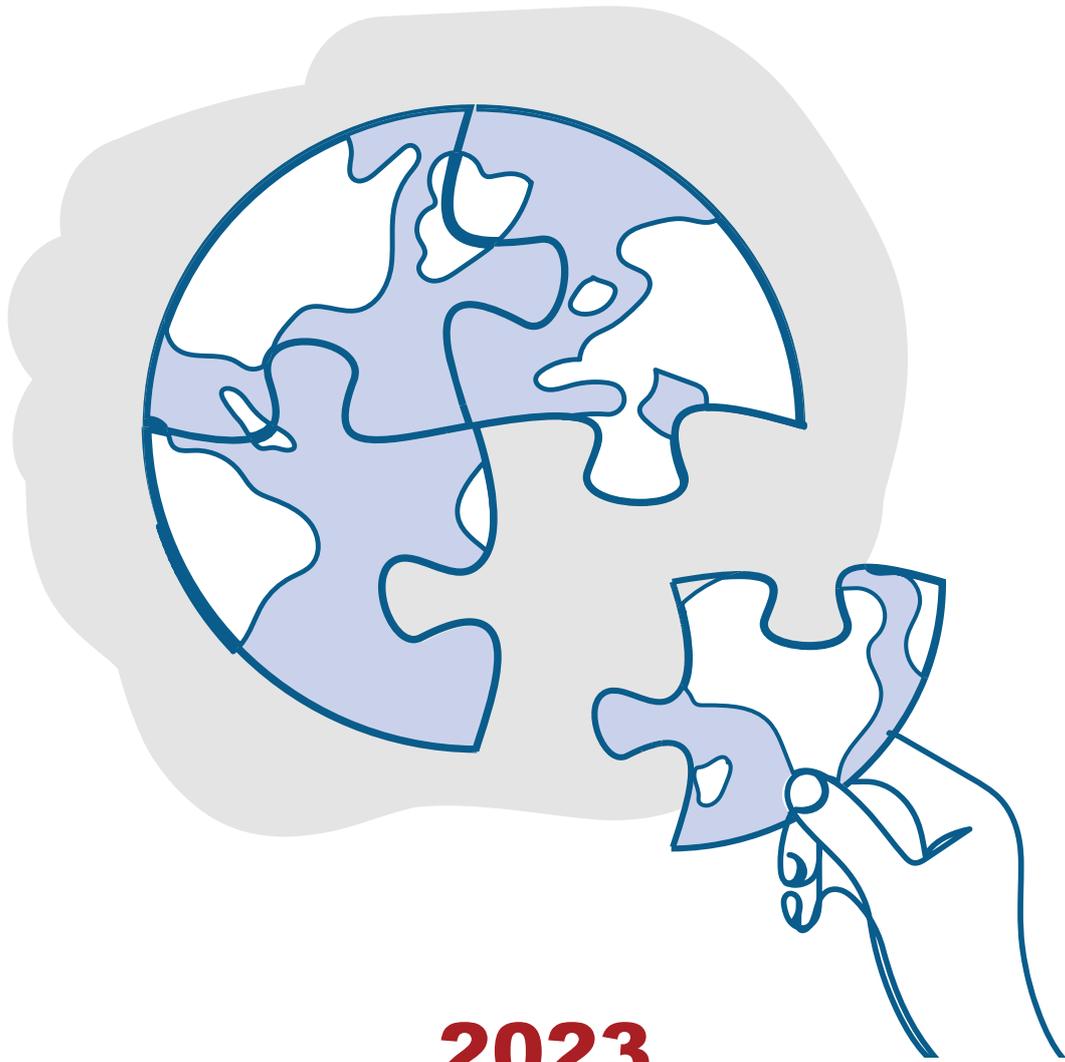


EU in the World

EDF's Contributions to the European Union's Actions



2023



Coordination: **Marion Steff**, International Cooperation Manager and **Erika Hudson**, International Cooperation Policy Officer

Input: EDF secretariat in particular (in alphabetical order): **An-Sofie Leenknecht**, **Alejandro Moledo**, **Andre Felix**, **Catherine Naughton**, **Giulia Traversi**, **Gordon Rattray**, **Marine Uldry**, **Phillipa Tucker**.

Editing: **Catherine Naughton**, Executive Director and **Erika Hudson**, International Cooperation Policy Officer.

Design and pdf accessibility: **Rodoula Nikolaou**



The European Disability Forum

Mundo Madou, Avenue des Arts 7-8, 1210 Brussels, Belgium

www.edf-feph.org

info@edf-feph.org

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The European Disability Forum



**We are a strong, united voice for persons
with disabilities in Europe.**

The European Disability Forum (EDF) is an independent Organisation of Persons with Disabilities (OPD) that advocates for the rights of 100 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe.

EDF is run by persons with disabilities and their families.

Executive Summary



In 2021, the European Commission (EC) launched the “[Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030](#)” in alignment with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The ambitious strategy aims to enhance the human rights of persons with disabilities.

This report spotlights EDF’s impactful efforts to advance implementation of that strategy. **Focusing on Articles 11 and 32 of the CRPD concerning humanitarian action and international cooperation, it gives a snapshot of our global work in 2023.**

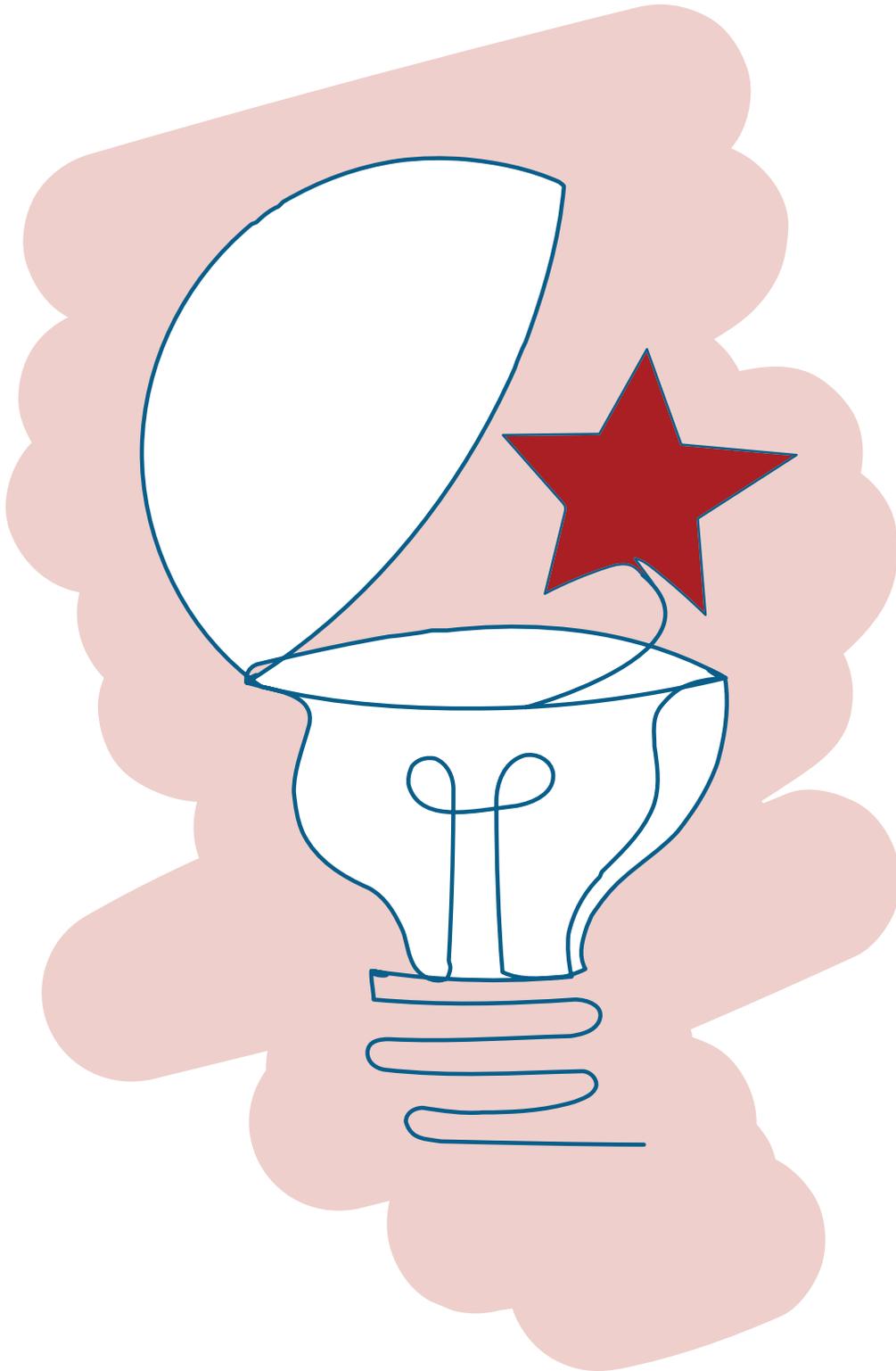
Our emphasis is on advocating for the inclusion of persons with disabilities and organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in key European Union (EU) policies. That commitment extends across various domains, including international cooperation, humanitarian action, disaster risk reduction, climate action and the conflict in Ukraine.

In 2023, EDF played a pivotal role in shaping six EU policies, ensuring that they are inclusive of persons with disabilities, including advocating to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are included in the [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the Ukraine Facility](#). Our engagement in European consultations was substantial, with input into 16 consultations. We also contributed to 15 EU human rights dialogues by submitting position papers and forging links between OPDs around the world and the EU.

On the advocacy front, EDF actively participated in 27 conferences and events, including the 28th [Conference of the Parties \(COP28\)](#) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Our engagement in 19 high-level meetings provided us with the opportunity to outline our objectives and foster connections with partners, allies and the targets of our advocacy work. Furthermore, we participated in 18 technical workshops, conducted 26 training events, such as an [online meeting to explore Disability-Inclusive Budgets, Programmes and Policies Worldwide](#), and undertook other relevant activities to further our objectives.

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Highlights of 2023



International Cooperation

- We actively contributed to development of the [EU Guidance Note on Disability Inclusion](#). We published [two toolkits for EU Delegations and OPDs](#) to enhance collaboration among EU Delegations and OPDs.
- We [found](#) that the proportion of European Commission Official Development Assistance (sometimes referred to as “aid”) projects reported as disability-inclusive rose from 2% in 2018 to 26% in 2021.
- We were selected to be part of the [Global Gateway Civil Society and Local Authorities Dialogue Platform](#).
- We co-hosted the [Global Action on Disability \(GLAD\) Network Annual General Meeting](#) with the EU, fostering unity among donors, state agencies, foundations and coalitions in the disability rights movement.
- We were selected to participate in the [European Union-Association of Southeast Asian Nations Civil Society Organisations Forum](#) in anticipation of the 5th EU-ASEAN Policy Dialogue on Human Rights.
- We successfully co-hosted a [significant online meeting](#) with the GLAD Network. The event attracted over 130 participants and high-level speakers, focusing on enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities and OPDs in the global operations of donor countries.
- We facilitated discussions at the European Parliament on the challenges faced by children with disabilities in [accessing education](#) worldwide, emphasising the need for inclusive policies.
- We participated in the [Conference of State Parties](#) to the CRPD, organising impactful side events addressing the forced sterilisation of persons with disabilities and promoting skills development for employment.
- We linked the EU with disability rights experts and OPDs across the globe and actively participated in the [European Commission Disability Platform](#), whose mission is to support implementation of the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Humanitarian Action, Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Action

- We organised a session on disability-inclusive resilience at the [5th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities \(EPPD\)](#), engaging speakers in substantive conversations aimed at safeguarding the rights of individuals with disabilities during crises and emergencies. The event culminated in the formulation of a comprehensive [Manifesto](#). The Manifesto, which was unanimously endorsed by all EDF members and EPPD delegates, will serve as a guiding document for our collective advocacy efforts in the coming years. It includes powerful policy proposals positioning the EU as a global leader in championing disability rights.
- We were invited to the Council of the EU Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid. The meeting at which EDF presented its work in Ukraine, contributing insight into disability inclusion in the humanitarian programme cycle, marked a milestone.
- We engaged with key Directorates-General of the European Commission, including the DG for Climate Action (DG CLIMA) and the DG for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO), to address deficiencies in climate action strategies, policies, programmes and budgets related to the rights of persons with disabilities.
- We actively participated in the [Bonn Climate Change Conference and the UN Conference on Climate Change \(COP28\)](#) to advocate for the inclusion of disability in climate negotiations.

Supporting Persons with Disabilities in Ukraine

- We influenced the [Commission proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the Ukraine Facility](#). We provided suggestions for changes in the law, working with Ukraine OPDs to ensure that the reconstruction of Ukraine is compliant with the CRPD. EDF welcomed the fact that the [position approved by the European Parliament](#) includes accessibility, inclusion of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD and meaningful participation of civil society organisations in decision-making processes.
- We provided crucial input, collaborating with Ukrainian OPDs to ensure that the reconstruction of Ukraine aligns with the CRPD.
- We advocated for a transition from institutional to community-based services, prioritising Ukraine's short-term recovery and long-term goals.
- We engaged with EU representatives, including the Team Leader for the reconstruction of Ukraine, to highlight key considerations regarding accessibility and inclusion.
- We participated in the EU Enlargement Report for 2023, providing input for the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR) and engaging in consultations with representatives from DG NEAR.

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The Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030



In 2021, the European Commission (EC) unveiled the ambitious “Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030”.

That strategy, rooted in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aims to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities, both in Europe and across the globe.

The strategy is driven by a range of actions and flagship initiatives. It sets out various priorities, **including promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities globally** (Chapter Six of the Strategy and the EU framework for implementation of the CRPD). The EU aims to prioritise human rights, social inclusion and access to basic services. Further, the strategy aspires to address challenges such as discrimination, lack of access and limited job opportunities, with a focus on inclusive policies in international cooperation and humanitarian aid.

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Driving Global Transformation: EDF's Contributions to the EU's Global Work in 2023



Throughout 2023, EDF actively engaged to ensure that the European Union (EU) effectively implements Articles 11 (Humanitarian Action) and 32 (International Cooperation) of the CRPD.

EDF actively monitors the various priorities outlined in Chapter Six of the Strategy and global implementation of the CRPD by the EU. This report serves as an overview of our contributions, describing our continued steps to champion the inclusion of persons with disabilities and organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) in EU policies focusing on international cooperation, humanitarian action and global actions.

Our efforts have been particularly evident in domains including international development, humanitarian action, disaster risk reduction, climate action and the war in Ukraine. We actively engaged with those sectors, working towards the implementation of inclusive EU policies that embody the spirit and principles of the CRPD.

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International Cooperation: Advancing EU Policies

Guidance Note and Toolkits on Disability Inclusion in EU External Action

In 2023, the EU published its European Union [Guidance Note on “Leaving no one behind – Disability Inclusion in EU External Action”](#). EDF contributed to the document and published two toolkits related to that Guidance Note:

1. [Toolkit for EU Delegations: Including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities](#)
2. [Toolkit for OPDs: Engaging with EU Delegations around the world](#)

Throughout 2023, those toolkits were widely shared with EU Delegations and OPDs to support their collaboration and engagement with one another. The toolkits help EU Delegations around the world to include persons with disabilities in their policies, budgets and programmes.

Latin America and the Caribbean new agenda

The [New Agenda for EU Relations with Latin America and the Caribbean](#) is now inclusive of persons with disabilities. EDF worked successfully with the Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organisations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS) to provide input into the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the CRPD in the region.

Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe

The 2021-2027 budget for external action is included in the EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Within the MFF, the EU has regrouped policies and funds for external actions into a single financial instrument called the [“Neighbourhood, Development, and International Cooperation Instrument”](#) (NDICI) or Global Europe. It has an overall budget of €79.5 billion.

Prior to the adoption of NDICI, EDF led a campaign to ensure the EU's budget be inclusive of persons with disabilities in the work of the EU inside and outside Europe. We also published a [joint statement with the International Disability and Development Consortium](#) on disability-inclusive programming of EU funding for external action in 2021. In 2021, NDICI was published with the inclusion of persons with disabilities and the CRPD.

In June 2023, EDF submitted a [response](#) regarding the [mid-term review](#) of NDICI. We made various recommendations, including the need for a dedicated budgets to cover the costs of making programmes inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities. For instance, funding should also be allocated to the costs of sign interpretation, captioning, personal assistance and adapted transportation. We advocate against using EU funding for actions that contravene the CRPD, such as for the construction of segregating residential institutions. Instead, NDICI funding should go to person-centred, community-based support.

Gender Equality Action Plan III

The EU's Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Relations 2020-2025 (GAP III) aims to accelerate progress on empowering women and girls and safeguard gains made in gender equality during the 25 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and its Platform for Action.

EDF provided input into various consultations and participated in structured dialogues of the European Commission on progress made on GAP III. EDF also advocated together with the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) and CONCORD (as a member of the Gender Reference Group) for the rights of women and girls with disabilities to be included in implementation of the policy and contributed to [CONCORD's alternative report](#).

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EU Human Rights and Democracy Action Plan

In June, the EU published the [mid-term review](#) of the EU's Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024. The review noted that “the EU continued to advocate for the global ratification and implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), and promoted those rights in its dialogues, urging countries to safeguard the equality before the law of persons with disabilities, as well as their social inclusion and right to an independent life”. EDF participated in two consultation meetings ahead of the mid-term review and provided input.

EU Human Rights Dialogues

EDF was actively engaged in consultation meetings and submitted written input in preparation for various EU human rights dialogues, including those concerning [Armenia](#), the [Association of Southeast Asian Nations](#) (ASEAN), India, Kuwait, Mexico, Moldova, the [Philippines](#), Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. In anticipation of most dialogues, EDF collaborated closely with our OPD colleagues at both country and regional levels to ensure the accurate representation of their perspectives and experiences regarding the situations of individuals with disabilities.

EDF has been showcasing the discrimination and barriers faced by persons with disabilities every day. Such barriers restrict persons with disabilities from participating in society on an equal basis with others. We have also worked to raise awareness about the forced sterilisation faced by women with disabilities, the shackling of people with psychosocial disabilities and the segregation in institutions endured by adults and children with disabilities, all perpetrated without due legal rights.

Disability Platform and External Action

The Disability Platform is a pivotal flagship of the EU Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It serves as an expert group devoted to supporting implementation of the Strategy through the collaboration

of representatives from all EU Member States and selected civil society organisations. The Platform offers a process to discuss relevant policy developments, exchange experiences and good practices, as well as reflect the diversity of disability. The Platform also provides a forum to engage and work together on the preparation of policy initiatives or legislative proposals in the field of disability and establish cooperation and coordination between the Commission, Member States and stakeholders.

In October 2023, the Platform convened a meeting to deliberate on the EU's commitment to Section Six of the Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, focusing on the global promotion of disability rights. The discussions centred on external actions, including the impact of the war in Ukraine, the situation of Ukrainians with disabilities in the EU and the reconstruction of Ukraine. The emphasis was on ensuring that the EU Delegations actively contribute to supporting implementation of the CRPD and promoting global ratification. EDF was involved in that meeting and provided its expertise.

How inclusive is EU aid? – using the Disability Marker

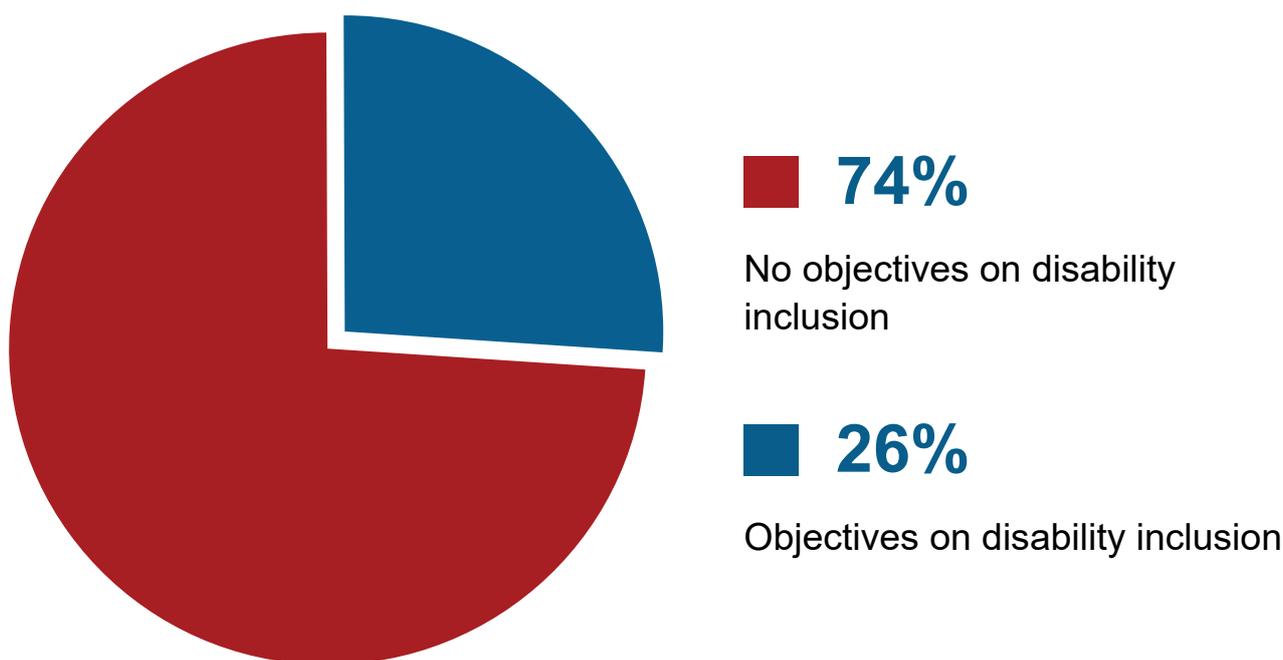
The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) is an international forum of 32 members that provides Official Development Assistance (ODA – sometimes referred to as “aid”). The EU is a member.

In 2018, the OECD-DAC introduced a “disability policy marker” to its data system. The disability policy marker is a tool designed to monitor how far ODA aims to be inclusive of persons with disabilities. EDF has campaigned for some years for the EU to measure how much of its assistance reaches persons with disabilities using the disability policy marker.

EDF has published [its yearly report](#) on the use of the OECD-DAC disability marker. In this edition, we have linked the marker with the new Global Gateway flagship and the recent EU Inequality Marker (the I-Marker), to examine how the disability marker is employed.

We found that the proportion of EC Official ODA projects reported as disability-inclusive have risen from 2% in 2018 to 26% in 2021 (Figure 1). Additionally, the I-Marker has the potential to work well with the disability policy marker. It can help draw attention to inequalities related to disabilities. Both markers should be used together. On the other hand, we noticed that some of the key partners involved in implementing the Global Gateway (see the next section for further information) do not yet use the disability policy marker. That makes it difficult to get a complete picture of how far Global Gateway programmes aim to be inclusive of persons with disabilities. That is also the case for EU funding given to the UN and global programmes like the Spotlight Initiative.

Figure 1: percentage of applicable EC ODA projects reported as disability-inclusive in 2021 by the EC



Note: the analysis is based on data from the Creditor Reporting System database, downloaded in December 2023. The percentages are calculated based on the number of projects given scores of 1 or 2 (“objectives on disability inclusion”) or scores of 0 (“no objectives on disability inclusion”).

International Cooperation: Promoting Partnerships and Connecting the EU with Disability Rights Experts Across the Globe

Global Gateway: a new EU initiative

EDF has been selected to be part of the EU's Global Gateway Civil Society and Local Authorities Dialogue Platform. The [Global Gateway](#) is the EU's contribution to narrowing the global investment gap worldwide. It is the EC's "flagship" strategy for large-scale infrastructure investments in the Global South. It will mobilise up to €300 billion in investments for sustainable and high-quality projects, taking into account the needs of partner countries and ensuring lasting benefits for local communities. Civil society organisations and local authorities will play a key role in ensuring that a value-based and inclusive approach is taken, so that Global Gateway delivers on its goals in line with its principles.



Global Action on Disability Network

In October, in collaboration with the European Commission, EDF co-hosted the GLAD Network [Annual General Meeting](#) (AGM) in Brussels for the first time.

The GLAD Network unites donors, state agencies, foundations and coalitions within the disability rights movement. They share the mission of advancing inclusive international development and humanitarian efforts, with working groups focusing on diverse themes, such as climate, gender and education. During the AGM, EDF therefore took the opportunity to present its work on women, political participation, Ukraine and climate action.



Gunta Anca, Vice-President of EDF, sharing our work in Ukraine

Photo credit: Marion Steff / European Disability Forum

European Union-Association of Southeast Asian Nations

EDF was selected to participate in the 3rd European Union-Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Forum on 2 October in Brussels, as a precursor to the 5th EU-ASEAN Policy Dialogue on Human Rights. During that event, the CSOs in attendance wrote recommendations entitled “[Advancing Human Rights: Creating an Enabling Environment for CSOs at the Regional Level](#)” and later shared the recommendations with the EU and ASEAN Delegations. The recommendations included protecting the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

Engaging donor offices and delegations for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in budgets, programmes and policies worldwide

In November, EDF co-hosted an [online meeting](#) with the GLAD Network focusing on the crucial topic of engaging donor offices and delegations to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities and OPDs in budgets, programmes and policies. Over 130 people registered for the event. Notably, the event featured high-level speakers, including representatives from the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA), the Delegation of the European Union to Mozambique and various OPDs, who provided valuable insight and expertise regarding inclusion of persons with disabilities in their work.



Global Inclusion

Engaging donor offices and delegations for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in budgets, programmes and policies worldwide

7 November | Online
15:00 - 17:00 Brussels time

European Parliament Disability Rights Week

The European Parliament held its first “[Disability Rights Week](#)” to mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The week took place from 27 November to 4 December. During the week, the European Parliament and its committees and bodies held several meetings, events and votes to advance disability rights, including a meeting to explain the challenges children with disabilities face in accessing education in many parts of the world, along with suitable solutions to address those challenges. The Development (DEVE) Committee of the European Parliament organised the meeting.

In collaboration with Inclusion Europe, EDF connected the Committee with Ms. Fatma Wangare Haji, Regional Coordinator of Inclusion Africa. Ms. Wangare Haji shed light on the stigma and discrimination experienced by children with intellectual disabilities in Kenya and shared her expertise with the Parliament.

In her remarks, Ms. Wangare Haji stated that:

“the [disability] stigma is too high; the stigma starts from the community and goes to the school...and parents do not want to send their children to school just to be stigmatised”.

She continued by calling on the Committee to:

“LISTEN to the voices of children with disabilities and their families...they are the experts!”

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Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Review of European countries by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

EDF helps its members in Europe to contribute to the review of their countries by the UN Committee. That includes support in relation to submitting alternative reports and participating in meetings with the Committee's experts.

In addition, prior to each session of the UN Committee, EDF submits information on Europe-wide issues, including issues at the level of the EU and the Council of Europe, such as the fields of international cooperation and humanitarian action. For example, in February 2023, EDF published its latest [Information Note](#) to the CRPD Committee Experts on disability priorities at the European level. The objective of the note is to encourage the experts to consider the issues in question during the review of the EU and European countries.

EU review by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

In March 2022, the UN Committee started the second review of the EU. To inform the Committee, EDF submitted an [alternative report](#) with suggested questions. In addition, EDF sent a [joint submission](#) to the UN Committee together with the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), focusing on the EU's implementation of the CRPD in its external action beyond Europe. In April 2022, the Committee published the [List of Issues Prior to Reporting on the EU](#), to which the [EU responded](#) in April 2023. Notably, four out of six questions asked by the Committee to the EU regarding humanitarian action (Article 11) and three out of four questions regarding international cooperation (Article 32) were based on EDF recommendations. EDF is currently analysing the EU's response and will prepare its proposed recommendations ahead of the Constructive Dialogue, including on EU external action.

EU candidate to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Every two years, the State Parties to the CRPD elect nine experts of the UN Committee. For the first time, the EU will propose an EU candidate for the 2024 election. This is the first ever candidate to a treaty body from a regional organisation.

In past years, EDF had been calling for the nomination and election of qualified candidates [from Europe](#), especially women with disabilities. That is particularly important for the 2024 election as there is currently no expert from the EU and only one expert from Europe (Switzerland).

Conference of States Parties to the CRPD (COSP 16)

A [delegation from EDF](#), led by our Vice-Presidents Gunta Anca and Pat Clarke, participated in the [16th session of the Conference of States Parties to the UN CRPD](#), an annual event organised by the UN to discuss implementation of the Convention. We took that opportunity to organise two side events with the EU. The first event focused on ending the forced sterilisation of persons with disabilities. It included high-level speakers such as the EU Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli. It was hosted together with Malta and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia. The second event discussed how to develop employment skills and was co-hosted with the European Commission and Belgium.

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Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction: Advancing EU Policies

Disaster Resilience Goals

On 9 February 2023, the European Commission published its [recommendation on disaster resilience goals](#) to strengthen disaster resilience and improve the capacity of the EU and its Member States to withstand the effects of current and future natural and man-made disasters, most of them exacerbated by climate change and environmental degradation. EDF met with the unit of the Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) working on the Disaster Resilience Goals and provided information and best practices of disability inclusion in DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction).

Humanitarian Responses

On 23 November, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on [“Innovative humanitarian aid strategy: Spotlight on current and forgotten crises”](#). The text adopted by the European Parliament underlines the importance of putting in place better preventive action, improving resilience and increasing the capacity to respond to emergencies, focusing on inclusion and protection of at-risk groups. The European Parliament took an ambitious position to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian contexts, in line with [amendments proposed by EDF](#).

Humanitarian Action: Promoting Partnerships and Connecting the EU with Disability Rights Experts Across the Globe

Disability-inclusive resilience during the European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities (EPPD)

On 23 May 2023, over 700 disability rights advocates gathered in the hemicycle of the European Parliament in Brussels with a purpose: building an inclusive future for persons with disabilities. Jointly organised by the European Parliament and EDF, the [5th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities](#) created the opportunity to discuss the demands of the disability movement. During the event, delegates adopted the [“Building an inclusive future for persons with disabilities in the EU” Manifesto](#) with the aim of guiding the political programmes of candidates for the European Parliament, the European Commission to be appointed after the elections and all the relevant policies affecting the future of persons with disabilities in Europe and beyond.

On that occasion, we also organised a session on disability-inclusive resilience. We welcomed Janez Lenarčič, European Commissioner for Crisis Management, Valerii Sushkevych, Head of the National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities of Ukraine (NAPD), Paola Albrito, Director of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Idriss Maïga Alzouma, Chairperson of the African Disability Forum (ADF).

The session focused on the challenges of ensuring persons with disabilities are protected and their rights upheld during crises and emergency situations. It looked at humanitarian crises, preparation for and mitigation of disasters, the effects of wars and health and other emergencies. Panellists underlined how persons with disabilities must be involved in such work. The main conclusions included:

- The importance of ensuring the accessibility of infrastructure and tools used during emergencies.
- Involvement of organisations of persons with disabilities in preparing and developing plans to deal with crises, disasters and other emergencies.
- The need to collect data disaggregated by disability and use that data when deploying humanitarian and development aid.



Maïga Alzouma, Chairperson, African Disability Forum

Photo credit: Vanessa James / European Disability Forum



Panellists for the session on disability-inclusive resilience.

Photo credit: Vanessa James / European Disability Forum

Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA)

EDF was invited to participate in a meeting of the Council Working Party on Humanitarian Aid and Food Aid (COHAFA) to present our work in Ukraine. EDF gave an overview of the challenges and opportunities of disability inclusion in the humanitarian programme cycle (from preparedness through response to reconstruction). EDF presented specific examples of the work in Ukraine with local members and partners.

The EDF intervention was well-received, and many countries made their own interventions on the topic. The EDF presentation was shared with all participants and will be stored on the public repository of the Council. Other participants involved said that it was a particularly interactive session.

European Humanitarian Forum

EDF Executive Committee and Board member Nadia Hadad participated in the 2023 edition of the European Humanitarian Forum, organised by DG ECHO. EDF was involved in the Humanitarian Disability Talk “From commitments to action: Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Response”. EDF showcased the work on Ukraine, explaining how it is possible to ensure inclusive preparedness before the crisis strikes. Moreover, the importance of cooperation between local OPDs and other humanitarian actors was described.

Training provided to DG ECHO (Directorate-General on European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations)

In December, EDF provided training to DG ECHO during its monthly discussion in the framework of the “policy dissemination series”. EDF presented the priorities for disability inclusion in the EU humanitarian programme cycle, based on the “must do” actions according to the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines. The audience consisted of DG ECHO colleagues working in the EU Delegations and at the headquarters.

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Climate Action

In recent years, the EU has committed to improving its efforts on climate action. Internally, the EU launched its “Green Deal” in 2020, and externally, in December 2021, the Global Gateway was introduced as part of EU foreign policy. The [Global Gateway](#) aims to boost innovation and enhance the EU’s global influence, focusing on improving connections in digitalisation, climate change, energy and transport, while also strengthening global health, education and research, all of which directly impact persons with disabilities.

In 2023, EDF met with various Directorates-General, such as DG Climate Action (DG CLIMA) and DG ECHO, to highlight shortcomings in climate action strategies, policies, programmes and budgets regarding the rights of persons with disabilities.

EDF participated in the [Bonn Climate Change Conference](#) and the [UN Conference on Climate Change](#) (COP28) with the objective of bringing the perspective of [disability inclusion to the negotiating table](#). We shared with the EU our [main message](#) that we prepared together with the International Disability Alliance. In particular, we are calling on all governments, including the EU, to ensure that:

- Accessibility is integrated from the beginning into all aspects of green and resilient infrastructure investments, programmes and initiatives, with the elimination of obstacles and barriers in the built environment.
- The Just Transition is achieved in an inclusive, affordable and sustainable manner and includes persons with disabilities.
- The first [Global Stocktake](#) plays a key role in strengthening the inclusion of persons with disabilities in climate change.
- Persons with disabilities participate meaningfully and effectively in all phases of all relevant policies, commitments and processes related to the implementation of climate change policies, such as the Paris Agreement, the Loss and Damage Fund and the Just Transition Work Programme.

- Persons with disabilities are prioritised by the Parties and their rights are included in their 2030 and 2035 Nationally Determined Contributions, including reference to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the contexts of both climate adaptation and climate mitigation.
- The Loss and Damage Fund respects the international commitments to promote the human rights of persons with disabilities (such as the CRPD).



Representatives of ODPs at COP28, with David Boyd, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment.

Photo credit: Disability Caucus

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Ukraine

In April 2022, immediately after escalation of the war in Ukraine, [EDF and CBM International started collaborating on a project](#) to address the needs of persons with disabilities impacted by the war. The overall objective is to ensure that persons with disabilities and OPDs are not left behind in the response to and recovery from the Ukrainian crisis.

EDF has been addressing immediate needs and providing humanitarian assistance to persons with disabilities in collaboration with members and partners in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Moreover, we have been active in influencing EU policies and strengthening the disability movement in the long term to better respond to humanitarian needs and to ensure disability inclusion in the wider humanitarian response and reconstruction.



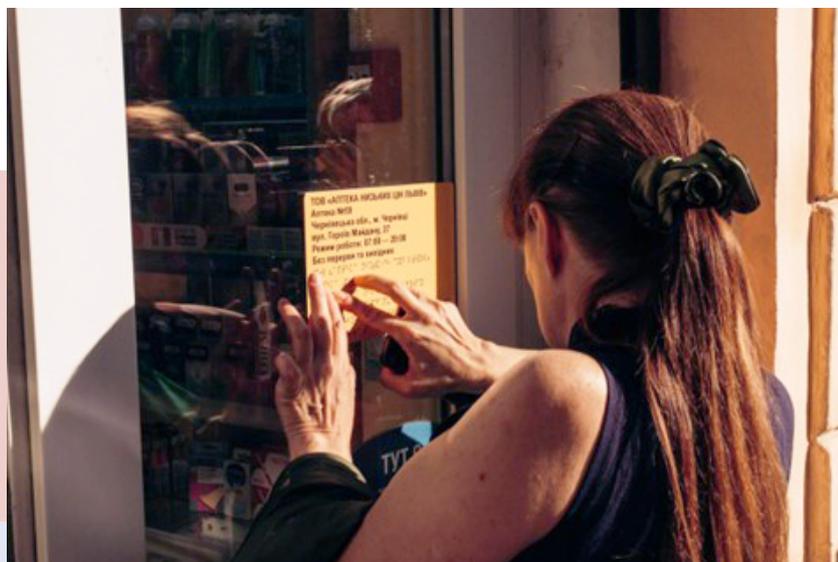
Accessible car

Photo credit: Anna Romandash



Wheelchair user going up a pavement

Photo credit: Anna Romandash



A person reading a Braille sign

Photo credit: Anna Romandash

Ukraine Facility – European Funding for Reconstruction

EDF has been influencing the [Commission proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on establishing the Ukraine Facility](#).

The aim of this proposal is to support short-term recovery needs and the reconstruction and modernisation of Ukraine. We provided suggestions for changes in the law, working with Ukraine OPDs to ensure the reconstruction is compliant with the CRPD. EDF welcomed the fact that the [position approved by the European Parliament](#) includes accessibility, inclusion of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD and meaningful participation of civil society organisations in decision-making processes. We continue to lobby EU Member States represented on the Council for a transition from institutional to community-based services, which is an important priority for Ukraine now and in the future. All such advocacy work is performed in coordination with our members in Ukraine: the National Assembly and the League of the Strong.

EDF also participated in a round table focused on the crucial topic of “Building a transparent and inclusive EU Facility for Ukraine”. The event was organised as part of the Euroscope project in cooperation with the Ukrainian Child’s Rights Network and the League of the Strong. EU representatives, such as the Team Leader for the reconstruction of Ukraine, were among the participants.

Reconstruction of Ukraine

EDF shared its concerns regarding the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine and the situation of Ukrainian persons with disabilities living in residential institutions in the country with the European Commission (including during a bilateral meeting with Commissioner Dalli, a bilateral meeting with the DG ECHO head of unit covering Ukraine and a bilateral meeting with Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)). We called on the EU to take the lead in the reconstruction of Ukraine and to prioritise:

- **Accessibility:** Implementing guidelines such as Universal Design and creating a barrier-free environment in new construction projects.
- **End of institutions:** Supporting independent living in the community, avoiding perpetuation of segregation in residential institutions and building relevant services for persons with disabilities.
- **Engagement of OPDs:** Ensuring the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and OPDs in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the reconstruction process.

Commissioner Varhely (Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement) replied to a letter EDF had sent, stressing that the EU is committed to supporting the design and implementation of a comprehensive childcare reform (de-institutionalisation) in Ukraine that will address children with disabilities. The Commissioner emphasised the significance of ensuring that investments in Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction take into account the needs of persons with disabilities. That aligns with commitments by the EU and Ukraine as a State Party to the CRPD. Finally, the Commissioner noted that civil society should also be appropriately included in the reconstruction effort.

EU Accession

The EU has published the [Enlargement Report 2023](#), including accession reports for Ukraine and Moldova. EDF members and partners have been consulted and prepared input for the Directorate-General European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR). EDF members and partners had the occasion to meet with representatives of DG NEAR on two occasions (May 2023 and September 2023) to discuss their involvement in the accession processes for Ukraine and Moldova.

EDF was pleased to note that the EU Enlargement Report 2023 includes references to persons with disabilities and recommends “higher levels of investment (...) to ensure full compliance with the CRPD, notably as regards transition to community-based care, independent living, accessibility and inclusion”. (p. 32)

EDF's Global Action Newsletter



EDF [consistently publishes its Global Action newsletter](#), showcasing the latest news on the EU's work on disability-inclusive international cooperation, humanitarian action and external action. We proudly highlight the contributions and work of our members and partners. This year, we have issued 8 newsletters, reaching a readership of 402 subscribers. To receive this newsletter, please register on EDF's website.

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More Information

For more information on our work and projects, please contact the International Cooperation team:

international.cooperation@edf-feph.org

or consult the following pages:



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