# Green EDF Policy

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# Introduction - why a Green Policy?

As the world's largest minority, persons with disabilities are very heavily impacted by the climate crisis. Considering that there are 1 billion people around the globe with disabilities, and over 100 million in Europe alone, our actions to combat the climate crisis will also have a huge impact.

EDF has been working on climate-related issues in recent years. Annex 1 elaborates some of the networks and alliances EDF already works on in the field of climate. This policy was developed by assessing the current situation, by discussing with our members and by trying to identify the key areas where EDF can have an impact. The areas covered in our policy are in four broad, interrelated fields:

* Advocacy: Building a greener, more accessible and inclusive future through inclusive climate action
* Climate action within EDF: reducing our own impact on the environment
* Research and evidence: studying the impact of the climate crisis on persons with disabilities and generating knowledge and best practice
* Building a stronger, more sustainable disability movement

# Background

## Our advocacy on inclusive accessible climate action

Persons with disabilities in every part of the world impacted by the climate crisis, and sometimes disproportionately compared to the general population[[1]](#footnote-2). So while the climate crisis dominates the political agenda, persons with disabilities should be part of this political dialogue. In addition, the [EU Green Deal](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en) and [EU Strategy on Adaptation to Climate Change](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM:2021:82:FIN) are key instruments which the EU will use to combat the climate crisis, both in Europe and around the world. These give a range of opportunities for EDF to support the sustainability agenda, and to advance disability rights through the green agenda. The rights which can be advanced include meaningful participation, accessible public transport, accessible buildings, access to training and work, inclusive disaster risk reduction, the ‘just transition’ including mitigating the negative impact of the transition on persons with disabilities, and the digital transition. Furthermore, with the topic becoming more important on EU policy level, we also see more opportunities to be able to mobilise resources for us to work on climate action.

## Climate action within EDF: Taking responsibility for EDF’s impact

EDF as an organisation has an environmental impact. It is important that we are aware of it, know what negative impact we have and take measures to reduce it. This covers our office, energy consumption, digital management, staff and members’ travel, our events, including travel, catering, materials we use and how we use them. Known sometimes as the idea “to practice what you preach” this is particularly important for the Disability Movement. We sometimes find ourselves arguing against climate measures which have not been discussed with the disability movement, or which are blatantly ableist (such as blanket bans on assistive products like plastic straws, without any alternatives put in place). In order to show the world that the disability movement is not climate-denying, and to pro-actively use the opportunity to advance disability rights in the context of sustainability, we should contribute to the development, and practice of inclusive, accessible climate mitigation and adaptation policies. EDF has a very wide membership, advocating for the rights of 100 million Europeans with disabilities. If EDF, our member organisations and their members engage in the fight to combat the climate crisis we will be a strong force for sustainability.

## Research and evidence

We have presented already the impact that environmental degradation and the climate crisis have on persons with disabilities. However, there is still a major gap in evidence in this field, which we need to address as the disability movement. The impact of rising temperatures, rising fuel costs, catastrophic weather events, need to be studied more deeply so policy solutions can be found. Climate mitigation measures that are fully inclusive and accessible also need to be identified and shared.

## Building a stronger, more sustainable disability movement.

EDF and its members must be part of the main discussions affecting our countries and the EU - so building our own knowledge and capacity to work on climate action - and influence those measures which affect persons with disabilities is essential for our own organisational strength. All climate measures impact persons with disabilities (such as modernising buildings for carbon neutrality); some measure particularly impact persons with disabilities (such as banning plastics and stopping cars from entering zones of cities). We need the knowledge, networks, resources and skills to engage.

## Who is this policy for?

Firstly, EDF is adopting this policy for the work of EDF - our advocacy as well as our operations. This means the policy will be overseen by the Board and its implementation guided by the secretariat.

Secondly, the policy can explain also to partners our priorities in relation to environmental sustainability. It will communicate to service providers what our expectations are and explain to our supporters the measures we are taking to promote environmental sustainability.

## Disability and environmental sustainability - the links and importance issues

Although persons with disabilities constitute 15% of the world’s population, actions taken in the field of the climate crisis, at national level and at multilateral level, have neglected to consider the rights of persons with disabilities and have not included representation of persons with disabilities in climate negotiations to-date. The failure to include persons with disabilities in the world’s efforts to combat the climate crisis has dramatic consequences.

The impacts of the climate crisis – from disasters such as wildfires, to more gradual changes such as droughts, food insecurity and malnutrition, temperature increase, and sea level rise – have disproportionate effects on the lives, well-being, and livelihoods of persons with disabilities all over the world. When disaster hits, be this a wildfire or a doubling of your heating bill, people with disabilities are at high risk of being gravely affected, from losing their lives to have to pay higher costs in energy (for example needing more electricity to charge an electric wheelchair).

Due to inaccessible preparedness, systemic discrimination, and widespread poverty, people with disabilities are left behind in emergency relief and response efforts. The consequences of the climate crisis are especially severe for members of the disability community that experience intersecting forms of discrimination, including women, children, older persons, indigenous peoples, and other minority groups; for those experiencing poverty - recognising that disability is both a cause and a consequence of poverty - and for underrepresented groups of persons with disabilities, such as persons with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities.

In addition to being more exposed to the impacts of the climate crisis, persons with disabilities may also be adversely affected by States’ responses to the climate crisis. Policies to reduce carbon emissions, such as carbon pricing schemes or bans of carbon intensive products, are often designed without consideration of the rights, perspectives, and the requirements of the disability community and do not address the differential costs and burdens that these may impose on individuals with disabilities. These types of ableist climate mitigation policies create barriers for persons with disabilities and reinforce social inequities.

Energy availability and energy prices affect us all. Persons with disabilities face greater risk of (energy) poverty, and in some cases higher energy costs than the general population

As the world moves forward with measures to combat the climate crisis, it is vital that countries design and implement disability-inclusive policies that enhance, rather than undermine, the human rights of persons with disabilities. New investment in green jobs must be targeted to reach people most excluded from the labour market, such as persons with disabilities. Building and renovation of buildings to increase energy efficiency can result in a more or less accessible environment. Climate measures are driving changes in physical infrastructure such as housing, schools, universities, hospitals, transport and workplaces: these drastic changes are also an opportunity to make buildings more accessible by following a Design For All approach. An accessible building will be more sustainable because it won’t need retrofitting and further renovation in the future.

Finally, training measure and education about climate action and how to protect oneself from the effects of the climate crisis need to be targeted at and be accessible to persons with disabilities.

## Principles underpinning this policy

At the core of EDFs work is the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The basic principles of the CRPD will be applied to our work in this field- and the work we do on climate action will aim to advance CRPD implementation. There are obvious synergies between creating accessible mass public transport systems, for example, and ensuring freedom of movement for persons with disabilities.

# EDF commitments

## EDF’s own environmental impact

EDF recognises that it has a responsibility to the environment beyond legal and regulatory requirements: We are committed to reducing our environmental impact and continually improving our environmental performance as an integral part of our strategy and operating methods, with regular review points. We will encourage our key stakeholders and members to do the same.  
We endeavour to limit activities and behaviours that have a negative environmental impact:

* Continually improve and monitor environmental performance
* Incorporate environmental factors into organisational daily and strategic decisions
* Increase employee awareness.
* We will minimise the use of paper and plastic in the office unless it interferes with accessibility.
* We will seek to buy recycled and recyclable (paper) products unless it interferes with accessibility
* We will reuse and recycle all paper and plastic where possible.
* When EDF organizes catering, we will reduce the provision of animal products in catering: vegetarian or vegan meals will be provided by default, unless otherwise requested under specific dietary requirements.
* When EDF organizes events where catering is included (e.g. at hotels), we will strive to provide vegetarian/vegan catering, and at a minimum at least one vegetarian or vegan option.
* If we need to organize physical events, we will always choose locations that provide the best public accessible transportation to and from the venue over any other alternatives.

Energy and water

* We will seek to reduce the amount of energy used as much as possible.
* Lights and electrical equipment will be switched off when not in use.
* Heating will be adjusted with energy consumption in mind.
* The energy consumption and efficiency of new products will be taken into account when purchasing.
* Local suppliers with green policies will be preferred. Suppliers will be asked about their commitment to fight the climate crisis and to demonstrate that they source their products responsibly

Office supplies

* We will evaluate if reparing/renting/sharing is an option before purchasing equipment.
* We will evaluate the environmental impact of any new products we intend to purchase.
* We will favour more environmentally friendly and efficient products
* We will reuse and recycle everything we are able to.

Transportation

* We will reduce the need to travel, restricting to necessary trips only (criteria to be defined).
* We will promote the use of travel alternatives such as video/phone conferencing and continuously strive to use the most energy efficient communication and collaboration means while retaining the cohesion of the EDF membership and staff.
* We will offset carbon emissions from necessary flights (would need to be taken into account for travel costs)
* We will use public accessible transport and other “green transport” means where possible; and collective accessible transport arrangements where public transport is inaccessible
* We will favour cycling and walking by providing safe bike parking and maintenance facilities in the office building

Maintenance and cleaning

* Cleaning materials used will be as environmentally friendly as possible.
* Materials used in office refurbishment will be as environmentally friendly as possible.
* We will only use licensed and appropriate organisations to dispose of waste.

Monitoring and improvement

* We will comply with and exceed all relevant regulatory requirements.
* We will continually improve and monitor environmental performance.
* We will incorporate environmental factors into our daily and long term organisational decisions.

Culture

* We will involve staff in the implementation of this policy, for greater commitment and improved performance.

All measures listed above are subject to assessment on their impact on accessibility or inclusivity. We will update this policy at least every two years in consultation with staff and other stakeholders where necessary.

## Advocacy: building a greener more accessible and inclusive future

Dealing with the climate crisis is a core priority of governments around the globe, and a key political priority of the EU. Climate measures are important politically and in terms of the finances being invested. The climate crisis and the measures taken to address it will impact our daily lives. EDF advocacy will aim to:

* Influence the development of inclusive, accessible climate policies which advance the human rights of persons with disabilities; these policies include but are not limited to transport, food security and access to adequate nutrition for all, energy/energy pricing, infrastructure, communications, economic transition, employment and training, education, disaster preparedness and management and humanitarian action.
* No policy measures proposed or adopted should in any way infringe on the rights of persons with disabilities or reinforce discrimination

## Building capacity

It is important that we build knowledge skills and resources within the EDF secretariat and membership if we are to be successful for both our advocacy work and our environmental sustainability measures.

**Build staff capacity**: The EDF secretariat will be fully aware of the environmental impact of our full range of work and will be able to identify and implement mitigation steps so that EDF reduces its negative impact on the environment. Staff will be informed about the choices and their impact and be able to weigh up factors such as accessibility with sustainability. This will be done through a series of staff trainings and a toolkit to be developed for our office. In addition, as policies are revised over the coming years, there will be an environmental sustainability section which will be inserted to align our work to this policy. (2022 and 2023)

**Build capacity within broader EDF**: EDF will create opportunities for learning and exchange for DPOs in environmental sustainability and make technical resources available to its membership, especially with EDF members and delegates who are most active on climate issues (2023-2025).

**Develop technical resources**: EDF will have human, technical and financial resources available for its own use, and its membership who wish to strengthen their work on environmental sustainability. This will be done through fundraising and cooperation and partnership with environmental expert networks. (2023 and 2024)

# Measuring progress

Measuring: EDF has a clear overview on its annual environmental impact for its operations, its meetings and events, and its communications and publications, and its events. (2022)

* Mainstreaming: EDF includes environmental impact in its work planning: for events, for communications and publications (2023) and in all HR, administration, travel and procurement policies (2022-2025)

**Indicator:** Number of checklists by work area focussing on sustainability

* Reporting back: EDF reports on the measures it has taken to reduce environmental impact (2023-2025)

**Indicator:** Number of articles on EDF website and in newsletters

* Building staff capacity

**Indicator:** Number of staff trainings given on the topic and new initiatives taken by staff

* Building capacity within broader EDF:

**Indicator:** Number of info sessions and trainings run for EDF members and new initiatives taken by members

* Develop technical resources:

**Indicator:** Number of guidance documents published and distributed

# Annex 1 Our current partnerships and networks

**Multi-stakeholder level**

* + EDF is European Focal Point for the [Global Thematic Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Action](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sgpwd-drr) (TG-DRRCA)
  + EDF is part of an informal multi-stakeholder group on climate action and disability. Members of group include International Disability Alliance (IDA), World Blind Union (WBU), CBM Global, McGill University, Human Rights Watch, Inclusion Scotland, Sustained Ability
  + Part of the Disability-Inclusive Climate Action Research Program (DICARP) Advisory Panel (since May 2021)
  + EDF is member of the “Just Transition Alliance” led by SOLIDAR

**Bilateral level**

* EDF working with CBM Global on climate action resource development
* EDF has worked with environmental NGOs such as the “Rethink Plastic Alliance” and the European Environmental Bureau
* Institutional partners – EDF is working with the European Commission’s different services to give feedback on sustainable and inclusive policies; for example EDF is represented in the External Advisory Body on the Climate Pact (DG CLIMA) by the chair of the Youth Committee, Kamil Goungor

# Annex 2 Glossary of terms

* **Carbon footprint:** Carbon footprint is commonly used to refer to the total amount of greenhouse gases produced by an individual, household, building, organization, private company, or country over a particular period.
* **Climate:** Climate is defined as the statistical description of global weather over a period of months or years. The statistical quantities used to determine climate can include temperature, precipitation, and wind levels.
* **Climate change or climate crisis:** Climate change refers to significant shifts in various statistical measures of climate over decades, centuries, or more. These measures include temperature, precipitation, wind patterns, drought, storms, and more. Changes in the climate are caused by solar radiation, volcanic eruptions, and plate tectonics. The term is associated with global warming, which is an increase in global surface temperatures.
* **Greenhouse gas:** These gases, such as carbon dioxide, absorb infrared radiation in the atmosphere. Without greenhouse gases, Earth would be inhospitable for life, and scientists debate the extent to which higher greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere contribute to climate change.

1. Ecology Law Quarterly Volume 47 (2020) - Issue 1, Nov 20, 2020, “A Disability Rights Approach to Climate Governance” by Sébastien Jodoin, Nilani Ananthamoorthy and Katherine Lofts;

   <https://www.ecologylawquarterly.org/print/a-disability-rights-approach-to-climate-governance/> (retrieved on 3 June 2022) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)