



**To:** Bistånds- och utrikeshandelsminister  
Johan Forsell

**Brussels, 12/02/2022**

**Re: Disability inclusive and accessible reconstruction and recovery of Ukraine**

**Dear** Johan Forsell

We write on behalf of The Swedish Disability Rights Federation (Funktionsrätt Sverige) our member organisation representing persons with disabilities in Sweden, and the European Disability Forum, the umbrella organisation advocating for the rights of 100 million Europeans with disabilities in the European Union, in relation to the situation of persons with disabilities in Ukraine and fleeing the country.

We wish to draw your attention to the process which will lead to the reconstruction of Ukraine, with a specific emphasis on inclusion of persons with disabilities. In this regard, the absence of accessible and inclusive reconstruction in Ukraine's Recovery and Development Plan represents a step back for the rights of persons with disabilities.

We believe that your government can take the lead in the reconstruction of Lugansk and Kherson, and we would like to emphasise the importance of accessible and inclusive reconstruction, with the aim of rebuilding an inclusive and resilient society in Ukraine. Such reconstruction requires prioritisation of:

1. Implementation of relevant accessibility guidelines, including the principles of Universal Design and Barrier-Free Environment to ensure all new reconstruction is accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes building accessible housing within the general housing stock, barrier-free streets, and public buildings.
2. Supporting deinstitutionalisation and independent living of persons with disabilities in the community by ensuring that resources are not spent to perpetuate segregation of persons with disabilities in residential institutions. Building of services



and support for people with disabilities. This includes accessible general public services (education, health care etc.) and relevant disability-specific services.<sup>1</sup>

3. Meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs) in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the reconstruction process

In order to be effective, these objectives need to be addressed - with allocation of specific budget - at the very beginning of all planning and decision-making processes.

We believe that the Ukrainian Recovery and Development Plan provides an opportunity to Build Back Better, which includes social protection mechanisms that are fully effective for all persons with disabilities. However, Ukrainian OPDs and civil society organisations (CSOs) report difficulties in persuading the government to include crucial topics such as deinstitutionalisation as a priority on the recovery agenda. No donor funding or humanitarian response organisation efforts should be spent on building, renovating, or rebuilding harmful residential institutions. Unless this issue is addressed by your government now, there is a real danger of this happening.

Deinstitutionalisation was specifically mentioned in the [Report](#) published by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2022, regarding the situation of persons with disabilities in Ukraine and in countries where they have fled after the beginning of the war. This report also emphasises the importance of “ensuring that international funds are not invested in rebuilding, expanding or renovating residential care institutions for persons with disabilities, and are instead directed towards the development of independent living provisions that are aimed at renovating and creating accessible community-support services and facilities, in-home services, personalised supports, including affordable housing in the community on equal bases with others”.

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<sup>1</sup> [updated-checklist-new-eeg-logo.pdf \(wordpress.com\)](#)



In response to these challenges, organisations of people with disabilities created the [Riga Declaration](#) in July 2022. It lists the main concerns and recommendations on the situations of persons with disabilities in Ukraine and urges the EU, the Ukrainian Government, the United Nations, and the wider humanitarian community to support the reconstruction of a peaceful, inclusive and resilient society. We propose to take as a basis the requirements of the Riga Declaration when developing and implementing reconstruction plans in Ukraine. Moreover, under the CRPD all persons with disabilities should be meaningfully consulted and participate in decision-making processes and have a right to be fully included in the community and to live in the least restrictive environment possible. Therefore, it is the duty of all signatory states including Sweden to respect these obligations.

If you would like further guidance and support on how to ensure that the reconstruction of Ukraine is inclusive and accessible for persons with disabilities, please do not hesitate to contact us and our focal point in your country The Swedish Disability Rights Federation in cooperation with My Right.

Yours sincerely,

European Disability Forum

The Swedish Disability Rights Federation  
(Funktionsrätt Sverige)