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EDF - IDDC Joint Position on the European Commission Communication “A Modern Budget for a Union that Protects, Empowers and Defends: The Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027”

The European Disability Forum (EDF) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC) welcome the European Commission (EC) Communication on “The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021-2027” published on 2 May 2018, a framework that will define the European Union (EU) budget for the next seven years following 2021. This is a key moment for the EU and its Member States to demonstrate their commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the New Urban Agenda.

The EU has a responsibility to ensure that all of its programmes and policies are implemented in compliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the first Human Rights treaty ratified by the EU and all its Member States. The EU Consensus for Development, that is referred to as a basis framework for the MFF in the EC proposal, has also recognised the legal link of the EU to the CRPD and its key role in ensuring no one is left behind.

We find however that the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) communication fails to deliver on the EU’s obligations under the CRPD and to adequately reflect the EU’s commitment to include disability into all EU internal and external policies and programmes. We would like to highlight the importance of including the rights of those facing most discrimination and vulnerability, in particular the rights of women, men, girls and boys with disabilities.

EDF and IDDC calls the EU and its Member States to build a stronger and more disability inclusive Multiannual Financial Framework by:

- Re-affirming disability as a cross-cutting issue as it is in the current MFF framework, with particular attention to the rights of women and girls with disabilities who face multiple discrimination, including sexual abuse and forced sterilisation. The focus for the next 7 years should be put on implementation of the mainstream approach to disability.
- Including data disaggregation by disability to accomplish the objective of “focusing on a smaller number of higher quality performance indicators”. This data should be disaggregated according to the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability.
- Involving persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (DPOs) in the decision-making process, including planning, implementation and monitoring.
- Ensuring that any EU investments in infrastructure and services will be allowed only if they lead to fully accessible outcomes, so that persons with disabilities benefit from the funding, guided by the universal design principle.

- Freezing EU funds when they have breached human rights until adequate policy reforms take place. The freezing of the funds should be complemented with softer means such as dialogue with governments to ensure compliance to human rights agreements.

Considering that migration has such a strong focus in the new MFF, we raise the specific concern that language and approaches to migration are not compliant with the 2030 Agenda. Emphasis should be placed on addressing the root causes of forced migration so that migration is a choice, not a question of survival. Human Rights, and the rights of migrants and asylum seekers, amongst them, children and adults with disabilities, must be at the core of migration policies. Disability must be mainstreamed in the EU migration and refugee policies. The migration journey, as we see today, is extremely dangerous; additional EU support is needed to deal with physical and mental trauma.

EU Internal Funding in the proposed MFF

Coherence between internal and external funding, policy and action is necessary to ensure the principles of inclusion, accessibility and cooperation are consistent. For instance, the Common Provision Regulation (CPR) advocates that measures be taken to facilitate a shift from institutional care for people with disabilities to community based care. This shift is also supported by Articles 14 and 19 of the CRPD and should be reflected in external policy. Therefore, any action that supports institutionalisation would be incongruent with both European policy and the CRPD.

In addition, in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), as per article 7 in the recent CPR proposal, accessibility for persons with disabilities is key criteria in regards to the use of the funds. In line with this approach, the EU budget should not be used to support inaccessible buildings, transport, information and services, which are incongruent with EU values, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and a violation of the CRPD obligations. This was already recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in its Concluding observations on the initial report of the EU which urges the EU to “interrupt any international development funding that is being used to perpetuate the segregation of persons with disabilities, and re-allocate such funding towards projects and initiatives that aim at compliance with the Convention” (p. 10).

EU External Funding in the proposed MFF

The EU is the biggest donor on International Cooperation and its unique commitment towards the rights of persons with disabilities needs to be accompanied by disability-inclusive policies and international aid programmes. This will only be achieved if the principle of “leave no one behind” is embedded in every financial instrument of the new MFF. As it stands, the current draft of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) is not properly aligned with the principle of sustainable development as implementation of the 2030 Agenda is not recognised as the main objective of this budget framework. Provisions related to the NDICI must be further strengthened to ensure that no European funds are invested externally in creating or exacerbating barriers and segregation of persons with disabilities.

The Article 32 of the CRPD recognises “the importance of International cooperation and its promotion, in support of national efforts for the realisation of the purpose and objectives of the present Convention, and will undertake appropriate and effective measures in this regard (...) in partnership with relevant international and regional organisations and civil society, in particular with organisations of persons with disabilities”. This principle of partnership to achieve common objectives for persons with disabilities applies to both internal and external EU policy and funding structures and therefore, should be reflected in both. EDF and IDDC urges the EU and its Member States to build a universal and inclusive NDICI by:

1. Establishing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its motto of leaving no one behind as the core vision for the NDICI.
2. Mainstreaming disability in geographic as well as in thematic programmes, with particular attention to women and girls with disabilities, facing multiple discrimination and vulnerability.
3. Guaranteeing that EU funding on Development Cooperation respect and fulfil the principle of aid effectiveness for ODA-eligible actions.
4. Recognising Civil Society as a key actor for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and sustainable development and therefore, establishing a mechanism to ensure active and meaningful participation in the decision making process, from planning to implementation and monitoring. As such, representative organisations of persons with disabilities must be included and supported in order to leave no one behind.
5. Including a disability policy marker to measure the implementation and monitoring of the NDICI. Currently, there is no indicators providing a clear overview of the allocation of resources that benefit persons with disabilities. There are no means to track the progress made towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities in development and cooperation programmes.

The SDGs are an exceptional platform to fight poverty and social exclusion, if they are in fact implemented properly. The EU, as the largest donor worldwide, has to seize the opportunity that the SDGs represent whilst also showcasing its leadership in fulfilling the CRPD provisions across the globe. The world is waiting.

This paper has been endorsed by:

- African Disability Forum
- Arab Organisation of Persons with Disabilities
- ASEAN Disability Forum
- RIADIS
- Terre des Hommes



Terre des Hommes
International Federation