

# European Regional Disability Summit: Perspectives on Pan European international cooperation

8 February 2022

## Outcome document



### Overview European continent

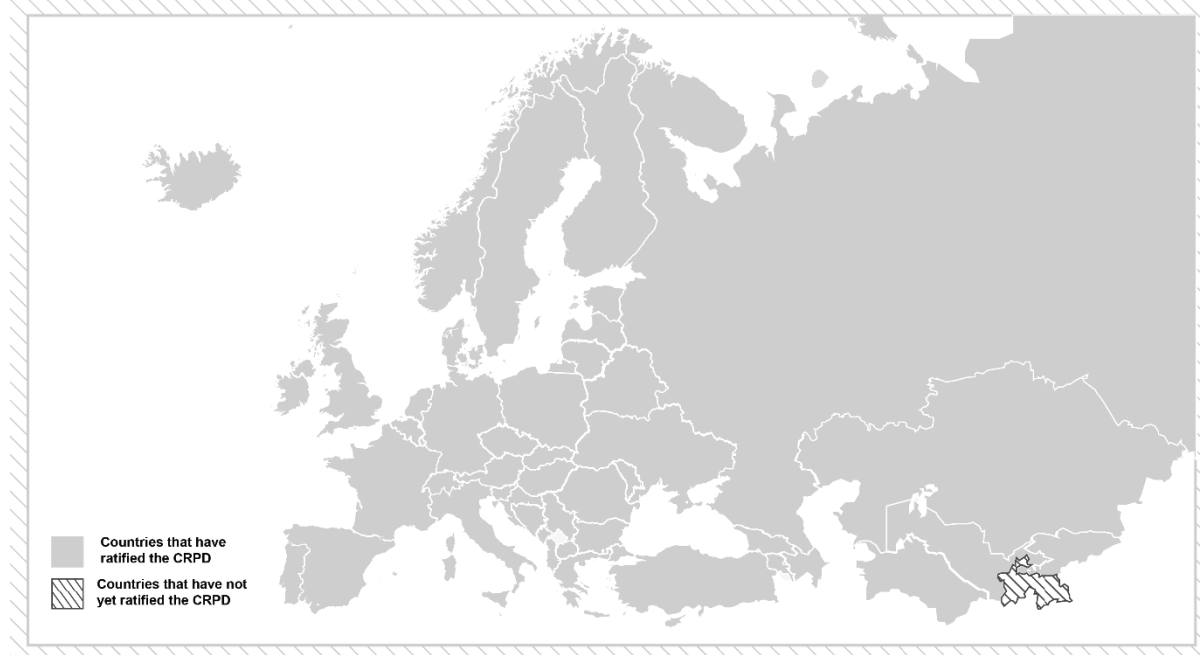
The area covered by this high-level Summit is 51 countries that constitute the European continent: 27 of these are within the European Union (EU), several are Nordic and Western European countries that are not part of the EU, and others include Eastern European and Western and Central Asian countries, which are geographically located on both the European and Asian continents.

### The United Nations Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities in Europe

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Optional Protocol were adopted in 2006 by consensus of the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN). In 2007, the CRPD and the Optional Protocol were opened for signature at UN Headquarters in New York. Today, 182 countries worldwide (94% of UN members) and the European Union (EU) are States Parties to the CRPD, making it the world's most quickly ratified international human rights treaty.

The EU has been a State Party to the CRPD since 2011 and is the only regional integration organisation to have done this. All 27 of the European Union (EU) Member States have also ratified the CRPD. All the EU candidate countries (Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia and Turkey) are States Parties, as well as three of the four European Economic Area/European Free Trade Association (EEA/EFTA) countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland; **Liechtenstein** not yet). The European microstates of Andorra, Monaco and San Marino have ratified. Beyond these countries, almost all other states within the 'wider Europe' have also ratified the CRPD (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). The only exception remaining is **Tajikistan**, which has signed the convention but not yet ratified it.

## CRPD ratification in wider Europe area with two countries not yet having ratified the CRPD: the microstate of Liechtenstein and Tajikistan



### International cooperation in Europe

In Europe, policies related to inclusive international cooperation remain complicated, due in part to the complex political and sociocultural landscape of this geographical region.

With that diversity in mind, European data on disability is limited. In the EU, there is an estimated 100 million persons with disabilities while in the 53 Member States of the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region, 6 to 10 out of every 100 people live with disability. In total, approximately 135 million people in the UN European region live with a disability. With population ageing and the rising prevalence of noncommunicable conditions, including injuries, this number is set to increase in the future.

Regarding international cooperation, the EU is one of the biggest donors of development aid in the world (with a focus on Africa and Asia), while the Eastern and Central Asian countries receive disproportionately lower financial and technical assistance support. It means persons with disabilities in these countries, in particular women, girls and children with disabilities, face high rates of poverty, discrimination and where access to universal coverage is limited. Persons with disabilities have poorer health outcomes, lower education achievements, and they are less inclined to be included in the labour market than peers without disabilities. Access to health, education, employment, transport and information is limited, with also little or no organised representative organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) to strengthen the disability movement.

### Overview of the European Regional Disability Summit

The co-hosts of the Global Disability Summit 2022 encouraged development partners, UN agencies, Government and Civil Society Organizations to organise regional Summits, to galvanise international cooperation, focus on region-specific discussions, with the [formulation of commitments](#) by the 26th January 2022.

**The aim of this high-level European Regional Disability Summit was to discuss how international cooperation in the broader European region can become inclusive of persons with disabilities.**

## Participants

1008 people registered for the event and participants included European governments, donors, UN country teams, civil society organisations and OPDs. The high-level speakers and participants took stock of the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and building on the shared experience of years of disability inclusive development.

## Main outcomes

The draft of this outcome document has been introduced at the high-level European Regional Disability Summit while the final version will be presented at the Global Disability Summit 2022.

### OPDs recommendations prior to the Summit

In advance of the Summit, consultations were organised with representative OPDs in Europe. These consultations informed persons with disabilities on the Global Disability Summit, tracked the progress made since GDS18 and gathered the European disability movement's priorities for GDS22.

Participants highlighted that all five GDS22 themes<sup>i</sup> were important to the lives of persons with disabilities. However, meaningful engagement of OPDs in international cooperation in the region is often not guaranteed. Many programs in international cooperation were cancelled or budget reduced due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During preparatory meetings for the European Regional Disability Summit, OPDs identified the following recommendations:

- Build the capacity and fund OPDs to be able to be fully engaged in development work, including regarding the Global Disability Summit;
- Support the development of networks and coalitions of OPDs in the region;
- Ensure that all development work in the region is fully inclusive of all persons with disabilities, with a particular attention to those people that are most excluded, such as women and girls with disabilities, indigenous people with disabilities, etc;
- Reach out and invest in regions of the world that are often forgotten by donors such as Eastern Europe, Central Asia, Latin America and the Mediterranean countries.

### Priorities highlighted during the Summit

During the European Regional Disability Summit, stakeholders highlighted the importance of concrete CRPD-compliant human rights-based commitments to disability inclusive development. The following priorities were highlighted:

1. **Meaningful participation** of OPDs, including those in the broader European region, central Asia and the global south, in all international cooperation and humanitarian action policymaking and implementation processes related to the CRPD.
2. Support of **the disability movement**, including in the broader European region, central Asia and the global south, in all its diversity.
3. **Financial commitment** to advance the rights of persons with disabilities, including timely and adequate budget for **accessibility and reasonable accommodation**, to ensure immediate progress and sustainability of disability inclusive process and outcomes.
4. Incorporation of **disability inclusion in all mainstream** international cooperation and humanitarian action activities, as well as specific targeted interventions, to make the CRPD a reality for all.
5. Investment in early inclusion, with focus on early intervention, disability-inclusive **education, health, employment and social protection with meaningful participation of parents, parental networks and organizations of persons with disabilities.**

6. Increasing **access to assistive technology** for children and adults with disabilities, including adequate services, funding, legislation and improved procurement mechanisms.
7. Increasing **access to education** for children and persons with disabilities, including investment in regular schools, support services and accessible digital learning solutions.
8. Specific actions to address the intersectional discrimination experienced by **women and girls with disabilities**, including gender-based violence, and to promote and sustain the leadership of all women and girls with disabilities.
9. Specific actions to address **other intersecting factors** that lead to increased discrimination, including (but not limited to) age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and cultural background.
10. Specific actions to ensure equality for all persons with disabilities, **including those most-marginalised** such as persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, or persons who are deafblind.
11. Continued and increased emphasis on **deinstitutionalisation**, transferring financial and human resources into community-based living options and child protection services that are closely integrated with inclusive health, education and social welfare support mechanisms.
12. **Disaggregation of data by disability, age and gender** in all relevant planning, monitoring and reporting systems from development through humanitarian and civil protection preparedness and response mechanisms.
13. Investment in **community support services and inclusive social protection**, including reforming disability assessment.
14. **Internal restructuring of organisations** to ensure inclusion starts from within, for example disability-inclusive recruitment and employment policies and practices, and changing attitudes of high-level decision-makers and at the governance levels.
15. **Cooperation and collaboration** on disability inclusion between and within all interconnected fields of work and stakeholders, including development, civil protection, disaster risk reduction, climate change emergency response.
16. Identify and adhere to existing **frameworks, strategies and guidelines** on disability inclusion (international, national or organisational), and ensure that further improvements to such resources are done in a way that is consistent and collaborative.
17. Incorporation of regular and embedded **training and awareness raising on disability inclusion and CRPD** as part of ongoing institutional education, and also as part of partner capacity building exercises where relevant.
18. Embrace innovative opportunities provided by **digital technology**, especially to improve **accessibility of information**, and to harmonise **accessibility legislation** across wider Europe.
19. Ensure that the **green transition is a just transition**, providing all persons with disabilities with equal access to green jobs, and ensure equal access of women to **digital services employment** opportunities.

For more information, please contact the European Disability Forum International Cooperation team: [international.cooperation@edf-feph.org](mailto:international.cooperation@edf-feph.org)

For more details on the European Regional Disability Summit, please visit the [European Disability Forum website](#).

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<sup>i</sup> The five themes of the Global Disability Summit are: Strengthening engagement with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in particular in the Global South, Inclusive education, Inclusive livelihoods and social protection, Inclusive health and Inclusion in situations of conflict and crisis, including from climate change.