

# Inclusion of persons with disabilities in European Union development cooperation mechanisms

A preliminary study of call for proposals in  
geographic and thematic instruments

**Country report - Ecuador**

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**Country expert**

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Bridging  the  
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### **Editor**

Bridging the Gap project: Inclusive Policies and Services for Equal Rights of Persons with Disabilities

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# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>AECID</b>	Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation)
<b>CONADIS</b>	Consejo Nacional para la Igualdad de las Discapacidades
<b>CRPD</b>	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
<b>CSO-LA</b>	Civil Society Organisations and Local Authorities
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EIDHR</b>	European Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EU Delegation</b>	European Union Delegation
<b>DPO</b>	Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
<b>MIP</b>	Multiannual Indicative Programme

# 1. Introduction

European Union Delegation (EU Delegation) to Ecuador's strategy is laid out in the Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) 2014-2017[1], which has been extended up to 2020. The strategic areas of policy dialogue set in this Programme are i) economic diversification, ii) boosting and diversifying trade, iii) poverty, inequality and exclusion, iv) inclusive growth and stability, v) democracy and human rights and vi) regional integration, international key role.

The programme was allocated **a total budget of €67 million** and the Government of Ecuador and the EU together decided to focus this joint work on two priority sectors (plus 5% of the budget dedicated to support measure activities). Persons with disabilities are not mentioned specifically in any of these two sectors, which do consider "vulnerable groups" and "minorities", and specifically women and indigenous people.

- **Support to sustainable and inclusive growth at local level** (€53.6 m):  
"Interventions in this sector will contribute to increase sustainable economic growth at local level, through strengthening public institutions and local organizations and fostering sustainable economic diversification and opportunities for decent work in selected provinces."
- **Fostering sustainable trade** (€10 m): Interventions in this sector will aim at further fostering the conditions for inclusive and sustainable growth and poverty reduction (including SME development, the reduction of the informal sector and a larger share of formal versus total employment), and at preparing Ecuadorian citizens and businesses for making the most of the opportunities offered by a possible, future Multi-Party Trade Agreement between the EU and Ecuador.

Since 2017, Ecuador's public sector follows the **National Development Plan 'Toda Una Vida'** (2017-2021)[2]. The plan has three main thematic focuses:

1. Life-long Rights For All (Derechos Para Todos Durante Toda La Vida),
2. Economy at the Service of Society (Economía al Servicio de la Sociedad),
3. More Society, Greater State (Más Sociedad, Mejor Estado).

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[1] [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multi-annual-indicative-programme-mip-2014-2017-ecuador\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multi-annual-indicative-programme-mip-2014-2017-ecuador_en)

[2] <https://www.planificacion.gob.ec/plan-nacional-de-desarrollo-2017-2021-toda-una-vida>

**This National Development Plan explicitly mentions persons with disabilities.** It states that recognizing people's full rights entails recognizing the diversity of others, including persons with disabilities, as equals. In this same direction, in the section Ecuador 2030, it says "(The State) will stimulate citizen empowerment, national identity, and the diverse identities, together with their respective life projects, under the guarantee that everyone has the same rights - regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, national or ethnic origin, disability, health status or other distinction that leaves room to discrimination". The inclusion of persons with disabilities in these and other sections of the National Development Plan can be attributed to the design process of the Plan, which included consultation with diverse groups, including persons with disabilities, through the National Council for Equality.

Ecuador is a middle-income country, with a per capita income of 6.200 USD. It is in the 89th place of 188 nations in the Human Development Index (HDI). Since 1990 up to 2015, the HDI of Ecuador increased by 15%.

## Situation of persons with disabilities

In 1992, Ecuador approved the Law on Disabilities, and created the National Council on Disability Equality (Consejo Nacional para la Igualdad de Dicapacidades - CONADIS) with the responsibility of designing laws, supervising their implementation, investigating and defending the rights of persons with disabilities[3]. In 2001, the Organization of United Nations granted Ecuador with the Franklin Delano Roosevelt prize for its work for and with persons with disabilities, being the first country in Latin America to receive such prize. Seven years later, in 2008, Ecuador ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). And in 2017 it approved new by-laws of the Organic Law on Disabilities, which defines person with disabilities as she/he who, due to physical, mental, sensorial or intellectual impairments, has permanent restrictions to perform normal daily activities, with at least 30% of disability, which must be formally established by the public health authority[4].

The first version of the National Agenda for Disability Equality (Agenda Nacional para la Igualdad de Discapacidades) was created for the period 2013- 2017. At the time of this report, the CONADIS is working under the framework of the National Agenda for Disability Equality, 2017-2021[5]. It establishes 12 strategic areas of work:

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[3] <https://www.consejodiscapacidades.gob.ec/>

[4] [http://progressservices.com.ec/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Decreto\\_194.pdf](http://progressservices.com.ec/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Decreto_194.pdf)

[5] <https://www.consejodiscapacidades.gob.ec/agenda-nacional-para-la-igualdad-de-discapacidades-2017-2021/>

1. Disability Prevention and Health,
2. Education and Life-long Capacity Building,
3. Integral Protection and Social Security,
4. Accessibility, Mobility and Housing,
5. Access to Justice and Life Free of Violence,
6. Work and Employment,
7. Access to Information, Technological Development and Innovation,
8. Participation,
9. Risk Situations and Humanitarian Emergencies,
10. Accessible Tourism, Art, Culture and Sports,
11. Awareness,
12. Inclusive Communication.

Ecuador submitted its first State report to the CRPD Committee in 2014, which was reviewed in 2017[6] and the second report was recently submitted in 2019. The Committee welcomed the inclusion of persons with disabilities in Ecuador's Constitution, several laws, as well as the increased budget allocation for persons with disabilities. However, its first concern was the "definition and understanding of disability that are based on a medical approach". The Committee recommended reviewing of "the Organic Act on Disabilities with a view to harmonizing it with the general principles and specific provisions in the Convention, particularly in matters relating to non-discrimination and full transition to a human rights-based model."

According to the statistics shared by CONADIS and updated on June 2nd 2019, there are 461,687 registered persons with disabilities[7], 56.18% male and 43.82% female. This represents, according to official estimations of Ecuadorian population[8], that 2.67% of Ecuadorians have a disability. Almost half of the disabilities are physical (46.6%), followed by intellectual disabilities (22.38%), hearing and visual (14.13% and 11.81% respectively), and psychosocial (5.08%). Of the total registered persons with disabilities, only 14% are officially active in the labor market, and of these more than are persons with physical disabilities.

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[6] <https://www.consejodiscapacidades.gob.ec/estadisticas-de-discapacidad/>

[7] <http://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/proyecciones-poblacionales/>

[8] <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/192/02/PDF/G1419202.pdf?OpenElement>

## Objective of the country assessment

This country assessment, together with the other country assessments undertaken under the same framework, are aiming to get an initial understanding of how EU Delegations contribute to the implementation of the CRPD and promote disability inclusion across their implementing partners of projects granted through call for proposals.

## Methodology

The methodology applied in getting a picture of the EU Delegation to Paraguay support for the rights of persons with disabilities reflects the overall methodology of the study. First, a desk review has been undertaken to understand the Ecuador's context for persons with disabilities. This has included the revision of existing laws for people with disabilities, the current National Development Plan, Ecuador's CRPD reports, and official statistics. In addition, the EU Delegation Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) and main country development plans were analyzed to verify if persons with disabilities were explicitly included. A number of EU granted project proposals were also assessed to understand if and how disability inclusion was understood and designed by implementing partners.

Second, **key informant interviews**[9] were held in Brussels and in Ecuador with desk officer, EU Delegation staff, partners and DPOs, to obtain firsthand knowledge on the opportunities and challenges to include persons with disabilities in the EU Delegation's work.

Institutional event to present the advances of Bridging the Gap project in Ecuador. Held in Quito on 13 March 2019.



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[9] Ecuador desk in DG DEVCO, Ecuadorian EU Delegation (staff in charge of social matters), implementing organizations (AECID, UNHCR, CARE, GIZ, Grupo Faro), DPOs (FENODIS, FENEDIF, FEPAPDEM) and CONADIS.



## 2. Disability inclusion

### EU Delegation commitment to disability inclusion

The EU Delegation in Ecuador is guided by the MIP 2014-2017, which has been extended until 2020[10]. The conversation with the Cooperation Officer at the Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development in Brussels clarified that this might be the last MIP for Ecuador, given that bilateral cooperation might end if Ecuador is reclassified thanks to its economic growth. The current MIP is thus based on the National Plan Buen Vivir (2013-2017), from the previous government, which did not include persons with disabilities. Additionally, the strategic dialogue was revised after the 2016 earthquake, to provide budget support to the Ecuadorian government, to improve economic performance and productive recovery of the impacted areas. Persons with disabilities were not considered as specific groups to be included in these new areas of work, as it was believed that supporting the general economic and productive landscape would benefit all the population in general.

Information gathered from the Delegation shows that staff is committed to promote gender equality, and inclusion of vulnerable groups, but there is no explicit work on and with persons with disabilities.

### Capacities and resources for disability inclusion

The Ecuador desk in DG DEVCO considered that inclusion of persons with disabilities should be encouraged in social projects and programs, where it can be considered a 'natural fit'. However there was limited awareness about existing tools that could be applied to improve the inclusion of persons with disabilities in projects, such as the Guidance Note for EU Staff on Disability Inclusive Development Cooperation[11] (designed to support staff at headquarter and in Delegations to

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[10] [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multi-annual-indicative-programme-mip-2014-2017-ecuador\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/multi-annual-indicative-programme-mip-2014-2017-ecuador_en)

[11] [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/disability-inclusive-development-cooperation-guidance-note-eu-staff\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/disability-inclusive-development-cooperation-guidance-note-eu-staff_en)

better mainstream disability and support the implementation of the EU Disability Strategy and the CRPD). There was also limited knowledge about the use of the newly adopted OECD Disability Inclusion Marker[12] (a voluntary policy marker on the inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities). These resources were neither extensively used in the EU Delegation in Ecuador.

There is no specifically designated focal point for disability at the EU Delegation in Ecuador. There is one person in charge of social protection and gender equality but with limited time and possibilities to dedicate on disability inclusion. It was mentioned that, in order to guarantee that persons with disabilities are included in call for proposals and projects, an expert must support the EU Delegation office for a sustained period of time. This expert, who would provide know-how to the staff, would work with all members of the office, to avoid considering disability inclusion as a responsibility only of the person in charge of social development areas.

Furthermore, the staff interviewed at the Delegation was not aware of the existence of a disability focal point at DEVCO headquarter. Given that most projects (which are part of this analysis) are focused on human rights and gender, it was suggested by EU Delegation staff that the focal points on Human Rights and Gender in Brussels mention disabilities in their visits and exchanges with the Delegation. This would send the important message that the inclusion of persons with disabilities must be taken into account when working across these sectors.

The EU Delegation had limited consultation with civil society organisations working with persons with disabilities and DPOs ahead of calls for proposals in the EIDHR and CSO-LA. In the design of the roadmap for their current lines of work, two representatives of DPOs of the blind were consulted, but the final document was not shared in a universal access design format.

Visit of the Ecuadorian organisations of persons with disabilities to Madrid in November 2018.



[12] [http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC/STAT\(2018\)39/REV1&docLanguage=En](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=DCD/DAC/STAT(2018)39/REV1&docLanguage=En)

## Inclusion of persons with disabilities in calls for proposals

Persons with disabilities are not mentioned in the three calls for proposals targeting grants (CSO-LA and EIDHR) for Ecuador between 2014-2018. Nevertheless, the proposal evaluation grid, which stipulates the maximum points a proposal can obtain for each type of criteria being evaluated, includes the 'needs of persons with disabilities' in the section on 'Relevance Of The Activities Proposed' through the following question, "does the proposal include specific added value elements, such as environmental issues, promotion of gender equality, equal opportunities, needs of disabled people, rights of minorities and rights of indigenous populations, innovations and best practices, groups in remote areas, and integral consideration of the problematics specified in the objectives of the call for proposals?" The evaluation grid is used in all call for proposals. Although persons with disabilities are included, it is from a needs perspective, instead of a human rights perspective and only as an added value element, not as a cross-cutting obligation.

In one of the calls analyzed, the guide for applicants did explicitly mention persons with disabilities in one of its priority actions, as part of vulnerable populations. It specifically mentioned, "it will be taken into account the inclusion of gender perspective and of vulnerable groups (such as indigenous populations, people from minority ethnicities, people with disabilities, the youth, people in human mobility situations, LGTBI, etc.) in the proposals." However, this did not translate into the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the proposals finally awarded. One awarded project did mention "most vulnerable and poor groups", and it proposed capacity building to civil society organisations to increase their awareness and impact "on gender equality, equal opportunities, rights of minorities, indigenous people and immigration". In the same way, other contracts awarded in these three call for proposals included vulnerable populations, minorities, families and groups at risk. It could be inferred that persons with disabilities are considered within this wording, but it is not guaranteed.

Discussions with organisations implementing EU grants reflected this finding. These organisations do not have persons with disabilities explicitly in their mission, nor the sufficient knowledge on inclusion, and as a result, they largely miss to reflect disability inclusion in the design of projects.

However, in some cases the project ends up including persons with disabilities because they are part of the target community. For example, CARE worked with persons with disabilities in the project Mujeres Con Voz, a project on violence against

women. This inclusion of persons with disabilities came from CARE's internal mandate on inclusion, not because they considered it an incentive or obligation coming from the EU call for proposal. The project started with conversations with municipal advisory councils, which include people with disabilities. As a result, the events organized within the project were celebrated in accessible venues, and the policy for violence prevention (one of the final products of the project) included women and girls with disabilities. One of the challenges though that CARE raised was difficulties in finding a strong partner to work on gender violence and disability. The organisations and the women with disabilities that were part of the project had little knowledge on gender violence and the different forms it can take. In fact, the participating women with disabilities did not talk about their experiences inside their organisations. And women and girls with intellectual disabilities did not participate.

None of the organisations interviewed for the study had been requested or encouraged by EU grant mechanisms to provide data disaggregated for disability in their programmes or other inclusion indicators. For example, CARE only realized that they did not have indicators to show their work with persons with disabilities during the conversation for this study.

## Empowerment of persons with disabilities

The Ecuador government is commitment to disability inclusion. The Plan Toda Una Vida, 2017-2021 explicitly mentions persons with disabilities. It also considers persons with disabilities as equal rights holders, while before there was an assistance approach. Furthermore, persons with disabilities are part of the "priority groups", which are established by law. And there is a law in place that states that organisations with more than 25 employees to ensure that 4% of the staff are persons with disabilities.

However, there are diverse opinions on the impact of the work that is being done with and for persons with disabilities by the government. The organizational structure makes it complicated for some DPOs to work independently and voice their real thoughts. The same person that chair CONADIS directs one of the biggest federations of DPOs. In addition, CONADIS and all national federations work in the same building. This is seen as both positive (for coordination purposes) and restrictive (feeling of a supervision from CONADIS).

Moreover, it was mentioned in several meetings that public services for persons with disabilities and their families has geographical limited reach. Big cities might have access to these "brigadas" (public staff working for persons with disabilities and their

families), but distant regions are not covered.

This is further weakened by current public budget constraints. Some of these constraints could also be behind the low official figures of the prevalence of persons with disabilities in Ecuador. While CONADIS considers that the official low statistics are a reflection of public investment and improvement in public health prevention, it might also underestimate the real figures.

Obtaining a disability certificate can be a challenge, particularly in rural areas, and it is only provided to those that have a 30% estimated limitation in daily function. The certificate ensures people can access benefits, such as subsidies in the cost of water and electricity, and tax reductions, among others. Some organisations interviewed during the study (DPOs and implementing organisations) consider that official statistics undercount the real prevalence of persons with disabilities (WHO figures states that around 15% of the population have a disability).

There are also people who prefer not to register as having a disability to avoid being marginalized. It is also important to mention that lower prevalence and registration of persons with disabilities reduces public budget spent on benefits for persons with disabilities, and in a certain way can improve public indicators on disability inclusion.

## Accessibility policies

The EU Delegation in Ecuador is accessible for people with limited mobility through the parking, but most common areas are not accessible. There is so far no accessibility policy or plan in place, and according to staff there is room for improvement when it comes to accessibility of information and consultation mechanisms.

International Forum on Experiences of Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Education. Held in Quito on 7 June 2019.



### 3. EU implementing partners

During the assessment of EU Delegation in Ecuador, representatives of three DPOs were interviewed together with five organisations that either were currently receiving EU funds or had received funds previously.

#### Organisations' policies and strategies

AECID is the implementing partner of Bridging the Gap in Ecuador and has clear objectives of working with and for persons with disabilities. This has been reflected in its new strategic working framework (Marco de Asociación País Ecuador-España 2019-2020)[13]. This document establishes four strategic sectors and sub-sectors of work, the third one being "Gender and Social Inclusion". This sub-sector comprises inclusive education for boys and girls with disabilities and economic rights of persons with disabilities. It entails five specific indicators and establishes an estimated budget to work on the rights of persons with disabilities. So far they have not received proposals from DPOs or from other organisations, which include disabilities as part of their projects, but AECID expects that this new framework will increase its work with people with disabilities and the corresponding organisations, beyond the implementation of Bridging the Gap-II.

CARE also includes persons with disabilities in their projects when they are part of the beneficiary community (in other words, CARE usually does not design projects with persons with disabilities in mind, but it adapts the project during implementation when needed to include persons with disabilities), and when there is an explicit demand from local authorities. This openness and awareness come from CARE's organisational values, which include diversity. In this sense, besides the project on gender violence, *Mujeres con voz*, CARE worked with boys and girls with disabilities in a project on cultural strengthening. With the objective of making local culture visible, CARE worked with educational centers to create inclusive activities around local music, language, arts, etc., making sure students with disabilities participated. Local DPOs were not ready (in terms of knowledge, human and other resources), to participate in an international funded project, and most of the knowledge and initiative came from CARE. The projects do not have a specific budget line to cover the additional costs that it can entail to include persons with disabilities in general projects (such as accessibility), and this limits the reach of action on disabilities.

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[13] <https://aecid-ecuador.ec/aecidenecuador/map-2019-2022/>

GIZ provides a good example where it includes 4% of the staff being persons with disabilities, in line with Ecuadorian law. GIZ also has persons with disabilities among its priority groups. Although they do understand that persons with disabilities must be part of cooperation projects, the team prioritizes other groups of people who are less covered by public interventions. Plus, they do not have clear guidelines on how to measure different topics being mainstreamed in projects.

The organisations that were receiving EU grants that so far have not mainstreamed disability raised challenges such awareness, knowledge, and budget constraints. They also considered that DPOs did not have the expertise to work beyond the specific services they might offer to their members and lacked general knowledge on development concepts and frameworks, such as for example the SDGs. This results in organisations not consulting or involving DPOs. All consulted organisations though welcomed capacity building and guidance on how mainstream disability in project cycle management, and support to understand which organisations are actively working with persons with disabilities, where and with what expertise, to spot potential future partners for projects. Yet, none of the implementing partner organisations had been requested by donors to mainstream disability.

## Opportunities and challenges for disability inclusion

Implementing organisations have different approaches to including persons with disabilities in their projects. Some organizations consider that, given their lack of know-how, it is preferable not to act than to do potential harm. Other organisations are open to include persons with disabilities in projects, if the nature of the activities and the composition of the beneficiary community justify so. In these cases, these “non-expert” organisations work directly with the individuals, not with DPOs Or, in the case of AECID, they partner with Spanish DPOs, which then can look for a local partner for the project.

One of the recurrent challenges mentioned in the interviews for this study was to find DPOs with sufficient capacity in project management or thematic areas to partner with. There are also not DPOs present in all areas of project implementation. As a suggestion to improve on this, organisations suggested to organize opportunities for DPOs and other organisations with experience working with European funds to get to know and learn from each other. At the same time, the EU Delegation would explain the type of projects/call for proposals it works with and how to present project proposals.

UNHCR shared its experience in the North Frontier, which exemplifies these opportunities and challenges in projects funded by both EU and other donors for support to migrant population. For the project not funded by the EU, UNHCR did not consider disability in the design phase. However, it soon realized that a considerable percentage of people trying to enter Ecuador through the north frontier had disabilities. Therefore, UNHCR decided to talk with frontier public staff to ask for special treatment for migrants with disabilities. However, the migration policy in Ecuador was getting stricter, and disabilities were not considered a condition to provide a person with special treatment to enter Ecuadorian territory. Staff at the frontier asked for official documentation proving that migrants had a disability, even when it was a physical evident one. UNHCR is working case by case advocating for these migrants with disabilities and their companions when necessary. If they are successful and the person is granted asylum, UNHCR has difficulties finding local DPOs to which direct persons with disabilities. In this sense, in a later interview for this analysis, when a national DPO in Quito was asked about migrants with disabilities, they said they only worked with Ecuadorians, and that they did not know any organization working with foreigners. They said that higher authorities were the ones entitled to talk about public policy, and they did not continue the conversation. However, a smaller DPO with less connections with the government, when asked about opportunities to support UNHCR, they said they were open and interested to collaborate.

Regarding European funding in the north frontier on early alert, UNHCR mentioned that disabilities were not part of the call for proposals, and that none of the four implementing organisations are considering so far including people with disabilities. The office of the Ombudsman is in charge of the general project and although it does have a unit for disabilities, it is not that active. UNHCR, after its experience with the other project in the area, would like to include persons with disabilities in this EU funded project, but it does not have the experience or knowledge on how to include it in the design and management of cooperation projects. They would value having guidelines and training on the subject.



## 4. Organisations of persons with disabilities

In Ecuador the main DPOs are organised in federations. These federations are often impairment based DPOs (physical, blindness, intellectual disabilities, etc.). They are all based in Quito, with members across the territory, and their headquarters are all located in the same building, together with CONADIS. In different conversations with these federations and with CONADIS, it was mentioned that DPOs had very few opportunities of working together in a project. Each organisation concentrates in their own expertise. This is also reflected Bridging the Gap-II project. Even though many of them work with AECID in inclusive education, they do it individually and not as a coordinated group. This lack of experience working among DPOs extends to lack of experience working with other organisations (when asked about partnering with other development organisations to present together projects for call for proposals).

### Participation to EU programming and planning

There has been limited consultation with DPOs in EU programming and planning up to now. The interviews with the Delegation suggest that the limited focus on disability as well as not yet considering disability inclusion as a cross-cutting issue might be the reason. Interviews with CONADIS and DPOs resonated with this in that most DPOs interviewed were not aware about potential EU funding. Their participation in Bridging the Gap-II project for instance was proposed directly by AECID to each DPO. One DPO expressed its feeling that most DPOs are not used to “risking” working outside their expertise. In other words, they only look for funds that explicitly target persons with disabilities. Therefore, so far no DPO contacted for this study had considered general EU funds as a funding opportunities.

There were diverse responses when asked about future opportunities to partner with other organisations to present project proposals to EU funding. While some DPOs expressed some reluctance, expressing doubts about trust and being sidelined by bigger organisations, other DPOs were keen on collaborating and advocating other NGOs to improve disability inclusion. In either case, it was always mentioned the need for the EU Delegation to share more openly (via email, subscription alerts etc.) which opportunities are open, which ones are specific for Ecuador and which ones are international, and in any case, to mention explicitly persons with disabilities as a target group in project documents. Having clear guidelines and obtaining training on how to present a proposal was also requested by several organisations.

## 5. Conclusion

While being limited in its scope, the analysis of the EU Delegation to Ecuador's contribution to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in funding mechanisms presents both opportunities and challenges.

Call for proposals across any sector should more explicitly include persons with disabilities as target population from needs assessment to ensuring outcomes can be measured and disaggregated for disability. When working on human rights and strengthening civil society organizations, persons with disabilities and their organisations should be included. This will ensure alignment with Ecuador's new National Development Plan 'Toda una Vida', which explicitly mentions persons with disabilities, it is a period of potential opportunities to strengthen disability inclusion in call for proposals and other European mechanisms. This is also one of the main requests from DPOs and other civil society organisations, the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in the various funding mechanisms of the EU and if possible, with a specific budget set aside for accessibility activities (in Ecuador, the offer of accessible material is very scarce, and therefore, very expensive).

Once the call for proposal documents are written with persons with disabilities in mind, the dissemination of opportunities could be more user friendly. DPOs do depend on external funding, but did not consider EU projects because they did not explicitly mentioned persons with disabilities, nor do they really know where to start looking for open opportunities. Being able to subscribe to alerts, or having direct contact with the EU delegation were suggested by most DPOs in order to consider applying to future call for proposals.

Furthermore, DPOs and other implementing partners of EU funded projects suggested to organise events or workshops to improving networking and building partnerships. This could be combined as well with information and training on EU funding mechanisms and writing successful project applications for call for proposals. Mainstream NGOs were positive towards learning more about disability inclusion and about disability inclusion throughout the project management cycle. In this sense, AECID has recently published a guidebook on disabilities and cooperation project[14], which might be socialized in Ecuador during 2019 given the interests and needs identified in this study.

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[14] [http://www.aecid.es/Centro-Documentacion/Documentos/Publicaciones%20AECID/180627\\_guia\\_discapacidad\\_def.pdf](http://www.aecid.es/Centro-Documentacion/Documentos/Publicaciones%20AECID/180627_guia_discapacidad_def.pdf)





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