



## EDF input to Five-year European migration and asylum strategy

The European Disability Forum (EDF) calls for the inclusion of migrants and asylum seekers with disabilities and protection of their rights in the upcoming strategy.

Despite existing commitments, asylum seekers and migrants with disabilities continue to be marginalised and their rights denied, as reported by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA). A more robust, disability-inclusive system is urgently needed at EU and national levels to ensure that persons with disabilities are adequately protected and supported throughout all stages of migration and asylum processes.

We call on the European Commission to ensure that the five-year Migration and Asylum Strategy is firmly **grounded in fundamental rights**, including the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the Istanbul Convention. The strategy must adopt an **intersectional approach** and explicitly include the rights and perspectives of asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants with disabilities, in line with the recent CRPD Committee EU concluding observations (para. 47(c), (d)). It should be consistent with and complement the EU's broader equality strategies, including those on gender, anti-racism, disability, and LGBTIQ equality.

On the **internal dimension**, the strategy should guarantee that **border management** respects international law and incorporates accessibility for migrants with disabilities, screening mechanisms (based on the socio-human rights model of disability set out in the CRPD), and appropriate support for persons with disabilities, such as the provision of assistive technologies. **Protection procedures** must systematically identify and assess the specific risks faced by people with disabilities, recognising that these risks can be heightened because of their disability. **Reception conditions** should ensure accessibility in practice, including access to healthcare, mental health support, and disability-specific assistance. **Return procedures** must be based on dignity and individualised assessments, avoiding discrimination and safeguarding rights. Equally important is the inclusion of **integration support**, ensuring equal access to education, healthcare, social protection, and the labour market, alongside the provision of reasonable accommodation. The **prevention of exploitation**, including trafficking, forced begging and other forms of abuse, should be reinforced, with particular attention



to women and children with disabilities, and coordinated with the EU anti-trafficking framework.

On the **external dimension**, the strategy must ensure that legal migration pathways are open and accessible to people with disabilities – in line with all obligations set in UN human rights treaties ratified by EU member states. In some countries, disability is still used as an exclusion criterion for visas or work permits. This is particularly the case with Member States requiring medical certificates, proof of health insurance or medical assessments as part of visa, family-reunification or residence/work permit procedures (e.g. Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany). Such health requirements can be in practice exclusionary barriers for people with disabilities, even when framed as public-health or administrative checks. The EU must ensure that its partnerships and external actions actively promote disability-inclusive migration pathways and counter such discriminatory practices.

In addition, the new strategy must include **specific actions on disability inclusion**, as well as **binding guidance and minimum standards for Member States** to ensure the CRPD is effectively applied in migration procedures, not just referenced in principle. This requires targeted **EU funding** to ensure accessibility measures and disability support services within asylum and migration systems, together with specific funding and **capacity-building** programs for municipalities and employment agencies to create inclusive local integration ecosystems. Member State authorities and EU agencies must be trained systematically on disability rights and inclusive practices. Equally, **migrants' organisations and organisations of persons with disabilities must be consulted and involved** in the development, implementation, and monitoring of national migration and asylum policies. Strong monitoring mechanisms must be established to ensure compliance with the CRPD. Lastly, the new strategy should encourage **cross-border innovation and learning**, supporting projects that pilot inclusive digital tools, assistive technologies, and tailored education or employment pathways for migrants with disabilities.