

The inclusion of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities

Toolkit for EU delegations

**September 2023**

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# Executive summary

The European Union (EU) is the only regional integration in the world to have ratified the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The EU has shown leadership to engage in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention, ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities are increasingly promoted, respected and included in Europe and around the world.

In the work of the EU outside the region, the EU relies on approximately 140 delegations (EUDs) to support the implementation of the EU Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030.

Despite the acknowledgement of the role of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs/DPOs) as unique interlocutors and intermediaries to represent persons with disabilities, and the requirement for state parties like the EU to engage with and actively include DPOs, international cooperation and humanitarian action projects frequently miss opportunities to include DPOs.

The European Disability Forum (EDF) developed this practical toolkit for EUD staff on how to actively engage with DPOs in their countries. In particular, the toolkit provides suggestions to put into practicethe human rights-based approach to disability inclusion in all EU international cooperation and humanitarian action initiatives. The toolkit is organised into 4 steps: a state of play regarding disability rights, engagement with DPOs, barriers to inclusion and inclusive programming.

# Acronyms list

**CRPD:** Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

**CSOs:** Civil Society Organizations

**DG ECHO**: Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations

**DG INTPA:** Directorate General for International Partnership

**DG NEAR:** Directorate General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations

**DPOs:** Disabled People's Organisations

**EDF**: European Disability Forum

**EEAS:** European External Action Service

**EUD:** European Union Delegation

**IDA**: International Disability Alliance

**OPDs:** Organisations of Persons with Disabilities

# Introduction

One billion people, or 16% of the world’s population, experience some form of disability, and disability prevalence is higher in low- and lower-middle-income countries. One-fifth of the estimated global total, or between 110 million and 190 million people, experience more limitations in everyday functioning than others ([WHO factsheet](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health))

The adoption of the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)](https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-persons-disabilities) in 2006 marked a fundamental turning point in approaching disability from a human rights perspective rather than a charity or medical perspective, underlining the right to full and effective participation and inclusion in society.

The CRPD acknowledges **organisations of persons with disabilities** (OPDs/DPOs) as unique interlocutors and intermediaries to represent persons with disabilities. [Article 4.3](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-4-general-obligations.html) and [General Comment 7](http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhsnbHatvuFkZ%2Bt93Y3D%2Baa2pjFYzWLBu0vA%2BBr7QovZhbuyqzjDN0plweYI46WXrJJ6aB3Mx4y%2FspT%2BQrY5K2mKse5zjo%2BfvBDVu%2B42R9iK1p) impose a general requirement on State parties to engage with and actively include DPOs. Yet, international cooperation and humanitarian action projects frequently miss opportunities to interact and involve organisations that represent persons with disabilities.

**DPO engagement is essential to underpin the rights-based approach to international cooperation and humanitarian action**. While global progress towards the effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities is important has improved, **much remains to be done.** The work by the European Union (EU) to adopt a harmonised policy on disability-inclusive development and establish a systematic approach to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in all international cooperation policies and programmes was also requested by the **UN CRPD Committee** in 2015, when it **reviewed the work of the EU**.

## Why this toolkit

Since the EU’s ratification of the CRPD in 2011, the European Disability Forum (EDF) has increasingly advocated for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in EU external action, including international cooperation and humanitarian action.

With this toolkit, we want to provide practical guidance to the **staff of the EU working in the 140 delegations around the world** on how to actively engage with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations.

The objectives of the toolkit are:

1. Supporting the European Union Delegations (EUDs) in **involving DPOs in their work.**
2. Putting into practicethe **human rights-based approach to disability inclusion** in EU international cooperation and humanitarian action.
3. Enhancing **participation and representation** of people who are most excluded in society and from EU programming and implementation.

The document introduces concrete tools, checklists, and options for advancing disability rights in EU external action and humanitarian response. It is organised into four steps to overcome barriers and move towards inclusive programming. The four steps are:

1. State of play on disability rights
2. Engaging with DPOs
3. Address barriers for persons with disabilities
4. Inclusive programming

## Definition of DPO

A Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) also known as Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) can be defined as **a representative organisation or group of persons with disabilities, where persons with disabilities constitute a majority of the members in general, members of governing bodies, staff and volunteers in all levels of the organisation**.

The combination of DPOs, disability focused International Non-Governmental Organization (INGOs), individual advocates and actors of disability inclusion, and families constitute the disability movement.

A complete definition of DPOs is provided by the CRPD Committee in its [General Comment 7](https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G18/336/54/PDF/G1833654.pdf?OpenElement).

## EU policy framework on disability - outside the EU

The EU has been a [party to CRPD since 2011](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1138). All 27 EU Member States have ratified the CRPD while 22 have ratified the Optional Protocol. The EU is therefore bound to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities. **Articles 11 and 32 of the CRPD**, specifically require this in situations of risk and emergencies, and international cooperation.

The EU has undertaken important steps forward in the implementation of the CRPD related to international cooperation:

1. The EU Disability Strategies [2010-2020](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM%3Aem0047) and [2021-2030,](https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23707&langId=en) which both include sections on external action[[1]](#footnote-2),
2. The [2017 EU Consensus on Development](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/6134a7a4-3fcf-46c2-b43a-664459e08f51_en?filename=european-consensus-on-development-final-20170626_en.pdf) refers to the CRPD and disability rights
3. Its global [commitments made on disability at the 2022 Global Disability Summit](https://www.globaldisabilitysummit.org/commitments)
4. A new practical note on [making consultations and dialogues inclusive and accessible for all](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/intpa-academy/course/index.php?categoryid=52) published in 2022 by the Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA)

The rights of persons with disabilities are also included in other EU external action policies:

* [EU’s Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024](https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/46838/st12848-en20.pdf)
* [EU’s Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Relations 2021–2025 (GAP III)](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_2184)
* [EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combatting-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-anti-racism-action-plan-2020-2025_en)
* [EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child 2020-2024](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child/eu-strategy-rights-child-and-european-child-guarantee_en)
* [Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_2068)
* [EU Child Rights Guidelines](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/rights-child_en)
* [EU Human Rights Guidelines on Non-Discrimination](https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-6337-2019-INIT/en/pdf)
* [EU Global Health Strategy](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_7153)
* [EU Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI – Global Europe)](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/funding-and-technical-assistance/neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument-global-europe-ndici-global-europe_en)
* [EU Youth Action Plan (YAP) in external action](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/youth/youth-action-plan_en)

The European Commission (EC) issued **two Guidance Notes** addressing disability inclusion in development cooperation and in emergency and humanitarian contexts, issued by the Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA) and the Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), respectively in 2023 and 2019:

* DG ECHO (2019): [The Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in EU-funded Humanitarian Aid Operations](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/sectoral/doc_echo_og_inclusion_en.pdf).
* DG INTPA and DG NEAR (2023): [The Guidance note- Leaving no one behind: Disability inclusion in EU external action](https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/file/131345/download?token=8cFxKe_O)

## Further reading

* 2022, [Global Disability Summit Discussion Paper “Promoting Engagement of OPDs in Development and Humanitarian Action”](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/opd-engagement-paper-2022-ok1.pdf)
* 2022, [Not just ticking the disability box? Meaningful OPD participation and the risk of tokenism – Findings from the 2nd IDA Global Survey on the Participation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/ida_global_survey_2022_final.pdf)
* 2021, [Bridging the Gap’s Capitalization Report (Inclusive International Cooperation)](https://bridgingthegap-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BtG_II_2021_Capitlz_DevCoop_final.pdf) and [Call for Action “Disability Inclusion in International Cooperation”](https://bridgingthegap-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Infographic-Inclusive-Development-Cooperation-EN-1.pdf)
* 2020, [OHCHR, Report on disability-inclusive international cooperation](https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/report-disability-inclusive-international-cooperation)
* 2019, [UN Disability Strategy](https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/)

# Meaningful participation of DPOs

## Step 1: State of play of your EUD regarding disability rights

Understanding what your EUD has done so far to include the rights of persons with disabilities in its work is a good starting point. Many EUDs have nominated a ‘disability focal point’, someone on their team who is responsible for working on the rights of persons with disabilities, but often also working on the inclusion of women, youth, indigenous persons, or others, etc.

It is equally important to get familiar with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and related disability rights laws and policies in your country. An accessibility audit should also be organised to ensure that your EUD, including its ways of information sharing and communicating, are accessible to all persons with disabilities.

### Review the work of your EUD

* Find out if the rights of persons with disabilities have been included in **EU Multi-annual Indicative and Annual Action Plans**, and for which policy sectors (education, infrastructure, employment, justice, etc.).
* Find out **which DPOs your EUD has engaged with before**, for example which ones have been attending your Civil Society/Human Rights Dialogues.
* If you notice that no DPO has attended your EUD’s Civil Society dialogues, **contact the umbrella DPO in your country** to find out who its members are and which DPOs you can invite and consult with moving forward.
* **Check out your programmes** to see if a DPO is already included in your activities as a recipient of EU funding or a partner.

### Review the work happening in your country

* **Check if your country has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**, and if it has been reviewed by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. If your country was reviewed, the UN Committee will have published a set of **recommendations** on how to advance disability rights in your country. These are called **Concluding Observations**.
* Find out who your **government’s focal point on the CRPD** is.
* Look up your country’s **national strategy** on the rights of persons with disabilities.
* Explore **national statistics** and if your country collects any data on persons with disabilities.

### Review the accessibility of your EUD

Advocating for better accessibility in all areas of life for persons with disabilities is one of the core activities of all DPOs. Equal access to information, regardless of disability, is a human right and is essential for all individuals to participate fully in society. It is vital that each EUD is accessible to all persons with disabilities, in terms of both physical and online environments.

* Audit your EUD to check its accessibility regarding office and meetings facilities, website, communication, and information channels (such as Facebook or Twitter).
* Read and implement the [EU’s own guidance for making dialogues consultative and inclusive](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/intpa-academy/course/index.php?categoryid=52), which was published in 2022.

### Various questions can guide you in your self-assessment

* Does our EUD staff have previous experience with including persons with disabilities in our work? Have the rights of persons with disabilities been included in the EUD’s Multi-annual Indicative and Annual Action Plans?
* What are the main barriers and challenges our EUD needs to address to close the gap for persons with disabilities? For example, physical and communication accessibility, engaging with DPOs in our country, dedicated funding, etc.).
* Does our EUD have specific country guidance on disability matters? Are there any disability laws or policies at country level that our EUD needs to comply with? Are there any statistics that exist on the national level in relation to persons with disabilities?
* Which government institution is the CRPD focal point (often this is the Ministry for Social Affairs, but it can be another Ministry as well)?
* Are budgetary allocations made to facilitate the inclusion and meaningful engagement of persons with disabilities in our EUD’s programmes, projects and policy processes (including the human rights dialogues)?
* Does our EUD staff have previous experiences with including other target groups at risk of exclusion (women, children, refugees/internally displaced, indigenous groups, etc.) that can be used to enhance the engagement of persons with disabilities?
* Beyond complying with the CRPD and with human rights, what will be the added value of disability inclusion in the work of our EUD?
* Is our EUD physically accessible (stairs, ramps, and lifts, door width, accessible toilets)?
* Do we use support services such as sign language interpretation, closed captioning, and easy read materials, when meeting with partners and civil society organisations?
* Are our documents and videos accessible (can they be accessed by persons with disabilities, for example through alternative texts, audio description or captioning)?

Potentially, this self-assessment exercise should help your EUD to understand your Delegation’s strengths and weaknesses regarding disability and inclusion and address the opportunities for engagement with DPOs moving forward.

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| Checklist reminder for step 1Immediate/Short-term actions  * **Objectives:** think about what you want to achieve in terms of objectives for your EUD. * **Accessibility audit:** ensure that your facilities, meetings, communication and information channels are accessible. * **Desk research:** check and review available country documents, existing datasets, national disability rights strategies, programming documents, programmes and projects, DPOs involvement in previous policy, political and human rights dialogues. * **Contacts:** Verify external sources of information on disability in your country, such as umbrella DPOs, institutional partners, INGOs, service providers, EU Member States working on disability, etc. * **Brussels:** Contact your headquarters (EEAS, DG INTPA, DG ECHO, DG NEAR) to collect and share further information, if necessary. * **Budget:** Conduct a self-assessment, including an overview of the budgetary allocations. * **Analysis:** Draw a basic analysis of the self-assessment’s results, including the proportions of projects that are scored 1 or 2 by the OECD disability marker. * **DPOs:** Define entry points for engaging with DPOs.  Longer-term action  * **External evaluation:** Conduct an external evaluation of disability inclusion in the work of your EU Delegation. |

### Further reading

EU (2022) [Making consultations and dialogues inclusive and accessible for all](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/intpa-academy/course/index.php?categoryid=52)

General information on the CRPD Committee and its reports:

* [OHCHR | Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crpd)
* [List of reports, concluding observations](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=4&DocTypeID=5)

Development for all: Evaluation of progress made in strengthening disability inclusion in Australian aid (2018):

* Full report: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-for-all-evaluation.pdf>
* Synthetic version: <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/development-for-all-evaluation-review.pdf>

## Step 2: Engaging with DPOs

In international cooperation and humanitarian action, DPOs are often substituted by international NGOs (INGOs) working on disability rights. INGOs do not always include or consult with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations.

Often there is a lack of **knowledge and understanding of the diversity included in the disability movement** (women with disabilities, persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, etc.). International organisations may have limited knowledge of the CRPD and the human rights of persons with disabilities, wanting to help and aid, rather than include and empower.

Yet, understanding the political nature of DPOs as representative organisations is not always easy. By following the suggestions below, you will obtain a database of:

* DPOs and contacts,
* Information sources (reports, data, etc.),
* Service providers (for instance, sign language interpreters, accessible taxi providers, etc.) which can support the involvement of DPOs in your work.

### Establish a reliable database of contacts

You can start with three important steps:

* **Conduct a basic online search of DPO contacts**, possibly relying on your country’s umbrella federation and/or additional database developed by other actors.
* **Make the most of existing databases,** checking existing services (rehabilitation, social protection schemes, education, etc.) can serve as starting points for reaching out and understanding the ramifications of the movement and of its representative organisations.
* **Ensure you don’t forget underrepresented persons with disabilities and their organisations in your country** (see box 1 below).

Ultimately, this will lead you to establish and periodically update a simple yet comprehensive database of contacts to be involved in your EUD’s activities and consultations.

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| ***Box 1 – Underrepresented persons with disabilities* defined as people who are insufficiently or inadequately represented.**  As indicated by the International Disability Alliance (IDA), underrepresented persons with disabilities include persons who are deafblind, persons with intellectual and/or psychosocial disabilities, and autistic people. Sometimes, this can also include women, children, older people and indigenous persons, as well as faith, ethnicity, caste, class, sexual orientation or gender identity minorities.  The identities that make people more vulnerable to discrimination are different in different countries and contexts. |

### Contact regional fora

The steps above may not always be sufficient to reach all relevant actors and all disability constituencies, especially for underrepresented groups. A valid complementary option is to contact the **regional forum of persons with disabilities in your region**, i.e., the various continental membership organisations.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Region** | **Name** | **Contact** |
| Africa | [African Disability Forum (ADF)](https://africandisabilityforum.net/) | [info@adf-secretariat.org](mailto:info@adf-secretariat.org) |
| Arab | [Arab Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (AOPD)](https://disability-hub.com/organizations/arab-organization-of-disabled-people/www.internationalDisabilitiesalliance.org/AODP) | [aodp@cyberia.net.lb](mailto:aodp@cyberia.net.lb) |
| Europe | [European Disability Forum](https://www.edf-feph.org/) | [info@edf-feph.org](mailto:Info@edf-feph.org) |
| Latin America | [Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS)](http://www.riadis.org/) | List of contacts [here](http://www.riadis.org/contactenos/) |
| Pacific | [Pacific Disability Forum (PDF)](https://pacificdisability.org/) | [infor@pacificdisability.org](mailto:infor@pacificdisability.org) |
| Southeast Asia | [ASEAN Disability Forum (ASEAN-DF)](https://www.aseandisabilityforum.com/) | [secretariat@aseandisabilityforum.org](mailto:secretariat@aseandisabilityforum.org) |

Additional contact details can also be found on the [Members section of IDA's website](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/members).

Your regional fora will be able to redirect you to your country’s DPOs. **If during the exercise you run into organisations, associations, or other disability groups which are not familiar with the country’s umbrella federation and/or with the continental membership organisation, please refer them to these bodies: this way you will support the growth and consolidation of the disability movement in your country and region.**

***Box 2 – The global disability movement***



● **Umbrella federations:** A country or regional membership organisation with legal DPO status which formally work together to coordinate activities and/or pool resources. They act as the coordinating body of the disability movement in a given country or region.

● **Other actors of the disability movement:** They include non-IDA members such as disability-focused INGOs, self-help groups, individual advocates, families, etc.

### Prepare for meeting with DPOs

In order to prepare an accessible and inclusive meeting, the following steps are recommended:

**Before** the meeting:

* Contact participants to ask about their accessibility requirements. **Do not just assume**. Make the necessary reasonable accommodation when requested.
* Send relevant information in advance: agenda, list of participants, reading materials, meeting location, etc.
* If possible, ask if participants want to see items included in the agenda - ensure there is adequate speaking time for the participants in the meeting and avoid passing on information without feedback.
* Ensure the meeting location is physically accessible (ramp, lift, no stairs, toilets etc.).

**During** the meeting:

* Include support services such as sign interpreters and captioner when they are requested.
* Ask speakers to describe visuals, figures and images in presentations, to speak in easy-to-understand language and to ensure accessibility.
* Adopt terminology the disability movement in your country uses or follow the language of the CPRD.

**After** the meeting:

* Send materials (recordings, transcripts, minutes, etc.).
* Ask for feedback.

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| Checklist reminder for step 2Immediate/Short-term actions  * **Local and national DPOs:** Contact DPOs in your country relying on existing datasets. * **Regional DPOs:** Contact regional DPOs to potentially get more information. * **Accessibility:** Ensure the information you provide and the meetings you organize are accessible.  Longer-term action  * **Inclusion:** Ensure meetings and communication are inclusive, with planned human and financial support. |

### Further reading

2023, [The Inclusive Participation Toolbox](https://www.cbm.org/get-involved/the-inclusive-participation-toolbox/)

2014, [MK\_MappingCSOsCWD\_Report\_ENG.pdf (unicef.org)](https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/media/3536/file/MK_MappingCSOsCWD_Report_ENG.pdf) (Example of comprehensive DPO Mapping: [EDF guide for accessible meetings (edf-feph.org)](https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2021/02/edf_guide_for_accessible_meetings_1.pdf)

2022, [UN Disability-Inclusive Communications Guidelines](https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/disability-inclusive_communications_guidelines_-_march_2022.pdf) (including a number of additional sources of reference)

2018, [BtG\_Inclusive-and-accessible-Communication-Guidelines.pdf (bridgingthegap-project.eu)](https://bridgingthegap-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/BtG_Inclusive-and-accessible-Communication-Guidelines.pdf)

On digital accessibility (docs and website): there are plenty of different sources, among others we recommend:

* 2022, [Toolkit on Accessible PowerPoint (edf-feph.org)](https://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2022/02/7.-Toolkit-Accessible-website.pdf)
* 2021, [UK Government Guidance “Publishing Accessible Documents”](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/publishing-accessible-documents) (gov.uk)

## Step 3: Address barriers for persons with disabilities

The CRPD defines disability as ‘an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’ There is an important focus on barriers. **As a duty bearer, EUDs must work to identify, address and remove these barriers.**

Barriers to participation can be classified into four groups:

1. **Lack of understanding** of the nature of DPOs (see step 1)
2. **Attitudinal** barriers (see steps 1 and 2)
3. **Physical and communication** barriers (see steps 1 and 2)
4. **Technical and financial barriers**: step 3 focuses on these obstacles and on how to remove them.

### Champion participation and engagement of DPOs

DPOs often have limited technical and financial resources. Tackling the structural challenges of the disability movement requires **providing tools and spaces for participation but also enhancing opportunities to interact with other local and national actors.**

For example, annual consultation meetings could be organised by an EUD with the local and national DPOs as well as EU Member States operating in the country. EUDs can showcase their work on disability inclusion by providing:

* An opportunity to hear the priorities of the disability movement and general updates on disability from the country/region.
* An overview of the EU’s ongoing and upcoming programmes and initiatives (disability-specific initiatives and mainstreaming opportunities).
* Key EU achievements of the past year.
* Key EU milestones for the future.
* Consultation schedule for exchange with DPOs moving forward.

This approach facilitates the inclusion of DPOs as partners able to meaningfully engage in major mainstreaming programmes, in addition to disability-specific ones. DPOs can formulate policy and/or programmatic requests. It also enhances DPOs visibility as reliable partners in the country’s CSO movement.

Participation in meetings and consultations is necessary yet insufficient to ensure meaningful engagement. **Addressing DPOs technical and financial challenges require EUDs to**:

1. Provide long-term support to DPOs.
2. Reserve special slots or envelopes in calls for proposals.
3. Support capacity development to respond to calls and manage EU-funded projects.

For EUDs, it implies:

* **Flexibility and adaptation of funding mechanisms** to allow DPOs to access and benefit from EU funds: DPOs might have limited capacity to respond to EU calls or might not meet eligibility criteria. Contact DPOs well in advance while seeking calls for proposals and evaluate if current call mechanisms are inclusive and accessible to the disability community. If DPOs are not represented in EUD programming it is important to evaluate why DPOs are not included or represented. Inclusive and accessible mechanisms to empower and build capacity can be a game changer for DPOs in partner countries.
* **Anticipation** (plan and budget for reasonable accommodations, share documents in advance, engage with DPOs, discuss feedback mechanisms, mainstream disability in non-disability initiatives, etc.), including in humanitarian response settings (inclusive disaster risk reduction/management mechanisms, inclusive contingency plans, etc.).
* **Clear expectations for DPO engagement**, including feedback mechanisms.
* **Support DPO capacity building** by offering guidance and assistance with writing and developing proposals and project management.

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| ***BOX 3 – EUDs portraying an approachable image***    In order for DPOs to see EUDs as approachable organisations to engage with as well as essential partners to support the disability movement, non-conventional action might sometimes be necessary.  The overwhelming majority of DPOs in EU partner countries would greatly benefit from:  - tailored and accessible trainings on EU functioning, funds and calls,  - innovative set ups so DPOs can benefit or receive EU funds. |

### Rely on persons with disabilities themselves.

**The best experts on disability rights are persons with disabilities themselves. DPOs are your ally in any inclusive programming process or initiative.** By including persons with disabilities and their representative organisations, you can benefit from their guidance to address issues and facilitate inclusion.

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| Checklist reminder for step 3Immediate/Short-term actions  * **Consultation:** Establish time for consultation and involvement with DPOs throughout the year and in combination with key moments (for instance: involve DPO representatives in coordination tables, steering committees, project governance), in line with the Multi-annual Indicative and Annual Action Plans. * **Accessibility:** Plan and budget for accessibility and reasonable accommodations. * **Preparedness:** In emergency and humanitarian response settings, prepare for more inclusive responses by engaging with DPOs **from the start**. * **Training:** Organise tailored and accessible trainings to support DPOs capacity to respond to EU calls and manage EU grants/projects. * **Feedback:** Establish regular and functional feedback mechanisms on how DPOs concerns and suggestions are taken into account and eventually incorporated into the work of the delegation.  Longer-term actions  * **Funding conditions:** Within the limits of EU legislation and guidance, consider innovative call set ups to ensure DPOs can access funding grants on a level and equal playing field as other CSOs. * **Budget:** Include costs to ensure planning of accessibility and reasonable accommodations. * **Procurement**: Introduce inclusive procurement rules. |

### Further reading

2021, [EDF, Guidance Note on the Role of European Organisations of Persons with Disabilities in International Cooperation](http://www.edf-feph.org/content/uploads/2021/02/guidance_note_on_dpo_involvement_in_international_cooperation_0.pdf)

2020, Cote & al., [The Unsteady Path - Towards meaningful participation of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities in the implementation of the CRPD and SDGs](https://bridgingthegap-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/The-unsteady-path.-A-pilot-study-by-BtG.pdf)

2020, Beales & BtG, [Disability-Inclusive Public Procurement Guidance Note](https://bridgingthegap-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/BtG-Inclusive-Public-Procurement-Guidance-Note.pdf)

2019, Axelsson & Bridging the Gap, [Inclusion of persons with disabilities in European Union development cooperation](https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/file/110197/download?token=NomhfLdm)

2019, [IASC Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-guidelines-on-inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-humanitarian-action-2019)

## Step 4: The inclusive programming cycle

Tackling the obstacles above allows for a holistic approach to disability inclusion in development cooperation and humanitarian action. Ideally, this process should be inspired by the principles of **inclusive programming** (ensuring meaningful engagement with DPOs) across the programming cycle, i.e.:

1. Project, programme and policy design, including budgeting, resourcing, and procurement.
2. Generation and management of partnerships.
3. Governance and coordination, including adopting organisational strategies and action plans for projects, programmes and policies.
4. Implementation of projects/interventions.
5. Communication and reporting, including M&E and data collection and disaggregation (also for baseline generation).
6. Safeguarding, including identifying and minimising the risk of harm to children and adults from staff, representatives and partners through the work of the EUD. This also involves responding appropriately to any concerns about children and persons at risk within communities where the EU operates.

***BOX 4 – What is inclusive programming?***

Inclusive programming seeks to ensure that DPOs are engaged meaningfully throughout the programme cycle, from design to ex-post evaluation through to governance, budgeting, data collecting, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) communication and safeguarding.

This “Inclusive Programming Cycle” figure is adapted from “A[pplying CRPD standards to programmatic processes: A look at inclusive programming in practice](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/ida_crpd_based_inclusive_programming_iw_experience_aug_2022.pdf)” (IDA-Inclusive Futures, 2022)

### Engage in a twin-track approach to programming

To guarantee that disability-inclusive practices are led by DPOs and that persons with disabilities are treated as rights holders, inclusive programming entails a **reform of organisational practices**. For improved ownership and impact of project interventions, inclusive programming needs to change from viewing DPOs and people with disabilities as beneficiaries of aid to promoting their meaningful role as contributors and collaborators.

Therefore disability-inclusive development requires mainstreaming via a twin-track approach. Meaning implementing disability-specific initiatives and mainstreaming disability into other programmes and initiatives **are equally as important**.

As an EUD you can:

1. Put DPOs in the loop from the beginning so they’re part of the process: DPOs participation is not the goal but a practice to enable the promotion and implementation of human rights.
2. Create strategic spaces, positions, or tools for DPO participation: some projects introduce the position of “DPO Engagement Officer” to foster the creation of networks and links, and to ensure systematic exchanges and participation in project design, governance, implementation, communication, and monitoring, evaluation, and learning.
3. Build the capacity of DPOs to ensure they can meaningfully engage with your EUD.

|  |
| --- |
| Checklist reminder for step 4Immediate/Short-term actions  * **Twin-track programming:** Begin adopting a twin-track approach:   + Mainstream disability-inclusive measures into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all EUD policies and practices.   + Support specific initiatives to ensure disability-inclusive development and the equal enjoyment of human rights by all persons with disabilities. * **Inclusive co-design:** Begin to co-design with DPOs as a regular practice while also anticipating potential shortcomings of the implementation phase. * **Intersectionalities:** Ensure the diversity of the disability movement is represented throughout the processes, reaching out to underrepresented groups and addressing intersectionalities**.**  Longer-term actions  * **Employment:** Consider the creation of and recruitment for the post of “DPO Engagement Officer” (or similar). Ensure your own recruitment processes are inclusive, accessible and non-discriminatory, leading to the employment of persons with disabilities in your Delegation. * **Inclusion:** Define, plan, budget for, and implement disability-inclusive practices applicable to the delegation as a whole: establish a process of progressive organisational change led by internal experts with the support of national/local DPOs. * **Contacts:** Establish communication channels, and regularly update a comprehensive map of contacts (expanded database of DPOs, disability service providers, accessibility experts, institutional and INGO contact persons, etc.). Ensure information sources are shared with all EUD staff: set baselines for the design of programmes, projects, and policies. * **Dialogues:** Involve DPOs in EU-related policy and political dialogues with partner countries. * **Data:** Propose and promote dedicated initiatives for collecting, disaggregating, and using disability data, in line with CRPD [Article 31](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-31-statistics-and-data-collection.html). |

***BOX 5 – What do we mean by “intersectionalities”?***

Building on [Kimberlé Crenshaw’s 1989 study](https://philpapers.org/rec/CREDTI), the concept of intersectionalities encompasses how disability intersects and overlaps with race, class, gender, and other individual characteristics generating growing layers and grounds for discrimination. In other words, it analyses how persons with disabilities are subject to exclusion on the basis of both their disability and their gender, and/or race, and/or national identity, and/or socio-economic status etc.

According to the International Disability Alliance, the “primary groups […] include **youth, older and indigenous persons with disabilities, persons with psychosocial and/or intellectual disabilities, as well as persons with deafblindness** as they are the most vulnerable to intersectional forms of discrimination”.

### Further reading

2012, CBM, [Inclusion Made Easy](https://www.cbm.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/cbm_inclusion_made_easy_a_quick_guide_to_disability_in_development.pdf)

2022, International Disability Alliance-Inclusive Futures (FCDO UK), [Applying CRPD standards to programmatic processes: A look at inclusive programming in practice](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/ida_crpd_based_inclusive_programming_iw_experience_aug_2022.pdf)

[DiDRR Network](https://www.didrrn.net/): good practices and tools for disability inclusion in emergency and disaster response

2019, UNHCR, [Inclusive Budgeting Tip Sheet](https://www.unhcr.org/62962a0a4.pdf)

2021, [BtG Capitalization Report Inclusive International Cooperation](https://bridgingthegap-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/BtG_II_2021_Capitlz_DevCoop_final.pdf)

2022, GIZ, [Living Inclusion](https://inklusion-leben.org/en/download/)

2018, AECID, [Guía para la inclusión de la discapacidad en la cooperación para el Desarrollo (in Spanish)](https://www.aecid.es/Centro-Documentacion/Documentos/Publicaciones%20AECID/180627_guia_discapacidad_def.pdf)

# Credits

### The European Disability Forum

The European Disability Forum is an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that advocates for the rights of 100 million persons with disabilities in Europe. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisation of persons with disabilities from across Europe. EDF is run by persons with disabilities and their families. We are a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe.

### Acknowledgements

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1. [European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2020-2030 (Chapter 6, page 23)](https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=23707&langId=en) “the EU will uphold the human rights of persons with disabilities and support their social inclusion in all international relations, and as part of all external action, policy planning, funding programmes and activities”. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)