

Monitoring Ausschuss

Unabhängiger Monitoringausschuss zur Umsetzung der UN-Konvention
über die Rechte von Menschen mit Behinderungen



Contribution by the Independent Monitoring Committee of Austria to the call for the implementation of inclusive humanitarian aid and protective measures for the rights of persons with disabilities within the framework of current humanitarian reform processes, issued by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Independent Monitoring Committee on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a national monitoring body in Austria. It was established as an independent mechanism pursuant to Article 33 of the UN CRPD. The Independent Monitoring Committee monitors compliance with the human rights of persons with disabilities and the implementation of the UN CRPD, which Austria ratified in 2008. The Independent Monitoring Committee issues public statements and recommendations.

The response to the call and the references are provided in the annex on the following pages.

Question 1: Information on how obligations under article 11 of the CRPD and related provisions as well as commitments under UN Security Council Resolution 2475 are implemented in practice in humanitarian contexts.

The implementation of the obligations under Article 11 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and UN Security Council Resolution 2475 is, in the context of international humanitarian law, a process with clear political ambitions that, in practice, exhibits significant gaps. While Austria has established an important strategic framework with the National Action Plan on Disability (NAP) 2022–2030, which aims to strengthen the inclusion and protection of persons with disabilities in crisis situations, practical implementation still falls short of expectations—particularly due to a lack of binding commitments and slow progress, as confirmed by the recent state review.ⁱ

For example, the NAP merely requires that “at least 10%” of development cooperation measures be designed to be inclusive. This implies that inclusion is viewed more as an add-on than as a fundamental principle.ⁱⁱ This contradicts the requirements of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) to systematically involve persons with disabilities in all decision-making and planning processes—particularly in the field of humanitarian aid. Inclusion must be consistently integrated into planning, implementation, and evaluation.

Despite structural shortcomings, Austria has tools in place to implement inclusive humanitarian measures. The Working Group on Global Responsibility (AGGV)—a national umbrella organization comprising 38 Austrian NGOs active in the fields of international development, humanitarian aid, and domestic development policyⁱⁱⁱ—has prepared a briefing paper with concrete examples to serve as a working document. It illustrates how inclusion can be successfully implemented in international projects. To this end, two training sessions were held.^{iv} The Austrian Development Agency (ADA) also offers an online training course on disability inclusion, complete with a handbook, designed to raise awareness and enhance knowledge.^v Such approaches are important steps, but they are not sufficient on their own to bring about systemic change. According to civil society reports, the ambiguous interpretation of Inclusion Marker 1 (mainstreaming) leads to uncertainty among implementing organizations. It is precisely at the level of implementing organizations—where humanitarian aid takes place—that evidence-based foundations for the actual implementation of inclusive humanitarian aid are lacking. While the OECD-DAC Gender Marker is mandatory and studies—such as those conducted by WIDE^{vi}—already exist on implementation experiences, there is no comparable analysis for the OECD-DAC Inclusion Marker, which is used only on a voluntary basis in Austria. Without a systematic assessment of existing challenges, best practices, and support needs, it remains unclear how inclusive humanitarian programs actually are and what

structural barriers persist. Such an assessment would be necessary to enable targeted monitoring, management, and further development of inclusive approaches.

Question 2: Challenges and barriers encountered by States and humanitarian actors in ensuring inclusive protection, assistance, and accessibility, through all stages of the humanitarian cycle (preparedness, assessment, planning, implementation, monitoring), as well as related good practices.

In a parliamentary inquiry^{vii} from 2023 addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, questions were raised, among other things, regarding the extent to which persons with disabilities and inclusion are taken into account in Austria's overall humanitarian aid strategy, and the application of international standards—such as the IASC guidelines—in all strategic documents as well as in procurement processes and calls for proposals related to humanitarian aid.

According to the response, funds from the Austrian Foreign Disaster Fund (AKF) are allocated based on a decision by the Council of Ministers. The process is generally handled by the ADA. The ADA awards grants, among other things, in response to requests for assistance from international organizations. However, these organizations are not bound by national regulations but are instead subject to their own international guidelines.^{viii} As a result, Austria has no influence over the extent to which inclusion and persons with disabilities are appropriately considered in the allocation of these humanitarian aid funds. The responsibility lies primarily with the international humanitarian organizations themselves.^{ix}

In contrast, grants to Austrian aid organizations are generally awarded by the ADA through so-called “calls for proposals.” These calls define qualitative evaluation criteria, such as environmental, gender, and social standards, as well as criteria related to the inclusion and participation of vulnerable groups.^x

Although the ADA now offers online manuals and training courses on inclusion in humanitarian aid, there is a lack of mandatory guidelines and systematic disability mainstreaming (see also the response to Question 1). From the perspective of the Independent Monitoring Committee, comprehensive accessibility must be considered at all levels, and disability markers (based on the OECD DAC marker) must be used. At a minimum, achieving OECD-DAC Disability Inclusion Marker 1 in the field of humanitarian aid is a step toward ensuring that disability is adequately addressed.^{xi}

The Austrian Strategy on Humanitarian Aid, adopted in 2023, should be viewed as a positive step. This comprehensive strategy document sets out specific goals and responsibilities for Austrian humanitarian aid. It is particularly noteworthy that persons with disabilities have been included as a vulnerable group and that intersectional dimensions have been incorporated as a key aspect of the strategic direction of national

humanitarian aid.^{xii} In particular, when it comes to quality, the focus is placed on this group.^{xiii} However, one criticism of the strategy is that the objectives are broadly defined and there is considerable discretion involved. No substantial changes have been made to the allocation criteria or the budgetary framework. It remains difficult to plan projects.^{xiv}

Regarding implementation, the Ministry of Social Affairs' guidelines for international projects are a positive step. These guidelines refer, for example, to the Austrian Federal Act on Equal Treatment of Persons with Disabilities and the prohibition of discrimination under Section 7b of the Federal Act on the Employment of Persons with Disabilities. According to these laws, a lack of accessibility—for instance, at public events—constitutes discrimination based on disability. Failure to comply with the legal requirements may result in the suspension or repayment of the granted funding.^{xv}

Question 3: Information on the extent to which persons with disabilities and OPDs are involved in humanitarian decision-making, coordination mechanisms, and programme cycles. Assessments of the structural, procedural, or resource-related barriers to meaningful participation, and how these affect the relevance, accessibility, and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance for persons with disabilities.

The concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Austria note that organizations of persons with disabilities are not being involved in disaster management.^{xvi} Furthermore, with regard to Article 32 CRPD, the UN Committee recommended establishing a legal and administrative framework that ensures close consultation with and the active involvement of organizations representing persons with disabilities in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of international cooperation programs and projects, including those of Austrian Development Cooperation.^{xvii} The Independent Monitoring Committee also criticized in its statement on “Inclusion and Accessibility in Humanitarian Aid” the fact that persons with disabilities and their advocacy groups are not systematically and sufficiently involved, and emphasized the need for changes to participation processes.^{xviii}

From the perspective of the Independent Monitoring Committee, it is positive that numerous strategies and policy documents of Austrian development cooperation explicitly highlight persons with disabilities as a target group and place a focus on their active involvement. For example, the national Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025 to 2027 includes strengthening the inclusion of persons with disabilities (as part of vulnerable groups). The participation of persons with disabilities in development cooperation projects is considered crucial, and reference is made to the ratification of the CRPD in Austria.^{xix} The Austrian Strategy on Humanitarian Aid also commits to participation in the field of humanitarian aid; specifically, under the “Quality” objective, it highlights vulnerable groups and intersectional aspects, and, with regard to

quality assurance, emphasizes the effective involvement of the local population, local institutions, as well as civil society organizations and self-advocacy groups (e.g., organizations of persons with disabilities and women).^{xx} However, it is worth noting that persons with disabilities and their advocacy groups were not sufficiently involved in the process of developing the strategy.

The NAP should also be mentioned. It serves as an important strategic tool for implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Article 11 CRPD in Austria. Advocacy groups were involved in the development and evaluation of the NAP. Subsection 1.10 of the NAP contains corresponding measures and goals regarding the participation of persons with disabilities. It should be noted that not every goal of the NAP includes a specific measure, and indicators are largely missing.^{xxi}

In addition, the AGGV has established a working group focused on inclusion, which meets twice a year to exchange views and coordinate efforts with advocacy groups representing persons with disabilities regarding humanitarian aid. At the ministerial level, the Inclusion Working Group meets twice a year as part of the “Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Development Cooperation,” a nationwide platform of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Advocacy groups and organizations are involved in this initiative.

The Essel Foundation has also recently published a guide that outlines approaches for strengthening the participation of persons with disabilities in disaster and conflict situations.^{xxii}

Question 4: Good practices related to the collection and use of disability-disaggregated data in humanitarian settings. Challenges in collecting, analysing, and using disability-disaggregated data for humanitarian decision-making.

The Independent Monitoring Committee identified, in its statement on humanitarian aid, data availability and collection as one of the key issues. Clear information—such as the number of persons with disabilities in crisis situations who require humanitarian aid—was lacking.^{xxiii} It has been proposed to introduce systematic data collection and mandatory identification phases using the Washington Group questionnaires.^{xxiv} In its latest Concluding Observations, the UN Committee also criticized the lack of data on persons with disabilities in situations of danger.^{xxv}

This situation has not changed to date. Systematic and representative data collection is still not the norm. Instead, data collection on individuals and the analysis of needs are carried out by project partners funded by Austria. Where it is “possible and appropriate,” disaggregated data collection on outcome indicators by gender, age, minority status, etc., is required. Standard indicators for the SDG targets relevant to ADC have been defined for this purpose; a survey based on the Washington Group on Disability Statistics’ questionnaires is not planned.^{xxvi}

One positive example is data collection using the “Survey for Inclusive Rapid Assessment” tool. This instrument, which is based on the Washington Group’s questionnaire, enables the identification of barriers. The “Data That Matters” project is also worth mentioning; it has developed guidelines to help reach persons with disabilities and older adults during crises.^{xxvii}

Question 5: Information on funding, capacity-building, and institutional support for disability-inclusive humanitarian action, including support provided to OPDs to enable their sustained participation in humanitarian action.

In response to a parliamentary inquiry regarding how persons with disabilities are considered in humanitarian aid and to what extent disability mainstreaming is incorporated into funded projects, it was stated that € 61.01 million was allocated from 2018 to 2022 for projects targeting persons with disabilities among others. Specifically, measures to combat exclusion and strengthen resilience were mentioned.^{xxviii} The NAP also includes measures to improve humanitarian aid for persons with disabilities. Unfortunately, there is no guaranteed funding for these measures.

In general, there is a lack of commitment to ensuring that sufficient earmarked funds are allocated for the implementation of the goals of the CRPD. The basic approach does not seem to focus on the big picture but rather attempts to develop guidelines based on individual proposals from specific projects.

Question 6: Analysis of how current humanitarian reform processes, including the Humanitarian Reset, affect disability-inclusive humanitarian action. Evidence of risks or opportunities arising from reform efforts, and of how the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are considered within humanitarian reform processes. Examples of measures necessary to ensure that reform strengthens, rather than weakens, inclusive humanitarian assistance.

Austria is currently in a transitional phase in terms of humanitarian policy, in which ambitious strategic goals are increasingly coming into conflict with a more restrictive political and financial reality. The Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy 2025 to 2027 and the Humanitarian Aid Strategy set forth clear human rights guidelines and commit to barrier-free access, participatory processes, and the implementation of the CRPD in humanitarian risk situations.

In Austria, however, these demands are coming up against an increasingly strained resource situation. The ÖFSE^{xxix} points to the sharpest cuts in bilateral development aid in twenty years; the 2025/26 biennial budget reduces ADA funding by 18% and AKF funding by 56%. These cuts have a particularly significant impact in areas where

inclusive humanitarian aid requires specific resources—such as accessible communication, assistive technologies, and inclusive early warning systems.

The AGGV also describes a “new selectivity”: funding decisions are increasingly guided by security-related and strategic priorities, rather than by human rights or needs-based considerations. At the same time, political pressure and administrative hurdles are narrowing the scope of action for civil society actors.^{xxx} Persons with disabilities face specific risks; for instance, a focus on efficiency and speed can lead to their needs being classified as “non-priority.” Measures that require ongoing expertise—such as disability-specific data collection, participation of persons with disabilities in policy-making, or accessible feedback mechanisms—quickly fall by the wayside when budget pressures mount. International analyses, such as those by the European Disability Forum, also show that between 4 and 9 billion € in humanitarian and development funding were allocated without taking disability into account^{xxxi} - an indication of systemic exclusion mechanisms.

At the same time, there are clear opportunities to ensure inclusion. Austria’s strategic documents contain inclusion standards that are legally binding under international law and continue to apply to policymakers and administrative bodies. The strong civil society infrastructure—particularly the AGGV—remains a key mechanism for gathering evidence and exerting pressure for monitoring. The ongoing interim evaluation of the NAP^{xxxii} also offers an important opportunity to embed binding requirements regarding participation, data standards, and inclusion-related budget lines. The OECD-DAC Inclusion Marker can also be used to systematically mainstream inclusion and align reform processes— including the Humanitarian Reset and the Localization Agenda—with international quality standards.

ANNEX

ⁱ *UN-Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Concluding Observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Austria** (CRPD/C/AUT/CO/2-3*), https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=4&CountryID=10 (last accessed on April 28, 2026).

ⁱⁱ *BMASGPK*, Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung (2022), 35, <https://www.sozialministerium.gv.at/Themen/Soziales/Menschen-mit-Behinderungen/Nationaler-Aktionsplan-Behinderung.html> (last accessed on April 28, 2026).

ⁱⁱⁱ See *AGGV*, English Reading Material on Development and Sustainability <https://www.globaleverantwortung.at/kategorie/english-reading/> (last accessed on April 20, 2026).

^{iv} *AGGV*, Inklusion von Menschen mit Behinderungen in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und Humanitäre Hilfe – Briefingpapier (2023), <https://www.globaleverantwortung.at/briefingpapier-inklusion-entwicklungszusammenarbeit-humanitaere-hilfe/> (last accessed on April 20, 2026).

^v *ADA*, ADA E-learning on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Project Cycle Management (2021), <https://www.entwicklung.at/en/themes/good-governance-human-rights-migration/ada-e-learning-on-inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-the-project-cycle-management> (last accessed on April 20, 2026).

^{vi} *WIDE*, Walking the talk - Moving towards a gender-equality-focus in Austrian development cooperation (2025), <https://wide-netzwerk.at/walking-the-talk-moving-towards-a-gender-equality-focus-in-austrian-development-cooperation/> (last accessed on April 20, 2026).

^{vii} See Parlamentarische Anfrage 14498/J BlgNR 27. GP, https://www.parlament.gv.at/dokument/XXVII/J/14498/fname_1544552.pdf (last accessed on April 28, 2026).

^{viii} For example, see the United Nations Disability Inclusion Strategy (<https://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/>) and those based on the Interagency Standing Committee Guidelines on the inclusion of persons with disabilities (https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2020-11/IASC%20Guidelines%20on%20the%20Inclusion%20of%20Persons%20with%20Disabilities%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action%202019_0.pdf) as well as the International Red Cross's Vision 2030 on Disability (<https://www.icrc.org/en/publication/4494-icrcs-vision-2030-disability>) (last accessed on April 28, 2026).

^{ix} See AB 14017 BlgNR 27. GP 8 f vom 10.05.2023, https://www.parlament.gv.at/dokument/XXVII/AB/14017/imfname_1558848.pdf.

^x See AB 14017 BlgNR 27. GP 8 f vom 10.05.2023.

^{xi} See the recommendations of the Independent Monitoring Committee *Monitoringausschuss*, Stellungnahme Humanitäre Hilfe (2022) 18 ff, https://www.monitoringausschuss.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/UMA_SN_Humanitaere-Hilfe_07_2022.pdf (last accessed on April 28, 2026).

^{xii} See *BMEIA*, Strategie der Humanitären Hilfe Österreichs, https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Entwicklungszusammenarbeit/DE_Strategie_fuer_die_Humanitaere_Hilfe.pdf, 9 f (last accessed on April 28, 2026).

^{xiii} See *BMEIA*, Strategie der Humanitären Hilfe Österreichs, 13 ff, https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Entwicklungszusammenarbeit/DE_Strategie_fuer_die_Humanitaere_Hilfe.pdf (last accessed on April 20, 2026).

^{xiv} See *Österreichischen Forschungsstiftung für Internationale Entwicklung*, Aktueller Kommentar Oktober 2023 - Was bringt Österreichs neuer Masterplan der Humanitären Hilfe? <https://www.oefse.at/publikationen/aktueller-kommentar/aktueller-kommentar-oktober-2023/> (last accessed on April 20, 2026).

^{xv} See *BMASGPK*, Sonderrichtlinie „Armutsbekämpfung in Drittstaaten“ zur Gewährung einer Förderung für Projekte zur Abfederung der sozialen und armutsrelevanten Folgen der derzeitigen multiplen Krisen (2024) 47, https://eespn.euro.centre.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Sonderrichtlinie_Armutsbekämpfung-in-Drittstaaten_pdfUA.pdf (last accessed on April 20, 2026).

^{xvi} *UN-Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Concluding Observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Austria** (CRPD/C/AUT/CO/2-3*), Rz. 29 f.

- ^{xvii} *UN-Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Concluding Observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Austria** (CRPD/C/AUT/CO/2-3*), 74.
- ^{xviii} *Monitoringausschuss*, Stellungnahme Humanitäre Hilfe (2022) 14 ff, https://www.monitoringausschuss.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/UMA_SN_Humanitaere-Hilfe_07_2022.pdf (last accessed on April 28, 2026).
- ^{xix} See *BMEIA*, Dreijahresprogramm der österreichischen Entwicklungspolitik 2025 - 2027 (2025) 27, https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Entwicklungszusammenarbeit/DE_Strategie_fuer_die_Humanitaere_Hilfe.pdf (last accessed on April 28, 2026).
- ^{xx} See *BMEIA*, Strategie der Humanitären Hilfe Österreichs, 14 ff, https://www.bmeia.gv.at/fileadmin/user_upload/Zentrale/Aussenpolitik/Entwicklungszusammenarbeit/DE_Strategie_fuer_die_Humanitaere_Hilfe.pdf (last accessed on April 28, 2026).
- ^{xxi} *BMASGPK*, Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung (2022), 33 ff, <https://www.sozialministerium.gv.at/Themen/Soziales/Menschen-mit-Behinderungen/Nationaler-Aktionsplan-Behinderung.html> (last accessed on April 28, 2026).
- ^{xxii} *Essel-Stiftung*, Zero-Project Research Report: Disability-Inclusive Crisis Response (2026) 1 ff.
- ^{xxiii} *Monitoringausschuss*, Stellungnahme Humanitäre Hilfe (2022) 15, https://www.monitoringausschuss.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/UMA_SN_Humanitaere-Hilfe_07_2022.pdf (last accessed on April 28, 2026).
- ^{xxiv} *Monitoringausschuss*, Stellungnahme Humanitäre Hilfe (2022) 19, https://www.monitoringausschuss.at/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/UMA_SN_Humanitaere-Hilfe_07_2022.pdf (last accessed on April 28, 2026).
- ^{xxv} *UN-Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, Concluding Observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of Austria** (CRPD/C/AUT/CO/2-3*), Rz. 29.
- ^{xxvi} AB 14017 BlgNR 27. GP 8 f vom 10.05.2023.
- ^{xxvii} *Light for the World*, How to Build an Inclusive Data Ecosystem During Emergencies (2024), https://www.licht-fuer-die-welt.at/app/uploads/sites/8/2025/02/SIRA-Tool_How-to-Guide_EN_web_reduced-file-size.pdf (last accessed on April 28, 2026).
- ^{xxviii} AB 14017 BlgNR 27. GP 2 f vom 10.05.2023.
- ^{xxix} *Österreichischen Forschungsinstitut für Internationale Entwicklung*, Aktueller Kommentar Mai 2025 - Bilaterale EZA: Stärkste Kürzungen der letzten 20 Jahre, <https://www.oefse.at/publikationen/aktueller-kommentar/aktueller-kommentar-mai-2025/> (last accessed on April 20, 2026).
- ^{xxx} *AGGV*, Mehrjahresprogramm 2026-2028 (2025), 4.
- ^{xxxi} *EDF*, New report finds serious gaps in Disability-Inclusive EU Aid (2025), [https://www.edf-feph.org/new-report-finds-serious-gaps-in-disability-inclusive-eu-aid/#:~:text=Meanwhile,%20the%20European%20Investment%20Bank,Persnons%20with%20Disabilities%20\(CRPD\)](https://www.edf-feph.org/new-report-finds-serious-gaps-in-disability-inclusive-eu-aid/#:~:text=Meanwhile,%20the%20European%20Investment%20Bank,Persnons%20with%20Disabilities%20(CRPD)) (last accessed on April 20, 2026).
- ^{xxxii} *WU Vienna*, Nationaler Aktionsplan Behinderung 2022-2030 - wissenschaftliche Begleitung und Bewertung (2026), <https://www.wu.ac.at/npocompetence/forschung/projekte/aktuelle-projekte/nationaler-aktionsplan-behinderung-2022-2030-wissenschaftliche-begleitung-und-bewertung> (last accessed on April 28, 2026).