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## EDF Strategic framework 2017-2021

for discussion at Malta Board Feb 18<sup>th</sup> -19th

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### Draft Strategic Framework 2017-2021

#### Description of EDF and the consultation process

The European Disability Forum (EDF) is an independent Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that defends the rights of 80 million people with disabilities in Europe. EDF is a unique platform which brings together organisations of persons with disabilities from across Europe. EDF is run by persons with disabilities and their families. It is a strong, voice of and for people with disabilities in Europe.

The purpose of this strategic framework is to define the EDF agenda from 2017 and 2021.

The objectives which the strategy should achieve are:



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- Together with our members to define our priorities and how we will work together as a network to create political, social and economic changes which have a positive impact of the lives and the enjoyment of human rights of persons with disabilities
- To communicate to the general public, partners and potential supporters about the reason we exist, and what we do

This strategy has been developed with the full involvement of EDF membership, led by the EDF Executive Committee and Board of Directors. Initially, priorities and challenges were derived from an EDF membership survey conducted by an external evaluator in September and October 2016. Key informant interviews were conducted throughout the consultation period to draw on the expertise of our partners, including external evaluators and EDF donors. A preliminary document was presented to the EDF Board in November 2016, following which a full draft was circulated to the entire EDF membership, key committees and expert groups for their input. The membership feedback was analysed by the EDF Executive Committee in January 2017 and this draft was developed as a result, for discussion in the February Board meeting.

## Context

The world is in a period of rapid and unpredictable change. EDF was established 20 years ago, at a time of very positive movement towards a stronger and more integrated Europe. The European Union (EU) experienced expansion and ambitious integration projects during this time. Ever since 2008, with the onset of the economic crisis, the European project has been under increasing pressure. The crisis stimulated a pattern of continuously escalating austerity, driven by both the EU and national governments, to the Greek bailout and externally driven reforms, Europe has been shaken in terms of its economic and social integration. A series of shocking terrorist attacks in Europe in 2015 and 2016 changed the security context and put this issue on the top of the political agenda. The huge influx of refugees mainly fleeing from an escalating war in Syria, but also including refugees from Asia and Africa, has challenged freedom of movement and led to closing of some EU internal borders. The UK referendum on leaving the EU in 2016 demonstrated that ordinary people in the UK no longer believed it was worthwhile to be part of the EU. Now protracted discussions on Brexit are set to distract European decision makers from building a strong social Europe and realizing human rights for all people in Europe. In early 2017, the inauguration of the new President in the USA has rapidly augmented the global political turmoil; in the first few days of this presidency, international relations are being reshaped. Dramatic measures such as halting the refugee programme and banning certain people from entering the USA, abandoning trade deals, and questioning support to NATO and the UN are already having ripple effects in Europe.

During this last 10 years however, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has been almost universally ratified in the EU and the European region. This has created an impetus for improving the legal framework of protecting, promoting and monitoring the rights of persons with disabilities. Regardless of the increasing negative



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effects of austerity, every government and the EU itself have been forced to address the rights of persons with disabilities.

Disabled People's Organisations (DPO) in Europe have mobilized around the CRPD review by the UN expert committee process when their country comes up for review. The CRPD is a strong tool with which the disability movement continues to use to promote change for persons with disabilities. However, unless it is translated into comprehensive inclusive disability laws, policies, programmes and financing, with CRPD compliant structures in place to implement and monitor application, the CRPD will not reach its full potential. The CRPD is just 10 years old and while the level of ratifications in Europe and globally is high, there is yet to be a change for persons with disabilities - grave human rights violations continue to affect the everyday lives of men, women and children with disabilities.

Governments continue to adopt policies and sustain systems which are in conflict with the CRPD and there has been no increase in structural financial support to the disability movement in Europe - EDF members in many cases are under pressure just to survive. Similarly, the Council of Europe does not give structural financial support to DPOs, nor does it give a specific role to DPOs in its work on disability. High rates of poverty and unemployment of persons with disabilities persist, with women with disabilities more affected than men.

At the policy level, a human rights based approach to disability is missing. The EU itself took a backward step in 2014 when it moved the CRPD focal point from Directorate General Justice (DG Justice) to Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG Employment), and most governments in Europe also continue consigning the focal point to its ministries of social affairs or employment. This shows a fundamental lack of understanding of the CRPD as a human rights instrument. Actions required to implement the CRPD across all sectors are therefore rare or even impossible.

Persons with disabilities are not sufficiently included in other human rights fields such as women's rights or children's and youth rights, and adequate attention to persons with disabilities is not given in some of the most pressing human rights issues, such as the refugee crisis. Inclusive, diverse, accessible environments, in politics, schools, work places and in culture are still the exception rather than the norm.

Increasingly, persons with disabilities are included in the category of vulnerable groups and no specific actions are identified to remove barriers, provide support or give specific attention to the rights of persons with disabilities. Many approaches of governments have not been radically changed with the CRPD. Most importantly, institutionalization, social exclusion and discrimination of persons with disabilities persist across Europe.

We are living in a time of unprecedented acceleration of technological developments- developments which are likely to have a huge impact on persons with disabilities, and yet the universal design/design for all approach is not fully mainstreamed in these technological breakthroughs. Smart cities, e-government, the internet of things, e-health, e-payments, virtual and augmented reality, self-driving vehicles, wearable's, biometrics and artificial intelligence give examples of technology which present major opportunities, and threats, to



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increase independent living of persons with disabilities since they will effect all aspects of life including- employment, education, transport and home life.

In addition to this, the social and human rights context is poor in Europe. Can we expect persons with disabilities to enjoy all human rights and have improved quality of life when societal inequalities in general are growing?

## Vision and mission of EDF

EDF's vision is that persons with disabilities in Europe are fully included in society on an equal basis with others and that their human rights, as outlined in the CRPD, are fully respected, protected and fulfilled. The principles of the CRPD are central to this vision, and they inform our advocacy objectives and our way of working.

The mission of EDF is to ensure persons with disabilities' full **inclusion in society** and **access to their human rights** through their active involvement in policy development, implementation and monitoring of the CRPD in Europe.

EDF is committed to a strong and inclusive European Union, where the right to live, travel, work, study, vote or be elected is guaranteed to all citizens in the Union, and that women, men and children with disabilities enjoy these rights on an equal basis with others. EDF believes that the EU is a means to promote the rights and well being of all people in every Member State, and refugees and migrants arriving on its shores. A diverse, equality driven European Union which enables the full social and political participation of all its people, actively removing the barriers faced by marginalised and discriminated people of all ages will be a thriving and stable society.

EDF is convinced that the EU can also play a key role in promoting human rights in the European region and globally.

EDF is also convinced that acting collectively, EDF, and its members and partners can fight together for a strong social and human rights based Europe, where democratic active civil participation is continuously practiced and improved. The European Union institutions themselves, and the European Disability Forum should embody human rights principles of participation, non-discrimination and ownership in the way that they work.

EDF is committed to practising diversity and ensuring within its own work that no one is left behind. All persons with disabilities should be free to make their own choices and to have the same possibilities and chances in their life as others.

In particular, EDF is committed to ensure the voices of the most marginalised persons with disabilities are heard and are central to our work- women and children with disabilities, people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, people in need of high level support and refugees with disabilities. The role of youth with disabilities in EDF will be promoted to ensure we influence EU youth policy, but also to nurture the future of the disability movement, and to do so, EDF will implement strategies and activities to empower, build capacity and strengthen leadership skills at all levels.



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## Outlook 2017-2021

Before outlining the strategic objectives of EDF's work during the four year period, it is important to look at the European and international context and events which will take place during this time. They will be adapted and developed into an annual work-plan on a year by year basis, based on the priorities of the disability movement, and the EU political and policy agenda. However, it is important to note matters which are important during this four year period:

- EDF 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary (2017)
- The European Parliament elections will take place in 2019, and this will also be followed by the establishment of a new European Commission
- The next report of the EU to the CRPD committee in 2021 (and many European country reviews in the meantime), and the implementation of the 2015 recommendations from the CRPD Committee to the EU
- The first steps of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, both internally and externally to the EU with its stated focus on 'leaving no-one behind'.
- The adoption of a new EU Consensus on Development
- Next EU programming period (long term budget) 2021-2027
- The final stages of implementation of the the current European Disability Strategy (2010-2020) and the CRPD Committee's recommendation calling for a new CRPD Strategy across all EU institutions from 2020.
- The EU will mark 10 years of the CRPD coming into force in 2021 (and EDF is proposing a 2<sup>nd</sup> European Year of Persons with Disabilities)
- Adoption and subsequent implementation of important legislative proposals such as the European Accessibility Act, the Audio-visual Services Media Directive and Telecoms package revisions, the Marrakesh Treaty Regulation and Directive and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- Implementation of important existing EU legislation: the Web Directive, Passengers' rights legislation, the Regulation on rail accessibility (TSI-PRM), the European Structural and Investment Funds regulations, the public procurement directive, the Employment Equality Directive
- The European Pillar of Social Rights is being launched in 2017
- A new framework for research and innovation in the EU after Horizon 2020.
- The Council of Europe will implement its disability strategy 2017-2023

This gives us an indication of issues we must incorporate in all our work.





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## Policy goals and priorities

Our overarching goal during this four-year period is to create a new framework for the rights of persons with disabilities at the EU. We aim for a comprehensive disability rights strategy 2017-2021, which will be implemented via an inter-institutional agreement at the EU level. 2021 should be named as the Second European Year for the rights of persons with disabilities. The EU should launch the new comprehensive disability rights strategy 2020 - 2030 which is mainstreamed in the overall EU budget 2021-2027 and is aligned to the implementation of the CRPD and the endpoint of the Global Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030.

EDF policy work will focus on the following key topics in this period:

- ❖ Human rights- with particular attention to the CRPD ensuring the full implementation at the EU level and the EU monitoring its application in all its laws, policies, programmes and funding, gender equality and women's rights, rights of youth, intersectional discrimination and refugees with disabilities, people denied their legal capacity and those living in institutions, and the adoption of a horizontal equal treatment legislation at the EU level
- ❖ Social and employment policy: European social policies, European Structural and Investment Funds, de-institutionalisation/ independent living and the European Statistical System
- ❖ Accessibility and freedom of movement: adoption of the European Accessibility Act, and the revised Audio Visual Media Services Directive and Telecommunication regulations, and their implementation, implementation and monitoring of the Web Directive, adoption and implementation of relevant pieces of transport and passengers' rights legislation, adoption and implementation of relevant pieces of ICT legislation under the Digital Single Market strategy, the European Disability Card projects; implementation of the mandatory accessibility criterion in the Public Procurement Directive, the European Structural and Investment Funds regulations and the adoption of the horizontal Equal Treatment Directive.
- ❖ Emerging technology: monitor the accessibility of emerging technologies and monitoring and influence upcoming policy and standards developments in this field, promoting accessibility following a universal design approach.
- ❖ International cooperation- ensuring inclusive follow-up on international commitments- the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Charter for Inclusive Humanitarian Action
- ❖ Political participation; promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in the European Parliament elections and new European Commission
- ❖ The EU budget 2021-2027, and the post-Horizon 2020 Research and Development framework.



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Access to inclusive education and to accessible, affordable and quality healthcare continued to be denied to persons with disabilities in Europe. The EU does not have strong competencies to act in these fields. EDF will collaborate with expert networks in these fields to enhance their work, in partnership with the disability movement. (In this case, with the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education and the European Patients Forum.)

Due to the European Commission refit process, which involves revising existing legislation, it is important that this is monitored so reviews do not reduce the strength of already existing legislation and human rights protection.

EDF participates in the a range of regular events and dialogues at the EU level. These will continue to be central to our engagement and include the Access City Awards, the CRPD Work Forum, the CRPD High Level Group, the European Day of Persons with Disabilities. EDF's long standing commitment to provide a Secretariat to the Disability Intergroup of the European Parliament, EDF's membership in the EU Monitoring Framework, and its participation in the European Parliament's structures where we have observer status, such as the CRPD Network, will also remain as a core engagement for EDF during this period. These opportunities need to be maximized by ensuring concrete outcomes from each of these processes through dialogue with and feedback from EDF members.

## Objectives

### ➤ Influencing the EU and EU Member States

**The European Union, including its key institutions, establishes a comprehensive process for ensuring the CRPD is fully promoted, implemented and monitored. Accessibility and social inclusion are promoted through all relevant existing and upcoming EU legislation.**

- ❖ There is annual progress demonstrated on the recommendations from the CRPD Committee to the EU in all EU institutions
- ❖ There is a structured meaningful dialogue with the disability movement and all key European Institutions and at all levels of policy making
- ❖ EU institutions have dynamic structures for the implementation of the CRPD (including internally) and actively involve EDF and its members in these structures in respect of Article 4.3 of the CRPD
- ❖ There is effective monitoring and enforcement of existing and future EU policies and legislation at national level, with meaningful involvement of DPOs
- ❖ When developing new or revised EU legislation, it should be screened to ensure the rights of persons with disabilities will be mainstreamed and reference to the CRPD should be made in all key policy areas



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- ❖ New legislative and policy initiatives, as well as mechanisms and standards in support of these, are undertaken to fully implement the CRPD and to address the most pressing concerns of persons with disabilities in the EU.
- ❖ All EU institutions have well resourced CRPD focal points and an inter-institutional coordination mechanism supports their mutual efforts to implement the CRPD, with the meaningful involvement of the disability movement
- ❖ EDF members are fully supported in their promotion and monitoring of the CRPD and other human right treaties and other matters related to improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities
- ❖ EDF strengthens its collaboration and advocacy work in the Council of Europe
- ❖ EDF publishes a series of European Human Rights reports which focusses on our priority policy areas
- ❖ EDF raises awareness on accessibility following a universal design approach among public authorities, policy makers, standards developers and industry players in relevant sectors

#### ➤ **Strengthening the disability movement**

**There is a strong, sustainable and diverse disability movement in the EU/ Europe with the capacity to effectively influence the EU and EU Member States.**

During this period, EDF will energetically engage with its members and partners in all work at the EU level, and improve our efforts to build capacity of EDF and its members. This will be done in part by revising our committees and working group structures to maximise the involvement of a diverse range of members, and by investing more time and resources in capacity building activities, to create a sense of shared vision, belonging, cooperation, mutual learning and ownership within the network. Each annual work-plan will include action to:

- ❖ Build capacity of governing body members, committees, expert groups and EDF members on selected priority topics, as well as on key skills (campaigning, influencing, negotiating, leading, fundraising, etc.). The topics are to be chosen with members and should focus on priorities expressed in this strategy development: engaging with youth and women, developing and maintaining diverse, inclusive, sustainable, accountable, democratic DPOs in a changing world.
- ❖ Connect members with each other using existing and new accessible communication channels
- ❖ Build the capacity and effectiveness of EDFs youth committee and women's committee
- ❖ Create committees on Social Policy and Inclusion, and on Human Rights and Non-Discrimination within the EDF Board





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- ❖ Find mechanisms to promote greater diversity within EDF and build capacity of members to address intersectional and multiple discrimination; EDF membership expertise is a key resource in this work and joint actions with members will be undertaken on specific issues
- ❖ Enhance transnational cooperation and capacity building amongst DPOs, and between DPOs and other key partners, with a particular focus on strengthening the voice of organisations of the most marginalised persons with disabilities
- ❖ Identify weaknesses and gaps in the disability movement and address these together with members- considering especially the capacity of organisations representing most marginalised persons with disabilities

### ➤ External Communication

During the strategy period, EDF will strengthen its external communication in a number of dimensions. EDF will:

- ❖ Present a clear vision for an inclusive diverse social Europe in its external communication
- ❖ Develop a communication strategy, which includes new approaches to reach the media
- ❖ Provide information to persons with disabilities about their rights derived from the CRPD and from European laws and policies in easy to read, accessible and understand language
- ❖ Use innovative external communication to influence policy makers and partners on our policy and political priorities
- ❖ Increase the awareness of the general public on disability and human rights
- ❖ Convince the public of the obligations and the benefits of an inclusive, diverse and accessible society through use of the best available evidence and use of appealing communication methods
- ❖ Provide communication tools to its members to enable their engagement in key strategies

### ➤ Promoting inclusive rights based international cooperation

EDF has played a strong role historically in the adoption of the CRPD, and through our engagement with the International Disability Alliance (IDA) in the adoption of the disability inclusive aspects of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). In our globally connected world, where new international frameworks are disability- inclusive on paper, there are more opportunities for EDF to promote the CRPD through international cooperation, strengthening the implementation of the CRPD in Europe, and around the



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world. There are also opportunities to share the learning of the disability movement in Europe with sister DPO networks around the world.

Looking at the wider European region, EDF will promote the mainstreaming of the CRPD in the EU's neighbourhood policy and in the work of the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe's 47 member States include all EU countries, Norway, Iceland and the EU's eastern neighbours (including Russia).

In this four year period EDF will focus on:

- ❖ Ensuring the EU and its Member States incorporate the rights of persons with disabilities in their approach to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and International Cooperation
- ❖ Cooperating with the regional DPO networks of Africa, ASEAN, Pacific, Latin American and Arab regions to strengthen their work and promote the CRPD and SDGs at the regional and international level
- ❖ Contributing to the work of the International Disability Alliance to promote the CRPD within the UN system and support IDA in its efforts to ensure that the rights of persons with disabilities are effectively promoted through the entire UN treaty body system.
- ❖ There are opportunities to promote disability inclusive disaster risk reduction through the Sendai Framework for action, and the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disability in Humanitarian action. EDF will remain alert for opportunities for EDF to engage further in both of these areas
- ❖ EDF also has the intention to cooperate with DPOs in the wider European region and will seek opportunities to build our capacity to engage in promoting the CRPD together with DPOs in this region.
- ❖ The implementation of the Council of Europe Disability Strategy should promote the Human Rights of persons with disabilities as enshrined in the CRPD, including article 4.3
- ❖ Mainstreaming the CRPD in the Human Rights work of the Council of Europe, in particular that of the Committee of Experts on the rights of people with disabilities, the European Court of Human Rights, the work of the Human Rights Commissioner.
- ❖ Advocating for a change to the stigmatising language in the Council of Europe's European Convention on Human Rights and the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention) to align it with the current human rights standards of the CRPD.

## Measuring results

In our changing environment it is critical that there is a continuous review of our priorities and working methods to ensure that our work is as targeted and as effective as possible. EDF will incorporate monitoring and evaluation as a continuous part of our work.



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- Each governing body meeting, and each conference will contain an element of evaluation which will then be turned into actions for improvements for next time
- An external evaluator will be recruited to evaluate the effectiveness of EDF strategy and work-plan on a biannual basis. Results will be shared with EDF Board and membership.
- EDF will engage in new methods of feedback and evaluation aiming to continuously improve our work and increase our public accountability and our accountability towards and members and persons with disabilities

## Resources

The EDF mission, its objectives and implementation require specific resources: human resources, financial resources, the engagement of our members including their technical expertise and their political influence.

### a. Human Resources

The Secretariat of the EDF currently operates with 10 full time staff members (1 Director, 5 policy officers sharing the various policy areas, 2 officers dealing respectively with Internal and external communication, 1 office and administration officer and 1 finance and human resources officer). The Secretariat also includes non permanent staff generally recruited for the duration of a project; in these cases, the work is totally dedicated to the implementation of the project.

There are some shortcomings in the present Human Resources structure and resources which should be addressed during this period. We will streamline the line management in the Secretariat, and build the skills of the Secretariat in tasks related to building capacity of members and strategic communication.

### b. Financial resources for core operations

This is a crucial element needed to achieve all the EDF's goals. Since its creation, EDF benefitted from on-going support to its core activities by the European Commission- with 20% co financing from EDF other sources. This has provided a strong financial basis for our work for 20 years. It also involves strict institutional rules and procedures, regular competitive calls for proposals and 20% co-financing. The 20% co-financing has been achieved through our membership- both in the diligent payment of membership fees, and also in the co-organisation of events including EDF governing body meetings. EDF also benefits from support from ONCE annually and from other donors on a project basis.

Given the unpredictable European environment, EDF needs to be prepared to be able to seek other sources of funding. During this period EDF will seek cooperation with a range of funding partners to expand our income in the priorities outlined in this strategy. EDF will ensure that in all cases where new donors are being approached this is done with the full approval of the EDF executive committee.



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Furthermore, EDF will work to share knowledge amongst EDF members to enhance all member skills and knowledge on how to mobilise resources.

c. Project based funding

Due to the difficulties in co-financing European Commission's projects, additional European Commission's funded project have been avoided in 2015 and 2016. However, in the coming four years EDF will target involvement in projects which allow us to expand our work in line with the direction of this strategy. Priority will be given to projects which enable us to work on women and youth with disabilities, with partners in the European region (countries which are not in the EU but in Europe), and other regional DPOs, as well as specific projects which allow us to work on capacity building and transnational exchange in Europe.

## Partnership and membership

Partnership and outreach are critical for EDF within these four years. References to partnership are referred to throughout the document, and some key issues are highlighted here.

EDF will strengthen our membership in key networks to achieve our objectives and reinforce their work:

- ❖ The European Women's Lobby-to promote women's rights and the rights of women with disabilities in the EU
- ❖ The Social Platform- to campaign for an inclusive and social Europe
- ❖ Sustainable Development Goals Watch Europe – to ensure that Sustainable Development is fully inclusive
- ❖ International Disability Alliance- to campaign for human rights and the CRPD globally and at the UN level
- ❖ Civil Society Europe – to campaign for a real involvement of civil society in EU policy and decision-making, together with the major European Civil Society Organisations and alliances.

To increase our focus on youth engagement, we will explore how to deepen our cooperation with the European Youth Forum.

EDF will formalize our cooperation on international cooperation with the International Disability and Development consortium (IDDC) in a Memorandum of Understanding.

EDF will continue our cooperation with established partners in the ICT and transport sectors, both from industry, NGOs, and public authorities.

We will continue our good working relationship on key policy issues with AGE Platform Europe and ANEC, the representative organisation of consumers in standardisation.



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To promote the CRPD at the EU level, EDF will systematically cooperate with the European Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other UN Agencies in Brussels. EDF will also seek to strengthen the collaboration with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

The CRPD has to be implemented and brought to life across the whole of government, and business; EDF will forge alliances with allies in business to promote the CRPD in their work.

Last but not least, EDF is also committed to strengthen its collaboration not only with policy makers, but also with all relevant industry representatives in order to promote Universal Design that could avoid the creation of new barriers for persons with disabilities, and will result in more products and services that are accessible and supports the independent living of persons with disabilities.

### **New times, and new ways of working**

During the last 20 years EDF has campaigned very successfully for EU laws, policies and regulations inclusive of persons with disabilities. Successes of the past are not guaranteed for the future. It is clear that the political will within the EU for truly joint EU initiatives is presently low, and not due to increase in this period. Furthermore, forces challenging the values on which the EU was built are increasing their leverage and influence the EU. EDF needs to therefore work, not only to promote the CRPD at the EU level, but to work with all like minded, and new partners to promote a diverse, inclusive and human rights-based, Europe. EDF needs to be a strong partner on human rights and social rights in Europe and needs to build bridges with strong actors at the EU level to achieve this. It will also be important to work simultaneously at the EU and with our members at the national level on European issues. New ways of working at the EU will be developed to enhance our cooperation with our partners in all that we do- this will be done in our events, our communication, our capacity building and our policy work.

The CRPD also drives EDF to cooperate with all levels of government- it is critical that the rights of persons with disabilities are directly included in the work of all relevant Ministries and departments.

The voice of the disability movement will be strong if it is truly diverse, and interconnected, and if our main partners and strong EU stakeholders are also promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.