



EUROPEAN
DISABILITY
FORUM

EDF's input to the EU Action plan on integration and inclusion of migrants and people of migrant background

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About the European Disability Forum

The European Disability Forum (EDF) is an independent umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of more than 100 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe, run by persons with disabilities and their families. EDF is a member of the Social Platform and Human Rights and Democracy Network and works closely to the European institutions, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

We started [our advocacy work on refugees with disabilities](#) in 2015, in cooperation with our members and organisations such as Human Rights Watch, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

We brought the issue to the European Commission and the [European Parliament](#), advocating for all EU funding for refugees to also reach those with disabilities. During a [mission](#) in Greece with the EESC, we were able to evaluate the difficult situation of refugees with disabilities.

At the [Conference of State Parties](#) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), we [called](#) for the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migrants to include the voices of persons with disabilities.

We repeatedly called on the European Union (EU) and its Member States to take a human rights-based approach to conflict driven migration by ensuring we receive migrants with disabilities in dignified conditions. Our vision of Europe is one where human rights are upheld for all.

We have also built the capacity of our members by publishing a [toolkit for disability organisations on how to support inclusion of refugees and migrants with disabilities](#).

Situation of migrants with disabilities

Refugees and asylum seekers with disabilities face the same risks as other refugees, however compounded by many other issues. Because of systemic failure to protect their rights, they find themselves at heightened risk of violence, including sexual and domestic abuse, discrimination, linguistic and communication barriers, inaccessible facilities, inaccessible support services or disruption of these services being disproportionately more likely to put their lives at risk, risk of being confined to segregated, institutional settings, and in some cases pre-existing health conditions which leave them more at risk of developing serious illness or dying.

EU legislation obliges member states to identify persons with disabilities in reception and detention centres, but there is a lack of formally defined procedures to identify and support persons with disabilities. Many are identified on an informal or ad hoc basis, or late in the procedure.

There is a lack of data disaggregated by disability, gender and age means that it is not possible to correctly assess the situation of migrants with disabilities living in EU member states.

EU's obligations

As a state party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**CRPD**), both the EU and all its Member States are obliged to provide persons with disabilities, including migrants with disabilities with the same range and quality of support services, including health care as the ones available to persons without disabilities.

Article 11 of the CRPD addresses the rights of persons with disabilities in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, stating that: "States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters."

All articles of the CRPD – including in relation to non-discrimination, gender equality, access to inclusive education, work and employment, access to health, accessibility and access to social protection are also all relevant to migrants with disabilities living in the EU.

In 2015, the **UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** [recommended](#) the EU to mainstream disability in its migration and refugee policies.

Main recommendations for the Action Plan on integration and inclusion of migrants and people of migrant background

All migrants and people with a migrant background, including those with disabilities, should be fully included in society, face no discrimination and be given equal access to services. They should be recognised as full members of our societies.

The Action Plan must explicitly refer to the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, its Article 11 on situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migration and follow up on the recommendation on refugees with disabilities received by the CRPD Committee.

EDF recommends that the Action Plan includes measures to:

1. Ensure the **identification of persons with disabilities and recognition of disability status** of migrants with disabilities; this can be done pre-departure or on arrival. This must take into account the invisibility of many types of disabilities.
2. Collect disaggregated **data** by disability, gender and age of migrants with disabilities. Data are necessary to adopt targeted actions to ensure full integration and inclusion of migrants with disabilities.
3. Include migrants with disabilities **in all integration and inclusion measures**: inclusive education and vocational training (including education in the sign language of the host country); labour market integration; access to basic services, such as healthcare (including mental health and sexual and reproductive health and rights services), accessible housing (no institutionalisation) and food.
4. Adopt **targeted measures** to ensure the inclusion of migrants with disabilities in our societies, with provision of disability and support services for persons with disabilities (and their families) to live in the community.
5. Allocate **EU funds to foster the inclusion of migrants with disabilities** in the EU, with no funding allocated to initiatives that do not comply with the CRPD or would further exclude migrants with disabilities (e.g. an initiative that would not be accessible for migrants with disabilities, or that would perpetuate segregation). There should be investment in civil society organisations who represent and advocate for people with a migrant background and in local and national organisations of persons with disabilities providing expertise on inclusion of migrants with disabilities.
6. Meaningfully **involve and consult with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations** in designing, implementing and evaluating the Action Plan and all initiatives on integration and inclusion of migrants, including through the European Integration Network.

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