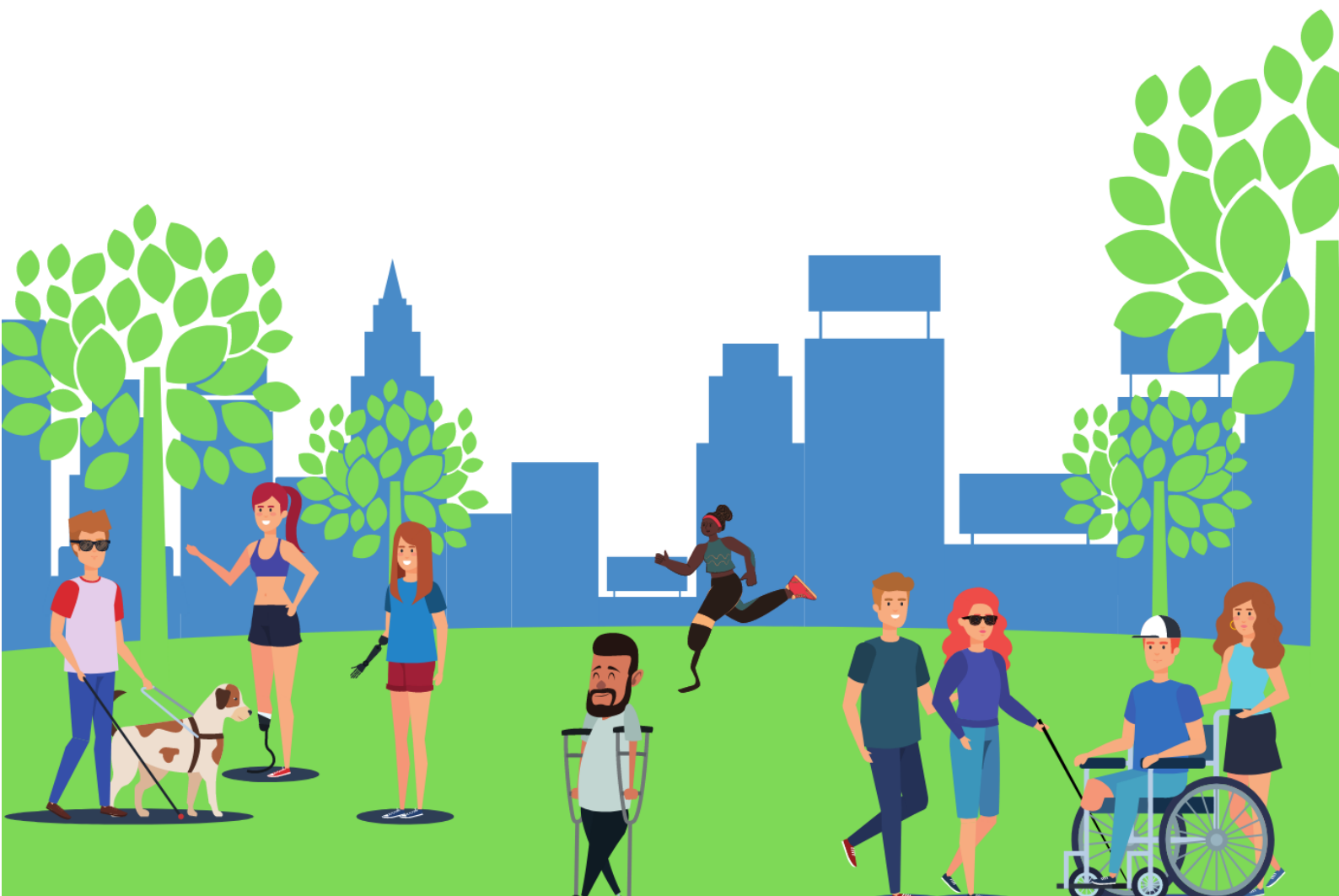




A snapshot of local
and regional Europe

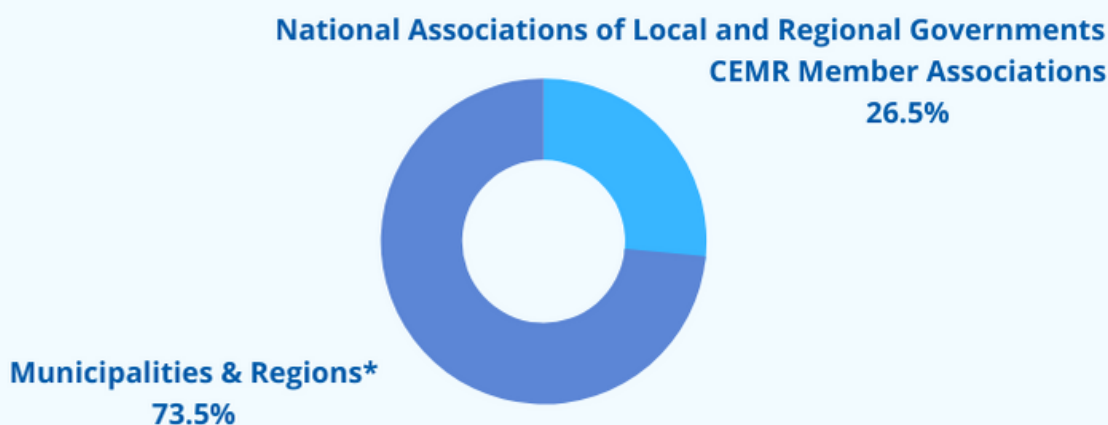
CEMR Survey on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

March 2021



UN CRPD in Europe's Municipalities and Regions

Who responded?



**from Romania and Iceland*

34 Respondents from:

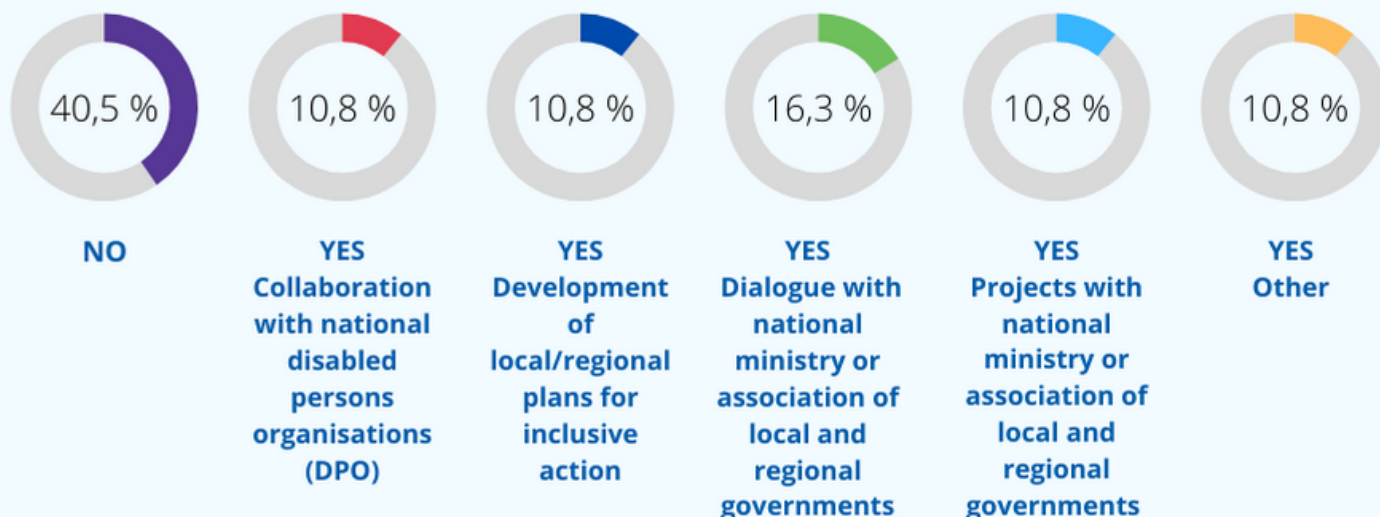


Are you aware of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?

76.47% YES

23.53% NO

Are you involved by the national level in the UN CRPD implementation process?



A snapshot of local and regional Europe



What are the main challenges that you face in the implementation of rights of disabled persons at the local level?

- Lack of funding
- Excessive bureaucracy
- Lack of information from national level
- Difficulty to apply the framework directly
- Lack of clear guidelines
- Availability of building and structures

Do you need specific support/guidance from the EU level? (for example: accessibility standards for built environment and information and communication technologies, information on mainstreaming the rights of disabled persons, inclusive education...)

76% YES

24% NO

Would you be interested in opportunities for peer-exchange and capacity building with other European local/regional governments and their associations around implementation of UN CRPD?



UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Europe's Municipalities and Regions: *A snapshot of knowledge, engagement and needs*

Executive summary

In view of the adoption of a new [EU Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030](#) (March 2021) and following an exchange of views with the cabinet of the EU Commissioner for Equality in October 2020, CEMR launched, in November 2020, a short [survey](#) on the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (UN CRPD) which was ratified by the European Union in 2011.

According to article 4 of the UN CRPD **all levels of government** have to respect the general obligations and implement the rights set out in the Convention “to ensure and promote the full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities without discrimination of any kind on the basis of disability”. Local and regional authorities play an important role in the implementation of the Convention's provisions, designing, developing and monitoring services for persons with disabilities.

The main purpose of the questionnaire was:

- To gauge current understanding that European local and regional governments and their representative associations have of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and its implementation
- To identify CEMR members and local and regional governments that are active and interested in the implementation of UN CRPD and future opportunities to influence the EU Strategy and contribute to its effective implementation.

The questionnaire was sent via email to CEMR member associations (national associations of local and regional government) asking them to forward the survey to their direct members in the hopes of obtaining a sizable sample from Europe's local and regional governments, to complement input from our member associations. The survey was also promoted on the [CEMR Equality Twitter account](#).

After a 6-week response period, CEMR received 34 answers from 10 countries:

- Iceland
- Israel
- Latvia
- Luxembourg
- The Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Romania
- Scotland
- Ukraine

The majority of respondents are aware of the UN Convention and are involved by the national level in the implementation process in some manner (ex: dialogues, projects, action plans).

Among the main challenges faced by local and regional governments and their national associations in the implementation of the rights of disabled people are the **lack of funds and capacity** for the development of targeted services; **lack of clear guidelines** and information; shortage of facilities and structures and **excessive bureaucracy**.

76% of those who filled in the questionnaire indicated that they would benefit from specific support from the EU level. They request, for example, **information and guidance on mainstreaming** the rights of disabled persons and **good practice guides** with regard to facilitating access to housing, public

transport, health, facilities, education, decision-making, public information and communication technologies, both in rural and urban areas. These (76%) survey respondents also indicate a need for European **support for the work already being carried out** at the local level; for example, the UNCRPD Scottish Local Government Delivery Plan; several partnerships with NGOs carrying out activities for disabled persons established by the Social Assistance Department (DAS) of Sibiu from the City Hall of Sibiu in Romania and the creation at local level by the General Directorate of Social Assistance of Craiova (Romania) of a centre for persons without shelter, in partnership with NGOs and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, a centre where persons with disabilities can also find accommodation;

91% of the respondents are interested in opportunities for **peer-exchange** and **capacity building** with other European local/regional governments and their associations on the implementation of UN CRPD. According to one respondent this exchange would be helpful in order to improve the legal framework and to strengthen the implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities.

Recommendations

Local and regional governments and their national associations can play a central role in the successful implementation of the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As the **closest level of government to citizens**, they are responsible for the development of accessible infrastructure and services as well as planning inclusive actions that impact the daily lives of persons with disabilities.

Local and regional governments would benefit from EU support in providing guidance and facilitating the exchange of information and best practices to promote improved accessibility of their infrastructures and services based on “universal design” principles and the inclusion of persons with disabilities at local level in the EU.

A major tool for the implementation of the EU Disability Strategy 2021-2030 – the EU Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values programme -- should emphasise the importance of working with the local level and **guarantee better access to financial support for local authorities** and **greater investment in social infrastructure and community-based services** which are so direly needed.

Developing and consolidating **communication and cooperation mechanisms** between the EU, national and local governments and civil society is essential to build capacity and promote effective policies addressing disability issues at all levels.

Good practices



The **City of Sibiu** in Romania has established a number of partnerships with NGOs carrying out activities for disabled persons. Of particular interest is the [Occupational Centre for People with Disabilities](#), established by a partnership agreement concluded between the Sibiu County Council, the local Council of Sibiu and Diakoniewerk International Association. It is a social assistance unit which collaborates with a pedagogical and strategic mission for the **improvement of the quality of life** of people with disabilities and their families.

The Centre offers specific services based on professional and theoretical qualitative experiences. Over the years, the activities of the centre have been aimed at ensuring the integration of beneficiaries in the social life of the community by providing counseling services, occupational therapy, socialisation, leisure, support and accompaniment.



The Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) are part of the UK Independent Mechanism (UKIM) appointed by the UK Government to monitor implementation of the UNCRPD in Scotland. Within this context, the [Convention of Scottish Local Authorities \(COSLA\)](#) has worked with the Scottish Government to consider how best to respond to the UN examination and COSLA's Health and Well-being Executive Group has agreed that a [Local Government Delivery Plan](#) should sit alongside a National Delivery Plan setting out the Scottish Government's commitments to advancing UNCRPD.

COSLA's UNCRPD Scottish [Local Government Delivery Plan](#) is intended to set out the contribution of local government to supporting the rights of disabled people in Scotland.

At the heart of this plan lies two important observations: first, that the role of the local authority is to create an enabling environment to support disabled people to participate in society and live independently, with control, freedom, choice, and dignity; and secondly, that to do this, local authorities must work in coproduction with disabled people, as key stakeholders in supporting them to get the best outcomes for their communities. Disabled people make up a large number of the people who use the services councils provide and have specific needs and rights – both as users and as planning partners.

The plan has five ambitions: support services that meet people's needs and promote independent living, decent incomes and fairer working lives, places that are accessible to everyone, protected rights, active participation. These were developed with and agreed by, disabled people's organisations, disability organisations, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and **COSLA, as the national association of Scottish municipalities, as they are responsible for most social services.**

*Note: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill is currently being discussed in the Scottish Parliament and once becomes law it will transpose the UN CRPD into Scottish Law, the only part of the UK that has done so. This is a necessary step because in the UK dualist system unless a signed treaty is transformed into domestic legislation any treaty has no legal value domestically, including any rights that any such treaty might confer.



The [Icelandic Association of Local Authorities](#) is involved in most of the components of the implementation process for UN CRPD at national level. The Association has responsibility for one of the actions in the national strategy for people with disabilities 2017-2021 which stipulates **raising awareness** amongst those elected in local authorities. The stated aim of the strategy is to bring the situation in Iceland in line with the requirements of the UN CRPD.



The **We Are Able!** programme, designed by VNG International together with ZOA (lead), the African Disability Forum, Light for the World, the Leprosy Mission and The Hague Academy for Local Governance, focuses on Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

We Are Able! presents a comprehensive and localised approach for inclusive governance and service delivery for people with disabilities and other marginalised groups, working with them directly as well as through Disabled People Organisations (DPOs). Formal and informal governing authorities will be brought together at the local, national and international level in order to instigate the improvement of the conditions under which disabled people need to ascertain their position in their community and in the society as a whole.

The programme will create links to initiatives in the Netherlands to promote country-to-country learning, drawing on the common starting point in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Through its roots in the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), VNG International will promote the exchange of experiences on implementation of the Local Inclusion Agenda by linking Dutch stakeholders to their southern peers. Further, VNG International will provide its expertise in capacity strengthening of public authorities, intergovernmental relations, political processes, and lobby and advocacy, as well as its access to networks of local governments and local government associations, such as United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG).

Contact

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About CEMR

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the broadest organisation of local and regional authorities in Europe. Its members are over 60 national associations of municipalities and regions from 41 European countries. Together these associations represent some 100,000 local and regional governments.

CEMR's objectives are twofold: to influence European legislation on behalf of local and regional authorities and to provide a platform for exchange between its member associations and their elected officials and experts.

Moreover, CEMR is the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the worldwide organisation of local government.

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