

AFET Committee & the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



The aim of this document is to give general information concerning why and how the Parliament, and particularly the **Foreign Affairs Committee**, can improve the lives of persons with disabilities in the European Union and beyond.

There are **100 million persons with disabilities** (this number includes 99 million persons according to the [EU-SILC survey](#) of 2016 and [1 million persons estimated to be segregated in residential institutions](#) and therefore not counted on the survey). Persons with disabilities experience legal, physical and attitudinal barriers that hinder their independent living and full participation in all aspects of life on an equal basis with others.

European Disability Forum

The **European Disability Forum (EDF)** is an umbrella organisation of persons with disabilities that defends the interests of Europeans with disabilities. We are a strong, united voice of persons with disabilities in Europe that collaborates closely with the European Parliament to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities.

International Disability and Development Consortium

The **International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)** and its members aim to promote inclusive development. Inclusive development means respecting the full human rights of every person, acknowledging diversity, eradicating poverty and ensuring that all people are fully included and can actively participate in development processes

and activities regardless of age, gender, disability, state of health, ethnic origin or any other characteristic.

Disability Intergroup

The [Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament](#) is an informal grouping of MEPs interested in promoting the right policies for persons with disabilities within their work at Parliament and national level. It was established in 1980 and is an efficient network through which to communicate and coordinate work on disability policies. If you are interested in joining, please contact alejandro.moledo@edf-feph.org.

UNCRPD

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** ([UNCRPD](#)) is an international human rights treaty ratified by the EU and all its Member States. The CRPD must be implemented while promoting **the full realisation of all human rights for all persons with disabilities** through the adoption of **new political tools and review of existing policies**. In 2015, the CRPD Committee adopted specific recommendations to be followed by the EU in its [Concluding observations on the initial report of the EU](#). The European Parliament is bound to take the CRPD into account in all its legislative work and processes. As a public entity, it is also obliged to ensure that citizens and personnel with disabilities have equal rights to their peers.

European Charter of Fundamental Rights

The **European Charter of Fundamental Rights** addresses EU institutions and national authorities when implementing EU law. Article 26 states that “the EU recognises and respects the right of persons with disabilities to benefit from measures designed to ensure their independence, social and occupational integration, and participation in the life of the community”. Article 21 prohibits any discrimination on the basis of disability. As such, the European Parliament has a double responsibility to ensure non-discrimination and promote the full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspect of life. [Read the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#).

Foreign Affairs – AFET Committee

The European Union (EU) is a leading actor on the international scene facing global challenges and opportunities (migration, climate change, security...) which all have a direct impact on the lives of persons with disabilities worldwide. There are about one billion people, or 15% of the world's population, who experience some form of disabilities. 80% of them live in developing countries.

Both EU institutions and all EU Member States having ratified the Convention on the rights of Persons with disabilities (CRPD), which is part of EU's and Member States' legal order and contains legal provisions on disability mainstreaming in their external action. Therefore, AFET committee has specific responsibilities towards ensuring that **respect for the CRPD and disability mainstreaming are appropriately promoted, implemented and monitored in EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.**

As part of the Committee's work on ensuring that democracy, the rule of law and human rights are guaranteed in agreements between the EU and non-EU countries, capacity-building of the disability movement in non-EU countries should systematically be included in order to respect our commitment to leave no one behind. This is particularly relevant in post-conflict regions (Western Balkans, Syria, Irak, Afghanistan...) where the number of persons with disabilities is higher. The EU must collaborate with persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (DPOs) to follow-up on the implementation and monitoring of the CRPD, which most partner countries have themselves either signed or ratified. Persons with disabilities must be involved in all decision-making processes and go beyond being beneficiaries of funding to getting involved as advocates for inclusive development.

EDF and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) advocate for the EU to become a global leader in external action – adopting disability inclusive agreements, development policies, programmes and budget while overall promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, in its relations with the UN, its political dialogue with partner countries, and in tackling global challenges (migration, climate change...).

The Committee on Foreign Affairs should ensure that agreement with partner countries comply with the CRPD and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and actively includes persons with disabilities.

Political Priorities

- Lead in disability inclusive development, with the implementation of a Common Foreign and Security Policy that is inclusive of persons with disabilities;
- Reflect the rights of persons with disabilities in all EU agreements (e.g. post Cotonou) and persons with disabilities and their representative organisations are active participants in all stages of these partnerships;
- Ensure that democracy, the rule of law and human rights are guaranteed in agreements between the EU and non-EU countries, with the inclusion of the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Adopt a new European Disability Strategy 2020-2030 which strengthens EU external relations, foreign affairs and international cooperation;
- Support partners' countries benefiting from EU's international cooperation or humanitarian action in their implementation and monitoring of the CRPD;
- Actively engage persons with disabilities and organisations of persons with disabilities in development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the CRPD – not just as beneficiaries but also as experts;
- Ensure the equal protection of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees with disabilities by EU institutions.

Useful resources

- [EDF Human Rights report on Disability-inclusive Sustainable Development Goals in Europe and in international cooperation](#) (2017)
- [IDDC “The European Union, Disability, and International Development: a guide for MEPs”](#) (2019)
- EDF international cooperation strategy “[EDF in the world](#)” (2019)
- [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy](#) (2015)
- [European Consensus for Development](#) (2017)

Contact

[Marion Steff](#): EDF International Cooperation Manager

[Francois Carbonez](#): IDDC EU Task Group Coordinator