



# 10 Disability Priorities for the Cypriot Council Presidency 2026

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## Contents

Introduction.....	2
Glossary.....	3
Top 10 Disability Priorities .....	4
1. Implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) .....	4
2. A new push for the EU Disability Rights Strategy 2025-2030 .....	5
3. Protect disability rights and social spending in the next Multiannual Financial Framework .....	6
4. Promote equal rights .....	7
5. Transparent and participatory decision-making .....	8
6. Make freedom of movement a reality .....	9
7. Accessible Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the Digital Single Market .....	10
8. Accessibility of transport and Passenger' Rights.....	12
9. An inclusive Green Deal for Europe .....	13
10. Champion the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide .....	14
Contact person at the EDF secretariat:.....	15

## Introduction

The European Disability Forum is an independent umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that represents the interests of more than 100 million Europeans with disabilities. EDF is a unique platform which brings together representative organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe, run by persons with disabilities and their families. EDF is a member of the Social Platform and Civil Society Europe, and works closely with the European institutions, the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

In this document, you will find calls and recommendations on how to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities are fully part of the agenda and work of the Cypriot Presidency. We are looking forward to continued discussions throughout the 6-month Presidency's term with the different services involved at national level and in Brussels, in order to contribute to advancing the rights of persons with disabilities.



## Glossary

- **Concluding observations (of the CRPD Committee):** document adopted by the CRPD Committee as part of the review mechanisms of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in States Parties. The document contains areas of concerns and recommendations for improvement.
- **Discrimination:** any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of one or several grounds (sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.) which damage or nullify the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field (see Chapter 2).
- **Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs):** Organisations comprising a majority of persons with disabilities that represent the interests and defend the human rights of persons with disabilities through self-representation and advocacy.
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD):** an international human rights treaty that reaffirms that all persons with disabilities must enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms. It clarifies that all persons with disabilities have the right to participate in civil, political, economic, social and cultural life of the community just as anyone else.



## Top 10 Disability Priorities

### 1. Implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is ratified by the European Union and all its Member States. Disability rights must be therefore considered in the development, implementation, monitoring and review of all policies and legislation addressed by the Council of the EU.

#### EDF Recommendations:

- Implement the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities following the 2025 review of the EU.
- Create a CRPD focal point within the Council for the implementation of the UN Convention, that will be responsible for mainstreaming the Convention across policy files in the Council and a Disability Working Party in the Council preparatory bodies.
- Mainstream disability issues in all new and revised EU legislation as well as Council Recommendation and Council conclusions in areas that affecting the lives of persons with disabilities.

#### Additional information:

- [Text of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [2025 Concluding Observations of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)



## 2. A new push for the EU Disability Rights Strategy 2025-2030

The EU Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 is at its halfway mark. The first half proved to be successful and almost all initiatives have been implemented on schedule. New actions will be adopted in May and will require strong ambition, inter-institutional coordination and meaningful involvement of the European disability movement for the new phase of the Strategy to succeed.

### **EDF Recommendations:**

- Nominate the Council's disability coordinator, as foreseen in the Strategy, and make it publicly known. This coordinator should participate in the meetings of the Disability Platform, set up by the European Commission.
- Commit to follow-up on actions for Member States which are part of the Strategy.

### **Additional information:**

- [EDF's demands for new actions for the second half of the Disability Strategy 2025-2030](#)

### 3. Protect disability rights and social spending in the next Multiannual Financial Framework

EDF is working to ensure the next long-term EU budget protects the rights of persons with disabilities. In light of a simplification of the regulations, the clarity on the need to protect the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the UNCRPD has been severely downgraded. The place of the European Social Fund has also been compromised, with a smaller amount of money going towards social objectives yet with a scope that goes far beyond what the ESF+ currently does. At the same time, EDF is striving to keep up the momentum of the Social Pillar and advocates in the areas of access to employment, inclusive education, social protection, fighting poverty and social exclusion, as well as de-institutionalisation and the right to live in the community.

#### EDF Recommendations:

- Ensure that the UNCRPD is included explicitly in the horizontal principles governing the use of EU funds post 2028.
- Strengthen the role of the European Social Fund in the next Multiannual Financial Framework, ringfencing at least 14% of the National and Regional Partnership Plans for social spending that is separate from investment in infrastructure, and earmarking 25% of funding within that pot of money for social action that addresses social inclusion of marginalised groups in particular.
- That the rules against investing EU funds in segregating settings for persons with disabilities are made clearer, reducing the ongoing risks of misuse of funds.
- The establishment of a “Disability Employment and Skills Guarantee”, supported by the European Social Fund and inspired by the existing [Youth Guarantee](#), that has a clear intersectional approach and also focuses on supporting and increasing the employment of women with disabilities
- That EU money going towards housing focuses not only on affordability and energy efficiency, but also on accessibility for persons with disabilities and older persons.
- That EU funds supporting social inclusion, particularly the European Social Fund Plus, are able to be more easily useable for organisations across the EU, with less bureaucracy and co-financing.
- Ensure that EU external financing instruments, including humanitarian aid and international cooperation, systematically promote the rights of persons with disabilities and are aligned with the CRPD.
- That a dedicated share of EU external action funding (including NDICI/Global Europe) supports disability inclusion, including through direct funding to OPDs.

#### Additional information:

- [EDF campaign page on the next EU Budget post 2028](#)



## 4. Promote equal rights

Persons with disabilities continue to face discrimination in their daily lives, in employment, education, access to health and good and services. They are also victims of intersectional and multiple forms of discrimination. For example, the 60 million women and girls with disabilities in Europe can face intersectional discrimination based on both gender and disability. They are more likely to be marginalised and excluded in all fields of life, including education and employment, to live in poverty and become victims of crime, including violence.

### Key legislative files:

- Horizontal Equal Treatment Directive – SQWP
- Regulation on Protection of Adults – JUSTCIV

### EDF recommendations:

- Establish an Equality configuration within the Council.
- Continue negotiations to adopt the Equal Treatment Directive.
- Adopt Council conclusions on equality and intersectionality, also calling for the adoption of an action plan by the European Commission on the topic. The conclusions should focus on the implementation of the various equality strategies adopted, from EU Member States' perspectives, and build consensus for future actions.
- Revise the proposed Regulation on Protection of Adults in JUSTCIV to align the text with the CRPD, [as called by civil society organised and UN experts](#).
- Support the implementation of the Istanbul Convention on violence against women by the EU and actively contribute to the first evaluation of the EU by the GREVIO, scheduled in 2025.
- Facilitate discussion for the addition of violence against women, as well as hate speech and hate crime to the list of EU crimes.
- Ensure the next EU budget properly funds civil society organisations working on equality, non-discrimination and anti-racism.

### Additional information:

- [9 organisations joint statement: “Building an inclusive European Union of Equality”](#)
- [EDF position and recommendation on hate speech and hate crimes](#)



## 5. Transparent and participatory decision-making

Persons with disabilities are currently excluded from the decision-making procedure at the level of the Council. The lack of timely, accessible information and consultation is a breach of the CRPD and leads to non-compliant EU legislation. This needs to be fixed. Furthermore, all meetings and events of the Presidency both on-line and in person should be accessible for persons with disabilities.

### EDF Recommendations:

- Make all Presidency events, both online and in person, fully accessible (see our guidance below).
- Use our “Presidency Scorecard” system to raise awareness of inclusion and accessibility among staff and decision-makers.
- Make all contact details of Council secretariat staff as well as staff of the Permanent Representations public on the “EU Who is Who” website.
- Actively involve organisations of persons with disabilities in the decision-making procedure. Invite civil society representatives to attend meetings and present policy positions.
- Meetings and decisions of Working Parties and COREPER should be public, made immediately available in accessible formats. Live-stream meetings of all Council configurations; publish full agendas ahead of meetings; publish full meetings and decisions immediately after

### Additional information:

- [EDF Guide on Accessible Meetings](#)
- [EDF Guide on Accessible Online Meetings](#)
- [EDF Presidency Scorecard \(example of Belgium\)](#)



## 6. Make freedom of movement a reality

Freedom of movement of persons is one of the 4 pillars of the EU but for persons with disabilities, it only exists in theory. There are still too many obstacles to move freely between the different Member States to work or study. The lack of portability of social security and disability benefits, the lack of recognition of disability assessment status, and lack of accessibility provisions under European exchange programmes are some of the problems persons with disabilities encounter every day.

We have achieved a big step with the adoption of the European Disability Card, but the Card will not solve the problem by itself. The same is true for inclusive ERASMUS+ and Solidarity Corps Programmes. Persons with disabilities should be able to move freely between Member States and work and travel on an equal basis with others.

Key legislative files:

- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/817 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing Erasmus+: the Union Programme for education and training, youth and sport and repealing Regulation \(EU\) No 1288/2013 \(Text with EEA relevance\)](#)
- [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/888 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2021 establishing the European Solidarity Corps Programme and repealing Regulations \(EU\) 2018/1475 and \(EU\) No 375/2014](#)

### EDF Recommendations:

- Ensure that the proposal for a revised Regulation on ERASMUS+ and Solidarity Corps for the 2028-2034 funding period are disability inclusive.
- Encourage Member States to be ambitious in the transposition of [Directives 2841/2024](#) and [2842/2024](#) on the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card and encourage the application of the widest scope possible.

### Additional information:

- [EDF web page on the European Disability Card](#)
- [EDF transposition toolkit on the European Disability Card](#)
- EDF positions on ERASMUS+ and Solidarity Corps will be sent directly to the relevant Attachés once they are adopted.

## 7. Accessible Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and the Digital Single Market


Accessible technologies can enable access to the labour market, an independent life, and participation in all aspects of society. Accessibility is best achieved and most cost effective when incorporated from the outset, and it also represents a potential business opportunity. Guidelines and standards to address accessibility are already in place with benefits for all users. However, when they are available, affordable and accessible, persons with disabilities use ICTs to a greater extent than their peers to overcome some of the barriers they find in the offline world.

### EDF Recommendations:

- Adopt an ambitious general approach on the Digital Networks Act to address existing gaps for persons with disabilities. This includes the provision of relay services 24/7 in all European Member States, the accessibility of missing children and child help hotlines and national emergency numbers and the implementation of Real-Time Text (RTT) Total Conversation (TC).
- The creation of a European Agency for Accessibility based on and building upon the work of the AccessibleEU centre, to support the implementation of all EU harmonised accessibility legislation and continue advancing towards a more accessible Europe. The agency could take inspiration from the US Access Board, and other relevant national agencies.
- A proposal for legislation on the affordability of assistive technology. This proposal could introduce legislation to guarantee the availability and affordability of assistive technologies for persons with disabilities in the EU single market, building upon the investigation carried out by the Commission in 2024.
- Greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in EU standardisation processes. While an increasing number of harmonised European standards are used in support of EU accessibility legislation, the European and particularly national standards bodies are not inclusive, nor accessible, for persons with disabilities and their representative organisations. Besides, certain stakeholders, particularly industry representatives have greater influence on the outcomes of the standardisation process compared to civil society organisations

### Additional information:

- [EDF position on Assistive Technologies](#)
- [EDF response to European Standardisation Regulation evaluation](#)

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- [EDF Toolkit on the transposition of the European Accessibility Act](#)
  - [EDF Toolkit on the transposition of the European Electronic Communications Code \(EECC\).](#)
  - [EDF Toolkit on the transposition of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive \(AVMSD\)](#)
  - [EDF response to the call for evidence on the revision of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive \(2025\)](#)
  - [EDF Position on the DSA and DMA](#)
  - [EDF recommendations for Artificial Intelligence that does not discriminate](#)
  - [Red Lines for the use of Artificial Intelligence](#)
  - [A disability-inclusive Artificial Intelligence Act: A guide to monitor implementation in your country](#)

## 8. Accessibility of transport and Passenger' Rights

Accessibility of vehicles, stations, stops, and infrastructure is necessary. We already have EU legislation on rail accessibility and on passengers' rights, but there are still many gaps that need to be filled. Especially in urban transport there are currently hardly any EU level accessibility requirements or rights for passengers. Existing legislation also needs to be implemented and enforced more strictly to allow independent, spontaneous travel for everyone.

### EDF recommendations:

- Strengthen and expand the disability-related provisions in the two new Passenger Rights proposals to eliminate the denial of boarding, eliminate the liability restrictions on loss or damage, of mobility equipment in air travel (if there is no progress on adopting Regulation 261/2004), keep the service quality standards on assistance provided to passengers with disabilities and eliminate prenotification time to request assistance. Attention should also be paid to ways of improving implementation, monitoring and enforcement of existing rights.
- Adopt the Air Passengers' Rights Regulation (261/2004) . While maintaining the existing level of rights for all passengers, waive the liability restrictions of airlines in case of loss, damage, or destruction of mobility equipment for persons with disabilities (and offer the declaration of interest free of charge), provide compensation, reimbursement and rerouting when passenger misses a flight due to lack of assistance and provide adjacent seating free of charge, among others.
- Support an ambitious revision of the TSI-PRM regulation. The ongoing revision, chaired by the European Railway Agency (ERA) with the participation of all Member States, should address existing gaps including real level access between the platform and the train and the proactive application of the regulation to existing infrastructure.

### Additional information:

- [EDF recommendations for the dialogues on enforcement of passenger rights](#)
- [EDF position on the Multimodal Passenger Rights Regulation](#)
- [EDF position on the Enforcement of Passenger Rights Regulation](#)
- [EDF recommendations for the negotiations on Air Passenger Rights \(Regulation 261/2004\)](#)
- [EDF demands for the revision of the TSI-PRM](#) (March 2026)
- [EDF report on Air Travel for Passengers with Disabilities](#) (2025)

## 9. An inclusive Green Deal for Europe

Persons with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, but the measures of the EU Green Deal also have the potential to benefit persons with disabilities directly. We need a “just transition” to make sure that the Green Deal brings about also social change and increases accessibility and affordability especially of transport and housing.

The recent recognition of the Disability Caucus as an Informal Group of Stakeholders within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) highlights the growing role of persons with disabilities in global climate governance. The EU should support this momentum and ensure that disability inclusion is reflected both internally and in its international climate leadership.

### EDF recommendations:

- Adopt a Council Recommendation on housing exclusion and ensure that accessibility and inclusion are part of the upcoming Affordable Housing Act.
- Encourage Member States to fully use the scope of the Directive on Energy Performance of Buildings to include accessibility in the National Building Renovation Plans.
- If the Green Deal is updated it has to become a Green **and** Social Deal – the impact of EU policies to improve sustainability also have to benefit EU citizens and should not create any new barriers for persons with disabilities.
- Promote disability inclusion in EU positions in international climate negotiations, including within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

### Additional information:

- [EDF policy briefs to advance disability inclusion in UN climate negotiations](#) (March 2026)
- [Disaster by design: the need for disability-inclusive climate action](#) (November 2025)
- [EDF Resolution: The right to accessible and affordable housing \(March 2025\)](#)
- [EDF Toolkit: Energy Performance of Buildings Directive](#) (2024)

## 10. Champion the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide

The EU is the only regional body in the world to have ratified the CRPD. Globally, it is also one of the largest donors of overseas development assistance (ODA) and a major trade partner of numerous countries in the Global South. The EU must lead by example and must apply its leadership as a champion of the rights of persons with disabilities, particularly where it can generate systemic change.

### EDF recommendations:

- Adopt an EU Disability Action Plan for External Action (2026–2030). Establish a dedicated, time-bound Action Plan covering international cooperation, humanitarian aid, and crisis response, with clear targets (e.g. percentage of inclusive ODA), earmarked funding, and annual public reporting. The Action Plan should align with the CRPD and the EU Disability Rights Strategy and apply across all external financing instruments.
- Ensure disability is established as a cross-cutting priority across all external funding streams, including with attention to intersecting forms of discrimination, such as those faced by women and girls with disabilities.
- Ensure disability-inclusive humanitarian action and preparedness in all EU partner countries. Require EU Delegations and partners to implement and champion (or advocate for) accessible early warning systems, evacuation procedures, and emergency services (including accessible shelters and inclusive communication), in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.
- Directly fund and partner with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs). Create dedicated funding and require the systematic involvement of OPDs in the design, delivery, and monitoring of EU external programmes, including in climate, humanitarian and crisis contexts.

### Additional Information:

- EDF -IDDC [Input for the consultation on the review of the European Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030 \(February 2026\)](#)
- [Recommendations from Persons with Disabilities to the European Commission on Disability Inclusive Humanitarian Aid](#): EDF's advisory note to DG ECHO on the Humanitarian Aid Communication (January 2026)
- "No Time to Lose: Assessing EU Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Disability Inclusion (2018–2023)" (2025)



## Contact person at the EDF secretariat:

Marie Denninghaus, Policy and Capacity Building Manager

E-mail: [marie.denninghaus@edf-feph.org](mailto:marie.denninghaus@edf-feph.org)

Phone: 0032 (0) 478 01 57 17

Should you have any problems in accessing the documentation, please contact the EDF Secretariat. Email: [info@edf-feph.org](mailto:info@edf-feph.org)).



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