

# Written Submission Ahead of the EU-Tajikistan Human Rights Dialogue: Statement on the Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Tajikistan

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This statement has been prepared by the [European Disability Forum](#) (EDF) ahead of the EU-Tajikistan Human Rights Dialogue that will take place during the week of December 11-15 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. As the regional forum for persons with disabilities in Europe, EDF actively advocates for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Our commitment extends beyond Europe to a global scale, advocating for the worldwide adoption of CRPD principles and championing the inclusion of individuals with disabilities and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in all external actions of the European Union (EU).

In alignment with the [EU's Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(2021-2030\)](#), the EU calls on all states to prioritize and fulfill the rights of persons with disabilities in the development of policy initiatives shaping the next decade. It is imperative that all external actions, including human rights dialogues conducted by the EU not only comply with but actively enforce the implementation of the CRPD.

## Background

In 2018, the Republic of Tajikistan committed to transitioning towards a social model and a rights-based approach to disability by signing the CRPD. This commitment initiated the preparation process for the ratification of the CRPD. In 2020, the process began with the development and approval of the national action plan, mapping out Tajikistan's journey towards CRPD ratification. The action plan delineates priority activities scheduled for implementation until 2024, with a significant portion expected to be concluded within 2023. **As of December 2023, Tajikistan has not ratified the CRPD.**

## Situation of Persons with Disabilities in Tajikistan

There is a lack of reliable data on persons with disabilities in Tajikistan today. However, according to official Tajik statistics as of April 2023, [159,849 people](#) (1.6% of the population) receive disability benefits, with 32,000 of them being children with disabilities. The absence of robust statistics means that a considerable number of persons with disabilities in Tajikistan remain unseen, resulting in their needs being neglected and their exclusion from societal considerations.

Today, individuals with disabilities in Tajikistan face [heightened susceptibility to human rights violations](#), including abuse within semi-closed institutions and discriminatory practices affecting their access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare, and social security. Moreover, women and girls with disabilities often encounter intersecting forms of discrimination rooted in both their gender and disability, often compounded by socio-economic challenges such as poverty.

More specifically, in education, the absence of clear definitions for inclusive education and inadequate infrastructure hinder academic access for children with disabilities. Teachers lack the necessary skills to best support students with disabilities. In labor and employment, non-compliance with disability employment quotas, inadequate government support, and lack of legislation creates hurdles for persons with disabilities seeking employment. The health and rehabilitation sector suffers from limited access to quality services, medicines, and assistive devices. Accessibility challenges persist in both physical and informational aspects, with the Tajikistan's state program "Accessible Environment" facing implementation issues, hindering persons with disabilities access to various facilities and transportation.

## **Recommendations for Advancing Disability Rights in Tajikistan**

EDF strongly urges the EU to endorse and encourage the Tajik government to implement crucial measures recommended by disability experts and OPDs in Tajikistan as outlined below:

- **Advancing UN Convention Ratification:** Facilitate and support the ratification process of the CRPD and its Optional Protocol.
- **Data Collection:** Allocate resources and establish frameworks to support the systematic and widespread collection of disaggregated disability data, ensuring its accuracy, relevance, and consistency over time.
- **Fostering Political Participation:** Advocate for the integration of OPDs into Parliament working groups and the appointment of individuals with disabilities and disability inclusion advisors from OPDs in key roles across government departments.
- **Enhancing Accessibility of Infrastructure and Transportation:** Collaborate with persons with disabilities and OPDs to integrate inclusive design principles into plans for public spaces, schools, buildings, facilities, and roads.
- **Promoting Equal Access to Education:** Support the implementation of effective inclusive education methodologies in mainstream schools and universities, fostering an inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities.
- **Improving Assistive Technology Provision:** Facilitate the personalized provision of assistive devices for children and individuals with disabilities. This includes the modernization of the prosthetic factory and its branches.
- **Ensuring Fair, Affordable, and Inclusive Health Care:** Assist in elevating the quality of medical services, ensuring access to essential medicines, and providing rehabilitation services for adults with disabilities.
- **Securing Access to Meaningful Employment:** Advocate for the adoption of legislation guaranteeing persons with disabilities access to reasonable accommodations, promoting their meaningful participation in the workforce.
- **Driving Disability Awareness:** Support comprehensive disability awareness campaigns through various media channels. Emphasize disability inclusion, the rights of persons with disabilities, the social model of disability, and a Human Rights-based approach.

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