



# **DG ECHO**

# **Consultation –**

# **Communication on**

# **Humanitarian Aid**

**European Disability Forum Position Paper**  
**January 2026**

**EDF input into the DG ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid) Communication to the European Parliament and the Council in early 2026.**

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## Introduction

### **The European Disability Forum**

The European Disability Forum is an independent NGO that represents the interests of 100 million Europeans with disabilities. 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.

## Executive Summary

This short paper outlines the EDFs advisory note to DG ECHO on the Communication on Humanitarian Aid to the European Parliament and the Council.

These communications are policy and strategic documents that sets out the Commissions vision, priorities and direction and are considered as having "soft law" impact. It is the foundation upon which future, more formal, legislative acts may be built.

These framework comms can shape future funding priorities under DG ECHO, influence how humanitarian principles are interpreted and applied, guide coordination with Member States (Team Europe approach) and later justify operational changes, guidance, or funding conditions and even be used politically as a reference point for years, in other words it can set the narrative going forward.

Feedback on early-stage documents like this one has a high chance of being incorporated into the final policy design because it helps avoid blind spots and potential unintended consequences later on.

In short it is a high-level strategic policy Communication, likely to influence future humanitarian practice and funding.

EDF makes eleven recommendations to DG ECHO on making Humanitarian Aid align with the UN CRPD (UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) and to better include persons with disabilities as leaders, decision makers, implementers and as beneficiaries of humanitarian aid.

## 1. General, cross-cutting and principles

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (2019) sets out a twin track approach. This approach is also reflected in the EU Disability Strategy 2021–2030 and aligned with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

### **Recommendation 1: All actions should be grounded in a twin-track approach:**

- Systematic mainstreaming of disability inclusion across humanitarian action, and
- Targeted measures addressing specific barriers faced by persons with disabilities, including women, children, older persons, and persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities.

### **Recommendation 2: We recommend that all actions be aligned with the UN CRPD, specifically**

- Align with the principle of “Nothing about us without us” found in Article 4(3), which requires States to closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including through their representative organisations, in the development and implementation of legislation and policies — including those related to humanitarian action and emergency response. And
- Article 29 – Participation in political and public life, which reinforces the right of persons with disabilities to participate in decision-making processes affecting them.
- Article 11 – Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies: This is the most explicit article, requiring States to take “all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of

persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters.”

- Article 9 – Accessibility: Applies to humanitarian assistance, requiring accessible shelters, services, information, transport, and communications in emergencies.
- Article 10 – Right to life and Article 15 – Freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment: Relevant to protection of civilians with disabilities and prevention of neglect or discriminatory triage in crises.
- Article 25 – Health and Article 26 – Habilitation and rehabilitation: Require continuity and non-discriminatory access to healthcare, rehabilitation, and assistive devices during emergencies.
- Article 32 – International cooperation: Obligates States (including the EU and its Member States) to ensure international cooperation, including humanitarian aid, is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities.

To align with and implement the CRPD Recommendations to the EU (March 2025)

"Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies (art. 11)

The Committee notes with concern:

- (a) The lack of mandatory requirements and monitoring mechanisms for disability inclusion in humanitarian action, civil protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change.
- (b) The limited support for organizations of persons with disabilities to be closely consulted and actively involved in the implementation of policies pertaining to humanitarian action, civil protection, disaster risk reduction and climate change.

(...) the Committee recommends that the European Union, in close consultation and active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations:

- (a) Ensure that the EU legislative, policy and implementation frameworks on humanitarian action, disaster risk reduction, civil protection and climate change protect the safety and security of persons with disabilities, enhance reporting, capacity building and monitoring mechanisms and incorporate indicators on

disability inclusion and the principles and rights of the Convention.

- (b) Promote disability-inclusive responses to prevent avoidable deaths in emergencies, establish close consultation and active involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in decision-making processes and monitoring of responses to humanitarian emergencies, pandemics, and other disasters and in global, regional and national negotiations on climate change, and support official recognition of organizations of persons with disabilities as part of a Disability Constituency within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change."

## **2. Respecting the humanitarian space (international humanitarian law, access, protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, protection of aid workers, support for humanitarian protection).**

### **Recommendation 3: Strengthen protection of persons with disabilities under International Humanitarian Law (IHL)**

- Explicitly recognise persons with disabilities as a group facing heightened risk. This needs to be evident in all EU humanitarian policies, operational guidance, monitoring, financing and advocacy.
- Promote systematic documentation and reporting of violations against persons with disabilities, including attacks on accessible civilian infrastructure, rehabilitation centres, and care facilities.
- Support disability-inclusive monitoring mechanisms to inform EU diplomatic engagement and accountability efforts.

### **Recommendation 4: Ensure inclusive humanitarian access and protection of civilians**

- Support community-based protection mechanisms that actively include organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).
- Promote and finance accessible communication in protection mechanisms, (sign language, Easy-to-Read formats, assistive technologies) in humanitarian alerts, negotiations, and community engagement.
- Require EU-funded humanitarian partners to integrate disability-inclusive risk analysis, evacuation planning, and early-warning systems.

### **Recommendation 5: Promote and protect humanitarian aid workers with disabilities and develop and protect a humanitarian aid workforce with disability knowledge**

- Demand, monitor and finance reasonable accommodation measures to ensure the recruitment, leadership and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities within humanitarian workforces, especially within decision-making, leadership and coordination roles.
- Invest in protection of humanitarian aid workers with disabilities, through trainings of all staff, policy, advocacy and reasonable accommodation.
- Strengthen EU support for training humanitarian personnel on disability inclusion, protection principles, and safeguarding.
- Invest in protection of humanitarian aid workers with disability knowledge and experience, through trainings, policy and advocacy.

### **3. Providing effective and efficient assistance (prioritization, humanitarian supply chain, cost-effective practices, horizontal enabling functions, like data management, support to safety and security, logistics).**

### **Recommendation 6: Make disability inclusion a criterion for prioritisation and funding decisions**

- Require all EU-funded humanitarian responses to demonstrate the leadership and inclusion of persons with disabilities to ensure inclusion and technical expertise that is relevant, applicable, acceptable and quality.
- Require all EU-funded humanitarian responses to demonstrate how assistance reaches persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others.
- Prioritise adaptable and flexible funding to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and their families and avoid one size fits all solutions.
- Demand and monitor and invest in better minimum standards for disability inclusion across all sectors (health, shelter, WASH, food security, education in emergencies).

### **Recommendation 7: Strengthen inclusive humanitarian supply chains and logistics**

- Ensure procurement of assistive devices, rehabilitation services, and accessible shelter and WASH facilities as part of core humanitarian supplies.
- Partner with and employ local OPDs and persons with disabilities to ensure logistics reach persons with disabilities in deep rural areas, in the last mile and that procurement provides applicable, acceptable, quality and effective services and devices.
- Promote cost-effective, locally sourced solutions for assistive technologies and inclusive design to reduce delays and costs.

### **Recommendation 8: Invest in enabling functions for inclusive assistance**

- Support disaggregated data collection (using the Washington Group questions where applicable) to identify and address gaps in assistance.
- Employ persons with disabilities to lead, inform, implement data collection to ensure better access, improved quality and broader reach.
- Fund safety, security, and logistics systems that consider the specific needs of persons with disabilities, including safe transport, accessible distribution points, and inclusive feedback mechanisms.

## **4. Addressing fragile contexts (innovative financing and working with international financial institutions and the private sector, exit strategies, linking humanitarian, development and peace action).**

### **Recommendation 9: Promote innovative and inclusive financing in fragile and protracted crises**

- Ensure that EU innovative financing instruments explicitly include disability-inclusive objectives and safeguards.
- Encourage collaboration with international financial institutions and the private sector to scale up inclusive infrastructure, social protection, and assistive technology systems.
- Demand that EU-funded reconstruction efforts are disability inclusive and monitor implementation to promote inclusive democracies post conflict.

### **Recommendation 10: Strengthen the humanitarian–development–peace (HDP) nexus through disability inclusion**

- Embed disability inclusion as a core outcome in EU nexus programming, particularly in health systems strengthening, education, housing, transport, livelihoods, and social protection.
- Support long-term capacity building of national institutions and OPDs to ensure sustainability beyond humanitarian exit strategies. Align these with CRPD demands.

### **Recommendation 11: Plan inclusive exit and transition strategies**

- Require disability-inclusive transition planning from the outset of humanitarian interventions, ensuring continuity of services such as rehabilitation, mental health support, and inclusive education.
- Support national ownership and policy reform aligned with the CRPD to reduce dependency on humanitarian aid in fragile contexts.
- Ensure “there before-there after” guides funding decisions, policy, hiring, and programme implementation.

## Document credits

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