

The 2030 Agenda, SDGs and Disability

The 25th of September 2020 marks the 5th anniversary of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals

Efforts are needed to ensure a sustainable and inclusive society that leaves no one behind



I. Disability and Sustainability background:

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), over a billion people in the world and 100 million people in the EU live with a disability. Moreover, this number is expected to double up to 2 billion by 2050¹.

Important steps have been taken by the EU during the last 10 years to include disability and accessibility as part of the CSR and Sustainability agenda:

- The renewed EU Strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility
- The European Parliament resolutions of 6 February 2013 on CSR
- The European Commission guidelines on non-financial reporting adopted in June 2017
- The EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024

Furthermore, steps that have been taken at an international level, with reference to disability, should also be noted, such as:

- The Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights implementing the UN 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' Framework (UNGPs)
- The OECD guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

- The 2015 and 2019 Guides on "Disability in Sustainability Reporting" by GRI and Fundación ONCE, with the co-funding of the European Social Fund
- The 2017 "Guide for business on the rights of persons with disabilities" by ILO and UN Global Compact
- The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs

II. The 2030 Agenda and SDGs as a framework to work on disability inclusion

On the 25th of September 2015, five years ago, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, "a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere"².

193 states committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda, which is integrated by 17 goals and 169 targets. As a result of this, countries have to review and track their progress against these goals and targets through specific indicators.

The inclusion of people with disabilities is at the heart of the 2030 Agenda with the request and commitment not to leave anyone behind and to reach the furthest behind first. It is mentioned that the 2030 Agenda is an action plan "in where people should be allowed to thrive, people should have a voice and people

¹ [Disability](#). World Health Organization (WHO).

² [The Sustainable Development Agenda](#). United Nations.

should have effective opportunities to shape the course of development”³. As such, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs is a key milestone in the development of human rights.

Five of the seventeen SDGs specifically refer to people with disabilities such as SDG 4 on Quality Education, SDG 8 on Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10 on Reduced inequalities, SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities (with a specific mention to accessibility), and SDG 17 on Partnerships for the Goals.

Overall, disability is mentioned: seven times in the targets and 11 times in the indicators⁴. It is worth highlighting as well, that the presence of disability in these indicators is key since it helps identify the areas where progress is needed for inclusion.

Furthermore, the inclusion of people with disabilities is implicitly considered in several other goals, targets and indicators. Terms such as ‘for all’; ‘the vulnerable’; ‘most disadvantaged’; ‘non-discriminatory’; ‘equal access’; and ‘universal access’ imply that people with disabilities should not be forgotten in the measures developed for the achievement of the SDGs.

Also, the introduction of the indicator framework mentions that indicators should be disaggregated by disability, if possible. The use of disaggregated data is key to ensure that the request and commitment not to leave anyone behind is fulfilled, ensure an effective follow-up and also reveal which areas of discrimination need to be addressed.

Bearing this in mind, and since goals and targets are based on equality and non-discrimination, no goal can be

achieved if a part of the population, such as people with disabilities, is forgotten.

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs bring an excellent opportunity to work together towards the implementation of a common disability inclusion agenda. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda and SDGs can be used by organisations as a guiding instrument to define their strategies and measure the impact of their disability-related activity. Due to the relevance of the 2030 Agenda both at a European level and internationally, linking an organisation’s disability-related activity to the SDGs can also be a way to reinforce the value of the contribution.

III. The 2030 Agenda and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

As mentioned before, the 2030 Agenda integrates a human rights-based approach. It is grounded on the guiding principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

It promotes “universal respect for human rights, equality and non-discrimination” and aims to empower vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, in the same way the CRPD does, as the SDGs have direct links with articles within the CRPD. There are only four goals that are not directly related to the provisions of the CRPD.

In this sense, the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs serve as a new advocacy framework to accelerate the implementation of the CRPD by drawing

³ [EDF European Human Rights Report issue 2 2018](#). European Disability Forum.

⁴ See figure 8 - Reference guide to disability markers in the SDGs of the [EDF European](#)

[Human Rights Report issue 2 2018](#). European Disability Forum.

attention to the need to create disability-inclusive policies and measures. Also, CRPD articles can be used as a foundation in which work towards sustainable development could stand, particularly when it comes to the inclusion of people with disabilities.

In conclusion however, only if the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs are in line with the CRPD, will the goals be achieved.

IV. Aligning the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs to the European Disability Policy

Considering the clear inclusion of disability in the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, work towards its achievement should be aligned with key elements of the European Disability Policy, such as the European Union non-discrimination legislation⁵.

Also, the European Pillar of Social Rights foresees principle 17 on inclusion of people with disabilities promoting, among others, their participation in the labour market and in society, and a work environment adapted to their needs.

Further, the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 coming to an end and being re-elaborated now, calls for the mainstreaming of disability in all EU policies, including participation in the labour market and specific regulations such as, the European Accessibility Act set requirements for a range of products and services.

⁵ Disability is one of the discrimination grounds addressed by EU's non-discrimination legislation (Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation) and it is also recognized by the EU Treaty together with age, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, or sexual orientation (article 10), as well as in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (article 21 and 26).

⁶ Relevant international examples are the ILO Global Business and Disability Network (ILO

All these policies must be supported by a number of EU funding frameworks, the most relevant being the EU Structural and Investment Funds. While their Regulations are yet to be adopted, it is safe to assume that the future ESF+ and ERDF for the 2021-2027 period will continue their relentless support to the social inclusion of persons with disabilities and to the development of infrastructures respecting the principles of universal accessibility.

V. 360° approach of people with disabilities

Disability is recognized as an element of diversity, and people with disabilities as a source of talent, growth, innovation and market opportunities.

The potential of inclusive businesses is being increasingly identified by companies, institutions and thematic initiatives around the world⁶. It is worth underlining the potential of the 360° approach to business and disability⁷, where people with disabilities are seen as stakeholders from a wide perspective, valuing their roles as employees, consumers (including their families seeking for accessible products and services), providers, employers, investors and part of the community in which a company operates.

This 360° approach can help us understand the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the SDGs, even in those that do not directly mention them but refer, for example, to employers.

GBDN), the Valuable 500 initiative, and Disability Hub Europe in the EU. At national level, there are other examples, such as the Inserta Responsible Forum in Spain, the UK Business and Disability Forum, the Austrian Disability Business Forum, The UnternehmensForum in Germany, or the Come CloSeR to Disability Task Force in Poland.

⁷ A concept created within Disability Hub Europe.

VI. Current situation of people with disabilities within the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs framework*



End poverty in all its forms everywhere⁸

- In 2018, **23.7%** of persons with disabilities (aged 16 to 64) were at risk of financial poverty **vs. 15.3%** of persons without disabilities.
- In 2018, **11%** of persons with disabilities (aged 16 to 64) were at risk of falling into material deprivation **vs. 5.1%** of persons without disabilities.



Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages

- In 2018, only **20.5%** of persons with some or severe activity limitation (aged 16 years or over) had a very good or good self-perceived health **vs 84.1%** of persons without disabilities⁹.
- In 2018, **4%** of persons with disabilities (aged 16 or over) reported unmet needs for medical examination **vs. 1%** of persons without disabilities⁸.



Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all⁸

- In 2018, only **29.4%** of persons with disabilities (aged 30 to 34) received tertiary education **vs. 43.8%** of people without disabilities.
- In 2018, **20.3%** of people with disabilities (aged 18 to 24) were early leavers from education and training **vs. 9.8%** of people without disabilities.



Gender equality⁸

- In 2018, **29.4%** of women with disabilities (aged 16 or over) were at risk of poverty or social exclusion **vs. 27.5%** of men with disabilities.
- In 2018, employment rate of women with disabilities (aged 20 to 64) was **47.8% vs. 54.3%** employment rate of men with disabilities.

⁸ [Europe 2020 data & People with disabilities](#). The Academic Network of European Disability Experts (ANED), 2020. Note that data refer to EU27 and that it excludes people with disabilities living in institutions.

⁹ [Self-perceived health by level of activity limitation, sex and age](#). Eurostat, 2020. Note that data refer to EU-27.



Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

- In 2018, **3.1%** of people with disabilities (aged 16 or over) had no indoor flushing toilet **vs. 1.9%** of people without disabilities¹⁰.
- In 2018, **2.9%** of people with disabilities (aged 16 or over) had no bath or shower in their dwelling **vs. 1.8%** of people without disabilities¹¹.



Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all

- In 2018, **11.4%** of people with disabilities (aged 16 or over) declared the inability to keep their home adequately warm **vs. 6.6%** of those without disabilities¹².
- In 2018, **6.7%** of people with disabilities (aged 16 or over) considering their dwelling as too dark **vs. 4.4%** of those without disabilities¹³.



Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

- In 2018, the employment rate for people with disabilities (aged 20 to 64) was **50.8% vs. 75%** for people without disabilities⁸.
- In 2018, **22.6%** of people with disabilities (less than 60 years) were living in households with very low work intensity **vs. 7.1%** of people without disabilities¹⁴.



Reduce inequalities within and among countries⁸

- In 2018, overall risk of household poverty or exclusion risk for persons with disabilities (aged 16 to 64) was **34.6% vs. 19.9%** for persons without disabilities.
- In 2018, the activity rate of persons with disabilities (aged 20 to 64) was **62.4% vs. 82.2%** for persons without disabilities.

¹⁰ [People not having indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of their household by level of activity limitation, sex and age](#). Eurostat, 2020. Note that the data refer to EU-27.

¹¹ [People with no bath or shower in their dwelling by level of activity limitation, sex and age](#). Eurostat, 2020. Note that the data refer to EU-27.

¹² [Inability to keep home adequately warm by level of activity limitation, sex and age](#). Eurostat, 2020. Note that the data refer to EU-27.

¹³ [People considering their dwelling as too dark by level of activity limitation, sex and age](#). Eurostat, 2020. Note that the data refer to EU-27.

¹⁴ [People living in households with very low work intensity by level of activity limitation, sex and age](#). Eurostat, 2020. Note that the data refer to EU-27.



Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable



Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2018, 17.5% of people with disabilities (aged 16 or over) living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in the window frames or floor vs. 11.9% of people without disabilities¹⁵. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2018, 14% of people with disabilities (aged 16 or over) were experiencing crime, violence or vandalism in their home area vs. 10.7% of people without disabilities¹⁷.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2018, 21.6% of people with disabilities (aged 16 or over) reported noise from neighbours or from the street vs. 17.3% of those without disabilities¹⁶. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2016, the level of people with disabilities (aged 16 or over) confidence in EU institutions (European Parliament) was 40.2% vs. 47.1% for people without disabilities¹⁸.

Note that **few reliable data on people with disabilities are available and as stated before the **use of disaggregated data is key** to ensure that the request and commitment not to leave anyone behind is fulfilled, ensure an effective follow-up and reveal which areas of discrimination need to be addressed. Thus, as mentioned in the recommendations below there is a **great need for collecting accurate and comprehensive disaggregated data on disability**. Also, it is worth mentioning that after **COVID-19 pandemic** it is estimated that these **data will get worse** considering the **high socio-economic impact** of this crisis on vulnerable groups, such as people with disabilities.*

¹⁵ [People living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation, or rot in window frames or floor by level of activity limitation, sex and age](#). Eurostat, 2020. Note that the data refer to EU-27.

¹⁶ [Noise from neighbours or from the street by level of activity limitation, sex and age](#). Eurostat, 2020. Note that the data refer to EU-27.

¹⁷ [Crime, violence or vandalism in the area by level of activity limitation, sex and age](#). Eurostat, 2020. Note that the data refer to EU-27.

¹⁸ [Sustainable Development in the European Union: EU SDG Indicators and Persons with disabilities](#). The Academic Network of European Disability Experts (ANED), 2019. Note that data refer to 18 EU Member States and Iceland, Israel, Norway, Switzerland and the Russian Federation and that it excludes people with disabilities living in institutions.

VI. Call to stakeholders to ensure people with disabilities are not left behind in a 2030 inclusive and sustainable future

Collaborative action must be key in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, with civil society, national governments and European institutions and companies working together.

European Institutions should work on a common EU framework, strategy and implementation plan for the 2030 Agenda and SDGs aligned with the Disability Rights Agenda 2020-2030

Institutions should invest in awareness, knowledge, capacity-building and expertise about the SDGs among EU citizens, including reference to people with disabilities

All **States** should collect accurate and comprehensive disaggregated data on disability at a global level for all SDGs, using the Washington Group data sets to ensure comparability

People with disabilities and **representative organisations** of persons with disabilities should be actively involved in the implementation of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs

Companies should use the Agenda 2030 as a guiding instrument to define their strategies and measure the impact of their disability-related activity.

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