



Policy Brief

Disability-inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction:

Moving forward in DiDRR across Europe and Central Asia

Overview

Persons with disabilities make up at least 15% of the global population¹, yet continue to be among those **most impacted by disasters**² and **more likely to be excluded from** emergency preparedness, disaster risk reduction (**DRR**) and related **decision-making** processes.³ Europe and Central Asia are no exception, with COVID-19 being one of the most recent examples of this. For instance, UK statistics from early 2021 already show that **persons with disabilities accounted for six in 10 COVID-19 related deaths**⁴, the fact strongly corroborated by evidence of discrimination from across the continent. Similar trends are observed in other crisis situations, including [flooding](#), [extreme weather related incidents](#) and [wildfires](#).

In preparation for the 2021 European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction (EFDRR), the European Disability Forum (EDF) has worked on the **first-ever review⁵ of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction (DiDRR) policy and practice** across countries of the Europe and Central Asia region.⁶

¹ [World Report on Disability](#). WHO and World Bank (2011)

² [IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#) (2019)

³ Twigg, J. Kett, M. Lovell, E. [Disability inclusion and disaster risk reduction: Overcoming barriers to progress](#) (2018)

⁴ [European Human Rights Report](#). Impact of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities. European Disability Forum (2021)

⁵ The methodology of the review entailed the following: (i) desk review of over 650 documents (DRR and disability related laws, policies, strategies and action plans) from the 55 member states of the EFDRR that were available in English and Russian; (ii) online survey administered among the representatives of government and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs) from the shortlisted 22 countries based on the identified reference to disability in their policies and strategic documents; and (iii) key informant interviews with the stakeholders who have responded positively to the online survey and the request to participate in the interviews.

⁶ The [review](#), [policy paper](#) and a [quick reference guide on DiDRR for practitioners in Europe and Central Asia](#) can be found at the EDF website: <https://www.edf-fepf.org/>



Key findings

During the review, several European countries have been identified with positive examples of disability-inclusive DRR. These include existence of inclusive policies as well as a few practices of engaging Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (DPOs) in decision-making. However, based on the results identified through this review, these good practice examples tend to be ad hoc, and are often the result of a dedicated action of individuals, rather than being established in official systems and coordination mechanisms for DRR.⁷

The findings from the DiDRR review point to an urgent need to accelerate action to reduce disaster and climate related risks and their disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities. This should be done through fast-tracked and contextual implementation of the Sendai Framework in adherence with its Guiding Principles, and in line with [Article 11](#) of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

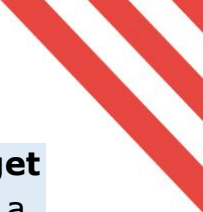
Figure 1. Key findings from the DiDRR policy and practice review in Europe and Central Asia

- The DiDRR review has found **no example of systematic data disaggregation** by gender, age and disability in national information systems related to disaster risk reduction and recovery.
- Only **five⁸ out of 55** countries in Europe and Central Asia have demonstrated attempts in **developing disability-inclusive DRR policies** in line with the Sendai Framework.
- Only **six countries⁹** across the region have **prioritized protection and safety of persons with disabilities** in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies by having included reference to Article 11 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in national policies, strategies and action plans related to disability.

⁷ Due to the very limited response rate from the government representatives, the findings of the review had to be based primarily on the desk research as well as on the feedback received from the DPOs. Therefore, the review does not exclude the possibility that there may be other positive examples of disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction in the region which are not included here.

⁸ Armenia, Georgia, Italy, Serbia and Tajikistan

⁹ Armenia, Croatia, Finland, Italy, Spain and UK

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- Only **one country**¹⁰ in the region commits to **allocation of state budget for disability inclusive civil protection** measures, which indicates to a major gap in national investments and efforts for inclusive DRR.
 - The review has found practically **no reference to disability** in country-specific **policies and plans** related to **climate change adaptation**.
 - **Rights-based approaches** are largely **missing** from policy and practice, and persons with disabilities continue to be seen as '**vulnerable groups**' rather than as key stakeholders and contributors to disaster risk reduction.

Priority gaps

The review of the DiDRR policy and practice across Europe and Central Asia has identified the following **five priority gaps** resulting from the **lack of awareness** and **prioritization** of disability inclusion in disaster preparedness, response and recovery:


Figure 2. Priority gaps identified from the DiDRR review in Europe and Central Asia

1. Lack of disability disaggregated data
2. Lack of representation, coordination and partnerships with 'representative' organizations of persons with disabilities
3. Lack of accessibility of crisis communication, risk information, critical infrastructure and services
4. Lack of expertise on disability-inclusive DRR
5. Lack of investments in disability-inclusive DRR

Key recommendations

Highlighting the need for participation of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations in building resilience, the European Disability Forum and its members call for governments to ensure implementation of the Sendai Framework and to fulfill their legal obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

¹⁰ Croatia



We ask to achieve this by prioritizing the development and implementation of fully inclusive DRR strategies (target E of the Sendai Framework), and promoting effective cross-sectoral partnerships through meaningful engagement with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in all aspects of climate action and disaster risk reduction, including preparedness, response, and recovery by capitalizing on the following:

Sendai Framework Priority 1: Understanding disaster risk

- 1. Prioritize** disability, gender and age **disaggregated data collection** as part of disaster management systems (including climate and risk assessments, emergency needs assessments and disaster loss databases) at regional, national and local levels as well as national population censuses and surveys (art. 31 of the CRPD).

Sendai Framework Priority 2: Strengthening disaster risk governance to manage disaster risk

- 2. Ensure representation and meaningful participation** of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations **in disaster and climate risk governance** and related **coordination mechanisms**, including National Platforms for DRR and the humanitarian Cluster system.
- 3. Designate focal points for disability** within the government units responsible for DRR and climate action and invest in their capacity building in close collaboration with the Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (art. 4.3 of the CRPD).
- 4. Ensure that DRR and CCA related policies**, strategic frameworks and plans of action **are inclusive, covering the diversity of disability**, and informed by disability, gender and age analysis to prevent the expansion of inequalities exacerbated by climate change.
- 5. Ensure that all disability-related policies**, strategies and action plans **consider protection and safety of all persons with disabilities** in situations of risk and humanitarian crises in line with Article 11 of the CRPD.



Sendai Framework Priority 3: Investing in disaster risk reduction for resilience

6. Include specific requirements of persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities in leveraging investments for DRR and CCA (e.g. budgeting for reasonable accommodation and accessibility), and ensure that **all investment strategies** and **their end results** are **fully accessible to** and **participatory of all of society**.

Sendai Framework Priority 4: Preparedness and resilient recovery

7. Ensure **meaningful participation** of persons with disabilities in **emergency preparedness** and **contingency planning** at national and local levels to fully address the specific requirements of all persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities and other groups of persons with disabilities that are most excluded in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (art. 11 and 4.3 of the CRPD).
8. **Ensure that risk information**, including early warning, alert systems, and crisis communication, **is fully inclusive covering the diversity of disability**, and is available in local languages and in sign language (art. 9, 11 and 21 of the CRPD).
9. Ensure that all newly built **critical infrastructure** including schools, hospitals and shelters are made safe and **accessible following** relevant national guidelines and the **principles of Universal Design**.