

# People with disabilities are still not treated equally

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Disability in the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda

The inclusion of people with disabilities is a cross-cutting issue, and is therefore something that Switzerland must consider and measure

comprehensively when implementing the 2030 Agenda at home and abroad. The following are of particular importance to the rights of people with disabilities: combating poverty (SDG 1); health and well-being (SDG 3); education (SDG 4); gender equality (SDG 5); decent work

(SDG 8); industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG 9); reduced inequalities (SDG 10); sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11); peace and justice (SDG 16) and partnerships (SDG 17).

The 2030 Agenda is an important milestone for people with disabilities, because several of its goals and targets refer explicitly to them, unlike previous international agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals. Furthermore, people with disabilities are also addressed indirectly by most of the SDGs. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) provides the benchmark by which the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be measured with regard to the inclusion of people with disabilities. Here it is important that such inclusion is not just anchored by SDG 10 (fewer inequalities), but that all of the relevant SDGs under Agenda 2030 are considered and implemented at both the national and international level.

## The national level

Switzerland lacks any comprehensive, coherent policy on people with disabilities<sup>1</sup> that spans government departments and has any demonstrable, timetabled objectives for all levels of the public sector—despite the report issued in 2017 by the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) on the development of a disability policy. This is severely detrimental to universal social policy objectives such as empowerment, inclusion and the equal participation of people with disabilities in society. The existing legal foundations, such as the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), are in no way sufficient to create an inclusive society.

As the Federal Council itself has found<sup>2</sup>, “people with disabilities are more threatened and affected by **poverty**” than the rest of the population. The corresponding structural deficits with regard to social security, as well as the creation of an inclusive education system and labour market, must be addressed as a matter of urgency, beyond the current revision of the Invalidity Insurance Act, and the Labour Market Conference.

To achieve an inclusive **labour market**, protections against discrimination under the DDA must be strengthened, and Switzerland must establish labour

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market policies which guarantee inclusive vocational education and training (VET), the assistance that is required and diversified, long-term work placement and support. As the distinction between the primary ( i.e. regular or open) and secondary (i.e. protected) labour market blurs, employment opportunities must be created on the open labour market for people with disabilities. These jobs must have low entry requirements while making the most of these individuals’ potential, and must be appropriately paid—by means of subsidies, if necessary.

There is also an urgent need for **education policy** to shift from an integrative approach—which is heavily underfunded at present—towards an inclusive system. The legal foundations at federal and cantonal level, which are at best insufficient and at worst detrimental to inclusion, must be revised. Furthermore, cantonal educational policies and special educational strategies must be aligned with the requirements of Article 24 of the CRPD. Wide-ranging steps are required to ensure that integrative measures and appropriate preventive action (measures to eliminate disadvantage, as well as assistance and individual support) have been taken, and that educational institutions are accessible. **Strict savings programmes where integrative support is concerned must be replaced by a transfer of resources**, ensuring structures which include, rather than divide.

> see chapter Education policy challenges

> see chapter Means of implementation

Finally, there is an urgent need to step up efforts to create a system of public transport that genuinely conforms to the DDA. Those affected must be involved in this process, taking into account the principle of proportionality in the light of long-standing obligations under the DDA and CRPD. The shortcomings that currently exist with regard to access to cities and urban spaces, accessible accommodation and inclusive disaster planning must also be addressed.

### The international level: Switzerland’s international cooperation and humanitarian aid

The Dispatch on Switzerland’s International Cooperation for 2017–2020 explicitly mentions people with disabilities for the first time as one of the target groups for the alleviation of poverty. This is of crucial importance, because people with disabilities are over-represented among the poorest sections of the population, and alleviating poverty and “leaving no one behind” are among the key objectives of the 2030 Agenda. The Dispatches for 2013–2016 and 2017–2020 also place people with disabilities—depending on the context—among the most vulnerable groups with regard to humanitarian aid. It must be remembered here that in humanitarian emergencies, those with disabilities are always at particular risk. The 2015–2019 strategic framework for the SDC’s Global Programme **Health** division, as well as the SDC’s **educational and VET strategy**, mention people with disabilities several times in the context of particularly vulnerable groups and as part of their strategic focus.

> see chapter Good health for everyone  
> see chapter Education policy challenges

Other key strategy papers nonetheless fail to mention the rights of people with disabilities. In the Federal Government’s online consultations on the 2030 Agenda in the summer of 2017, just two references to people with disabilities, and the UN Convention, were made in the section on Switzerland’s international contribution. Switzerland has also so far failed to sign the “Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action”. Where disaster risk reduction (DRR) is concerned, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 is the currently applicable approach, and is accepted by Switzerland as such. Although Sendai explicitly includes people with disabilities, they are not considered on an equal footing in the SDC’s existing DRR projects.

Therefore, there are not only shortcomings in the Federal Government’s basic strategy documents, **but too little heed is paid in practice to including people with disabilities**. There is a fundamental lack of strategy and systematic

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approach at Federal Government level: the inclusion of people with disabilities must be addressed systematically across the board in all projects and programmes in all areas, such as education, work and income, **gender equality**, humanitarian aid and DRR, to name just a few.

> see chapter Women's\* rights

In addition, no data on people with disabilities exists, or is collected, as this is not an area that has been covered by the SDC's impact analyses to date; neither does the SDC disaggregate the data that it actually does collect. The same is true of the indicators that Switzerland has defined to measure the impact of the 2030 Agenda: the Swiss government disaggregates only two targets by disability, and only provides data at the national level, without considering its international contribution towards the inclusion of those with disabilities. Shortcomings also exist with regard to how people with disabilities are consulted in social and political processes. One of the key elements of the UN CRPD is to include people with disabilities in all steps, processes, projects and programmes that affect them. The principle of "nothing about us, without us" also applies to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The Federal Government has a considerable way to go to catch up in this regard.

## Recommendations

1. Develop a comprehensive policy on disability to implement the CRPD at all federal levels and in all areas of life, including an action plan with measurable targets and associated deadlines. Disability must also be mainstreamed into all legislative policy development and implementation processes.
2. Develop a strategy to include people with disabilities in international cooperation and humanitarian aid work, including DRR, and ensure that disability is integrated into all other FDFA strategies in this area.
3. Systematically develop and apply disability-specific indicators when setting and measuring targets, factoring in the IAEG-SDG indicators and the list of priorities issued by the Stakeholder Group of Persons with Disabilities and the Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability.
4. Actively include people with disabilities, and their organisations, in all political and other relevant strategy, planning, implementation and monitoring processes.

## NOTES

1 Please refer to the postulate submitted by Christian Lohr (13.4245), Kohärente Behindertenpolitik, submitted 13 December 2013

2 Interpellation from Silvia Schenker (17.3833) Alarmierende Zunahme der Armutsbetroffenheit von Menschen mit Behinderungen, submitted 28 September 2017

## FURTHER READING

WHO/World Bank: [World Report on Disability 2011](#)

Inclusion Handicap, alternative report: report of civil society in the first alternative reporting process to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 16 June 2017 (available in German: [Bericht der Zivilgesellschaft anlässlich des ersten Schattenberichtsverfahrens vor dem UN-Ausschuss für die Rechte von Menschen mit Behinderungen](#)).