

European Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 4 and 5, 2025

Brussels – Belgium

Hosted by the European Commission in partnership with the European Disability Forum this annual event brings together policymakers, organisations, and persons with disabilities to shape a more inclusive European Union.

This two-day event features debates and discussions with policymakers, experts, and disability advocates, marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities

André CUENCA attended this event as FEPEDA representative.

- **Opening:**

- Strengthening the strategy in favour of persons with disabilities, establishing equality and non-discrimination, inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- Right to independence for persons with disabilities: Inclusion in the UN Convention, persistent obstacles (discrimination, poverty).
- Findings:
 - 24% of people over the age of 16 are persons with disabilities.
 - Under-representation in employment.
 - Limited and expensive adapted housing.
 - Rights still far from being a reality (access to employment, transport, etc.).
 - Inhumane practices (forced sterilisation).
 - Emergency plans drawn up without people with disabilities.
- Call to action:
 - Remove barriers and stereotypes.
 - Need for a stronger legal framework.
 - Creation of a European fund for accessible housing.
 - Transform a society that renders people with disabilities invisible.

- **Panel 1 (Strategy 2021-2030) :**

- The importance of the environment for inclusion.
- Independent living as a right (1 million people in institutions).
- Strategy against poverty (people with disabilities are more affected).
- Management of AI and algorithms

- **Panel 2 (Inclusive European budget):**

- European funds are used for institutions instead of independent living.
- Need to fund housing and enable people with disabilities to live as they wish.
- Punish violations of rights.

- UN Convention not integrated into horizontal documents.
- Desire to impose budgets at national level.
- **Accessible Cities Award 2026: Recognising efforts to improve accessibility (cinema, theatre, etc.)**
 - Special mention for technology and information: Piacenza, Italy
 - Special mention for accessibility and emergency preparedness: Valencia, Spain
 - Special mention for accessible accommodation: Salzburg, Austria
 - 3rd prize: Rennes, France
 - 2nd prize: Valencia, Spain
 - 1st prize: Zaragoza, Spain
- **Panel 3 (Crisis preparation and management):**
 - Persons with disabilities are vulnerable in times of crisis.
 - Including persons with disabilities in emergency plans issue is a matter of survival.
 - Improvement of transport and emergency response services.
 - Guidelines currently being developed (2026).
 - Training to recognise types of disability.
 - Improvement of early warning and communication systems (112).
 - Sign language recognised
 - National crisis management plans must take all needs into account.
- **Conclusions:**
 - Shortcomings in actions, call for stronger commitment.
 - Clearer rules for the use of European funds.
 - Draw on the expertise and ideas of persons with disabilities.
 - Accelerate the implementation of the strategy.
 - Budget monitoring by EDF with constructive criticism.