full Members.

Its term of office will be four years and will coincide with the term of office of the Board. The members will be elected by the General Assembly that will have also have elected the new Board. If a person withdraws, for whatever reason, from the Finance Committee, the vacancy will be covered at the next General Assembly meeting.

TITRE IV – Finances

Article 15 - Income

The Association’s income includes the membership fees, donations, grants, subsidies and legacies awarded to support either the general aims, or a specific goal, which does not run counter to the Association’s aims and tasks.

The level of the different annual membership fees is set by the General Assembly.

Article 16 - Payments and expenses

The President and Treasurer shall both have authority to sign payment orders for expenses foreseen in the budget. For all payments above 10,000 EUROs both signatures shall be necessary.

For expenses exceeding 2,000 EUROs and not exceeding 5,000 EUROs not foreseen in the budget, the President or Treasurer shall ask for prior approval of the Executive Committee.
For expenses exceeding 5,000 EUROs not foreseen in the budget, the prior approval of the Board is required.

For the management of the Secretariat, the President or the Treasurer shall give a mandate to the Director to oversee the operational costs of the Secretariat.

Members, staff and consultants shall adhere to the Guidelines of the Association relating to payment of expenses.

Article 17 - Accounts

The Director must provide the Treasurer with a financial statement each trimester. The Secretariat of the Association is responsible for keeping the books, under the supervision of the Treasurer. A financial statement shall be sent to the Board two times a year.

These statements shall be approved by the Board at each of its meetings.

Once a year, the annual accounts shall be submitted to the Board for approval before being submitted to the General Assembly for approval. The Association’s Secretariat keeps these documents at the members’ disposal for consultation at any time.

The accounts of the Association shall be subject to an external and internal audit.

Article 18 - Financial year

The financial year shall run from 1 May - 30 April. The General Assembly shall have the power to change the dates of the financial year.

TITRE V – Miscellaneous

Article 19 – Notices

Whenever the Internal Rules refer to “any means of communication as set forth in the Internal Rules”, this shall mean any of the following means of written communication:
- letter;
- fax;
- email;

Any of these means of written communication can also be used if the statutes or the Internal Rules do not specify by which means the notice, invitation, letter, other document or announcement to which the statutes or Internal Rules refer, should be communicated/sent.

Alternative formats such as Braille, large print, electronic format or tape shall be provided upon request.

Article 20 - Accessibility of Meetings

EDF will do its utmost in order to ensure that meetings and events organised by the Association are accessible to people with disabilities, on the basis of the needs indicated by the participants prior to the event. This will include the physical accessibility of meeting venue and accommodation, as well as the provision of accessible information for people with
hearing disability (such as sign language, video captioning, hearing loop, etc...), and with visual disability (electronic format, large print, Braille or other alternative formats). The needs of people with intellectual disability (the provision of easy to read information) will also be taken into account. Before any meeting EDF must inform the participants on the “level” of accessibility – especially if there are any shortcomings.