



DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

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Sent via email to: webmaster@taoiseach.gov.ie

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Dear Taoiseach,

Our government has responded quickly and effectively to the crisis and growing horror faced by the people of Ukraine and the worry across their neighboring states. We thank you for this.

Our first and enduring concern is for disabled people and their families. We know from experience that humanitarian responses to such situations have not been successful in responding to the needs of disabled people. Upwards of 2.7 million members of the Ukrainian population are disabled and a high proportion are still in large institutions. War and conflict will only send the number of people with disabilities higher. Mobility and travel are huge problems for every facet of their lives.

The UN CRPD, Article 11, Situations of Risk and Humanitarian Emergencies, specifically addresses the responsibility of Ireland as a state that has ratified the Convention. The Sustainable Development Goals similarly call for all people to have access to food, clean water, education, health, and well-being, many of which are compromised now for people in Ukraine.

As we all did from the start of the Covid pandemic, DFI and its organisations along with disabled people will work and co-operate with state and civil society efforts to support people who find refuge in Ireland and otherwise support our sister organisations in Ukraine. To date we have been engaging with our European organisations, particularly the European Disability Forum, EDF, and European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, EASPD, and through them listening to testimony and calls for support from organisations within Ukraine.

Disability Federation of Ireland represents over 120 disability organisations in Ireland, all of whom are concerned with the rights and safety of people with disabilities in Ukraine. Many of our organisations have connections in Ukraine as well. As an organisation promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, we place particular importance to the safety of persons with disabilities and their families in the war. We know that their situation is grave. They are either trying to flee, taking dangerous journeys to cross their borders for safety, or they are confined to their homes in cities under attack, unable to move to shelters.

We ask you to urgently:

- Continue to participate in international actions to bring peace
- Ensure humanitarian help is provided to persons with disabilities and their families in Ukraine in cooperation with local organisations; this includes people and children in their homes, shelters, hospitals (including psychiatric hospitals) and residential institutions, all of whom face severe risk to their lives
- Ensure the safe passage to our country of Ukrainian refugees and other persons fleeing from Ukraine irrespective of their nationality, with measures in place to include refugees with disabilities - accessible transport, accommodation and communication are essential. We applaud the actions Ireland has already taken to welcome Ukrainian refugees, and ask that the state ensure that people with disabilities are not left out, or left behind, as Ukrainians are welcomed to Ireland
- People requiring medical support should be identified and provided healthcare according to their specific needs, not only emergency medical assistance but also support for people with chronic conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, and heart disease.
- In your humanitarian activities, ensure that your implementing partners fully address the urgent needs of persons with disabilities by applying the [IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action](#). The IASC is a branch of the UN that coordinates action in situations of humanitarian crisis.

We make this request to Government, and we offer our full support in any way that we can, as we all did throughout the pandemic.

Please contact us if you need further information on how best to support persons with disabilities in Ukraine.

Kind regards,



John Dolan
Chief Executive Officer

Resources

- <https://www.edf-feph.org/protection-and-safety-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-ukraine/>
- [Tools and resources to ensure persons with disabilities are included in Ukraine emergency response](#)
- 2021: [EDF's toolkit on the inclusion of refugees with disabilities](#)