

IDDC input for the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 consultation

The **International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC)** is a global consortium of disability and development non-governmental organisations (NGOs), mainstream development NGOs and representative organisations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) supporting disability and development work in more than 150 countries around the world. The aim of IDDC is to promote rights-based disability inclusive development and humanitarian action, we therefore focus our reflections and recommendations for the new European Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 in the area of external action.

IDDC input and recommendations

The European Union (EU) and its Member States are all now Parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and in accordance with Article 4 of the CRPD they have an obligation “to adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the CRPD”, including in relation to **Article 11** (Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies) and **Article 32** (International cooperation).

Persons with disabilities account for 15% of the world’s population. More than 80% are living in poverty, with an estimated 800 million persons with disabilities living in developing countries. Disability is more prevalent in low- and middle-income countries where poverty and disability often reinforce each other resulting in an ongoing cycle which must be broken to ensure that no one is left behind. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “aims to leave no one behind and seeks to reach the furthest behind first”.

As one of the largest donors of overseas development assistance (ODA), the EU has a responsibility to ensure that all its policies and programmes related to external action and international cooperation are disability-inclusive and in line with the CRPD. This includes the EU’s implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), both within the EU and in its partner countries through its external cooperation.

During the EU’s review by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2015, an overall recommendation for the EU was “to adopt a strategy on the

implementation of the CRPD, with the allocation of a budget, a timeframe for implementation and a monitoring mechanism”.

In relation to Article 32, the Concluding Observations included recommendations that the EU should “establish a systematic approach to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities in all international cooperation policies and programmes” and “take the lead in the implementation of disability-inclusive SDGs”.

In relation to Article 11, the Committee urged the EU to build capacity on disability-inclusive and accessible humanitarian aid, and develop a monitoring and accountability framework, including collecting data disaggregated by sex, age and disability.

IDDC recognises and welcomes the commitments made by the EU, since the adoption of the current European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, which are related to disability-inclusive development and humanitarian action. This includes the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities in EU external action within the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2015-2019 which was further strengthened in the new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024; specific references to disability and an alignment with the 2030 Agenda’s principle to leave no one behind in the 2017 European Consensus on Development; the ongoing implementation of the Bridging the Gap project both at the global level and in partner countries; the introduction of DG ECHO’s operational guidance on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in EU-funded humanitarian aid operations; and the adoption and implementation of the OECD DAC disability inclusion policy marker in EU reporting mechanisms.

However, it is essential that the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 strengthens the EU’s current commitments to the disability-inclusive, CRPD-compliant implementation of the 2030 Agenda and Agenda for Humanity as well as other key human rights, development and humanitarian frameworks, and ensures coherence across all the EU’s policies and programmes related to external action, international cooperation and humanitarian action.

In general, the new European Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 should:

- Cover all provisions of the CRPD, with a budget allocated for its implementation and a well-resourced monitoring mechanism;
- Ensure the Concluding Observations of the CRPD Committee are taken into account in all aspects of the EU’s policies and programmes;
- Be aligned with the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, the Agenda for Humanity, and all frameworks and legal obligations relevant for EU external action;
- Involve all EU institutions, bodies and agencies in the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy;
- Ensure more consultation with relevant stakeholders including civil society;
- Ensure the EU’s commitment to the Rights Based Approach, including when it comes to persons with disabilities.

IDDC recommends that the European Disability Rights Strategy 2021-2030 should reinforce external action as a priority area, and proposes the following as actions:

- **Promote the rights of persons with disabilities and ensure disability-inclusion across all EU policies and programmes related to external action, international cooperation and humanitarian action, and across all sectors.** Revisions of any existing policies and action plans, including the European Consensus on Development, the EU Human Rights and Democracy Action Plan 2020-2024, the Gender Action Plan 2021-2025, and the external dimensions of the EU strategy on the Rights of the Child 2021-2025, must take into account the EU's obligations under the CRPD and should be aligned to the disability-inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs as well as with the Agenda for Humanity commitments.
- Ensure that **the rights of persons with disabilities are addressed in the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework, and are specifically reflected in the ongoing programming** of the new financial instrument for international cooperation, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). At a minimum disability must be reflected in the external financing instruments to the same extent that it is under the current instruments. DPOs, both in Europe and in partner countries, must be meaningfully involved and engaged in consultations during the programming phase but also the implementation and the monitoring of the NDICI.
- Ensure that the ongoing Team Europe global response to COVID-19, as well as all future Team Europe initiatives and joint programming and implementation, leaves no one behind. **Disability inclusion is critical to address all forms of inequality, and to truly build back better Team Europe must follow a human rights-based approach and be intersectional.**
- Ensure that **disability inclusion and accessibility are a consistent requirement in the delivery of all EU aid, including humanitarian aid.** No EU funds should be invested externally in creating or exacerbating barriers and segregation of persons with disabilities.
- **Implement the OECD DAC Disability Inclusion Policy Marker** to track development finance in support of disability inclusion within mainstream development and humanitarian programmes (across all relevant DGs), and encourage EU Member States to adopt and implement the disability marker.
- Undertake a large-scale and independent **study to assess the impact of the EU's external action on disability inclusion.** Such a study could be used to establish a baseline for future targets on disability inclusion, to identify potential gaps and to highlight good practices. It could also be used to support the design of EU programmes and partnerships to promote disability inclusion and the rights of persons with disabilities in partner countries.

- Provide **clear guidance for a twin-track approach to disability inclusion in the evaluation of all external and internal project proposals**, in order to ensure that they integrate disability inclusion from the earliest possible stage. **Introduce a disability inclusion target** as a companion of the aid tracking system put in place to implement the OECD DAC marker on disability inclusion.
- Ensure the **systematic collection of disaggregated and globally comparable data and use them for evidence-based policy-making**. Data should be disaggregated at least by gender, age and disability. As a minimum standard, use and promote the use of the Washington Group Short Set of Questions and the Washington Group/UNICEF Child Functioning Model for data disaggregation for disability.
- As disability cannot be addressed in isolation, **adopt an intersectional analysis of the needs and policy responses**, so that the different forms of marginalisation and exclusion (e.g. disability, gender, geography, ethnicity, etc) are addressed comprehensively. It is important to note that such discriminations do not merely add to one another, but instead compound one another.
- **Strengthen the technical capacity on disability inclusion, intersectionality and CRPD implementation** across DG DEVCO / International Partnerships and DG ECHO units and country desks, the EU External Action Service, and the EU Delegations. **Disability focal points should be clearly identified and trained.**
- **Monitor the implementation of the 2019 ECHO Guidance Note on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in EU-funded humanitarian aid operations as well as the new IASC guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action.**
- **Create and implement an External Action Disability Action Plan.** A Disability Action Plan, or at the very least an update of the **EU Guidance Note on disability inclusive development cooperation**, should be in line with the CRPD Committee's Concluding Observations, the disability-inclusive implementation of the SDGs, DG ECHO's Guidance Note on inclusive humanitarian action, and other international frameworks. It should include sector specific policy work with examples of good practice on education and life-long learning, health, employment and livelihood, accessibility, humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction and other key topics linked to international cooperation and humanitarian action. It should also include clear and comprehensive information on how to implement the OECD DAC disability inclusion marker. Monitor the implementation of an External Action Disability Action Plan, or the updated EU Guidance Note on disability inclusive development cooperation.

Additionally, we would ask the EU to:

- Introduce a mechanism **to strengthen coordination** between the relevant European Commission Directorate-Generals and the different EU institutions

involved in the EU's external action. **Consolidate a network of disability focal points across the EU institutions and the EU Delegations.**

- **Ensure all EU institution buildings, including the EU Delegations** in partner countries, **are accessible. Ensure also that public procurement includes mandatory standards on accessibility for any international cooperation projects relating to infrastructure, mobility or technology.**
- **Engage in a sustained dialogue with civil society organisations, especially with representative organisations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) and disability-focused development NGOs.** Ensure the effective, consistent and continuous involvement, and participation of persons with disabilities affected by marginalisation and exclusion, and of DPOs and their allies, in the design, monitoring and implementation of policies related to external action.
- Strengthen the **role of the EU as a champion on the rights of persons with disabilities in ongoing dialogues with partner countries** (e.g. the human rights dialogues). The EU should continue to raise awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities and to foster its commitment on disability inclusion in international fora.
- **Facilitate the dialogue on disability inclusion in external action amongst EU Member States.** For example, convene the disability focal points of EU Member States who are also members of the GLAD Network and set up an informal working group at the Council level.
- **Establish a mechanism to build capacity and share good practices among the different EU institutions and among the EU Member States** on disability-inclusive and accessible international cooperation and humanitarian action.
- **Support research and access to scientific and technical knowledge on disability inclusion and facilitate access to and sharing of accessible and assistive technologies.**
- Ensure that **reporting on the EU's Policy Coherence for Development commitment includes specific references to how the leave no one behind agenda is being met**, including specific references to persons with disabilities.
- Ensure that provisions on the protection of fundamental rights (which includes rights of persons with disabilities) and 'social inclusion' are fully realised and monitored within the 'Better Regulation Toolbox'.

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