

# 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.