



DOC-AGA-22-06-14

## Declaration on women and girls with disabilities

---

### Document for adoption

---

#### Purpose of this item

To propose the adoption of an EDF Declaration calling for the advancement of the rights of women and girls with disabilities on the occasion of the 25th year anniversary of EDF, at the initiative of the EDF Women's Committee.

#### Questions for the delegates

- Do you have comments on the proposed Declaration on women and girls with disabilities?
- Do you agree with the adoption of the Declaration?

#### Introduction

In May 2022, the EDF Women's Committee decided to propose to the General Assembly the adoption of a Declaration calling for the advancement of the rights of women and girls with disabilities on the occasion of the 25th year anniversary of EDF. The draft declaration was circulated to the Board for comments in May 2022.

The objective of the Declaration is to recommit to the defense and advancement of the rights of women and girls with disabilities in Europe, including to commit to the preparation of a Third Manifesto on women and girls with disabilities in 2023.

#### Declaration calling for the advancement of the rights of women and girls with disabilities on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of EDF



Considering that, according to United Nations,<sup>1</sup> an estimated one in five women live with disabilities; that the prevalence of disability is actually higher among women than men (19.2% versus 12%), and that contributing factors include the lower economic and social status of women and girls, gender-based violence and harmful or gender-discriminatory practices;

Considering that women and girls with disabilities constitute 25.9% of the total population of women in the European Union<sup>2</sup> and 60% of the overall population of persons with disabilities;

Taking into account that women with disabilities are severely underrepresented in decision-making; that they are underrepresented in national coordination mechanisms on disability matters and in gender equality institutions, and that fewer women lead organisations of persons with disabilities;<sup>3</sup>

Considering the calling of the UN Human Rights Council to accelerate efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls with disabilities in its resolution of 2021<sup>4</sup>;

Given that the European Union as a regional organisation has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);

Considering that all EU Member States have ratified the CRPD and the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and are therefore bound by the obligations enshrined within them;

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2015/12/empowering-and-including-women-and-girls-with-disabilities>

<sup>2</sup> EU-SILC UDB release 1, 2021. Data available in European comparative data on Europe 2020 and persons with disabilities (December 2021), page 19.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2018). [Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities.](#)

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/47/L.18/Rev.1 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G21/176/46/PDF/G2117646.pdf?OpenElementA/HRC/47/L.18/Rev.1>



Considering that 21 EU Member States have ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), and that the EU has signed but not ratified this Convention;

Taking into account the commitment made by the European Commission to protect and promote disability rights, women's rights and gender equality, in particular under the Strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030 and the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, as well as the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) related to external actions;

Having regard to the European Parliament resolution of 29 November 2018 on the situation of women with disabilities;

Considering the commitment of the European Disability Forum to defend the rights of women and girls with disabilities, the Manifestos on women and girls with disabilities adopted in 1997 and 2011 and Gender Equality Plan 2015-2017;

Recalling that the CRPD Committee General Comment No. 3 recognises that women with disabilities are not a homogenous group and that they include indigenous women; refugee, migrant, asylum-seeking and internally displaced women; women in detention (hospitals, residential institutions, juvenile or correctional facilities and prisons); women living in poverty; women from different ethnic, religious and racial backgrounds; women with multiple disabilities and high levels of support; women with albinism; lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, as well as intersex persons; and young and older women;

Highlighting that women and girls with disabilities face multiple and intersectional discrimination in all areas of life, including, socio-economic disadvantages, social isolation, violence against women, forced sterilisation and abortion, lack of access to community services, low-quality housing, institutionalisation, inadequate healthcare and denial of the opportunity to contribute and engage actively in society;

Whereas data published in the 2021 Gender Equality Index of the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE)<sup>5</sup> reveals that:

---

<sup>5</sup> <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2021>



- 22% of women with disabilities are at risk of poverty, comparing to 20% of men with disabilities and 16% of women without disabilities
- 20% of women with disabilities are in full-time employment, comparing to 29% of men with disabilities and 48% of women without disabilities
- 15% of women with disabilities graduate tertiary education, comparing to 17% of men with disabilities and 30% of women without disabilities
- 7% of women with disabilities have unmet needs for medical examination, comparing to 6% men with disabilities and 2% women without disabilities

Whereas data available also shows that women and girls with disabilities living in the EU are at higher risk of violence than those without disabilities:

- Women with disabilities are 2 to 5 times more likely to face violence than other women<sup>6</sup>
- 34 % of women with a health problem or a disability have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime (comparing to 19% of women without disabilities)<sup>7</sup>
- 61% of women with a health problem or a disability have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15 (comparing to 54% of women without disabilities)<sup>8</sup>

### **The European Disability Forum commits to:**

- Continue to advocate for the advancement of the rights of women and girls with disabilities in all their diversity in the legislations and policies of the European Union and its Members States, as well as in the external action

---

<sup>6</sup> European Parliament resolution of 29 November 2018 on the situation of women with disabilities (2018/2685(RSP)).

<sup>7</sup> FRA, Survey on violence against women (2014), page 186.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, page 187.



- Mainstream women's rights and gender equality in the disability movement and actively contribute to the work of the European women's movement
- Continue the efforts to ensure the full political participation of women with disabilities at all levels of EDF on equal terms with others
- Publish a third Manifesto on women and girls with disabilities

**The European Disability Forum and its members call on the EU institutions and the Member States to:**

- Ensure the full implementation of the CRPD and the CEDAW in a way that promote and protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities, by including them in the design, implementation and monitoring of EU's and national policies on disability rights, women's rights and gender equality
- Ensure that legislative proposals affecting women and girls with disabilities pay precise attention to their rights and needs, in particular at EU level in the negotiations of the Directive on combating violence against women, the Directive on Pay Transparency; in the revisions of the Directive on Victims' Rights and the Anti-Trafficking Directive, as well as in any other future Directive proposal that may affect them
- Swiftly ratify the Istanbul Convention and take measure to prevent, combat and prosecute violence against women and girls with disabilities, in and outside of closed settings, such as residential institutions
- Work to remove the barriers faced by women and girls with disabilities in accessing justice as victims of crime or witnesses, in particular to those who require intensive support measures (for example, those with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, Deafblindness, cerebral palsy or multiple disabilities, among others), including by combating gender and disability stereotypes, training for the justice personnel, and ensuring accessibility and procedural accommodation in the justice system
- Address the barriers faced by women with disabilities to participate as equal citizens in society, including by reforming the legal capacity regimes of EU Member States to abolish substituted decision making and provide supported decision-making measures,



with the aim to guarantee their right to autonomy, independent living, family life, and political participation

- Ensure access to education and in particular help women and girls with disabilities to go to universities and benefit from students exchange programmes
- Ensure access to the open labour market by combating the gender and disability employment and pay gaps, by including the perspective of women with disabilities in the Employment Package developed by the European Commission under Strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities
- Protect the rights of women in the informal and formal care sectors, including women with disabilities and mothers of children with disabilities, notably in the development and implementation of the European Care Strategy
- Ensure access to healthcare services, including sexual and reproductive health services, such as gynecological care, based on the full and informed consent of the women and their bodily autonomy, including access to safe abortion and contraception, as well as support for pregnancy and maternity
- Criminalise forced sterilisation, abortion, pregnancy and contraception of women and girls with disabilities still performed in several EU Member States and provide free legal aid, support and compensation to victims
- Pay specific attention to women and girls with disabilities in internal and external actions, including in situation of armed conflicts, in refugee camps, humanitarian actions and emergencies, for migrant, internally displaced, refugees and asylum-seeking women, and the risk they face related to sexual violence and human trafficking, with considerable attention to Ukrainian and Afghan women and girls with disabilities
- Ensure that EU funds, including the Recovery and Resilience Facility, are used to advance and protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities, and that they are mainstreamed in EU's programmes including in external actions such as the Spotlight initiative



Funded by  
the European Union

- Support the establishment and functioning of organisations of women with disabilities through fundings and capacity buildings to ensure their voice is represented in civil society
- Work in cooperation with representative organisations of persons with disabilities, including organisations of women with disabilities and women's organisations in general, to develop and implement disability and gender policies