



DISABILITY FEDERATION OF IRELAND

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Sent via email to: paul.reid@hse.ie

Tuesday 15th March 2022.

Dear Mr Reid,

Since the invasion of Ukraine commenced DFI has been engaging with its European organisations, namely, the European Disability Forum, EDF, and the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities, EASPD, to get first-hand information from disability organisations within Ukraine and in the neighbouring refugee reception states. Last Friday at the EDF meeting in Paris I heard directly from our Polish and Ukrainian colleagues. They recount a dire situation where urgent support is needed in Ukraine for those who cannot leave and for the refugees also.

Across the EU states disabled people and their organisations are mobilising to provide support and refuge to their Ukrainian brothers and sisters. In DFI we are doing the same with our 100 plus member organisations to prepare for the arrival of significant numbers of refugees with disabilities.

We have four specific requests:

Firstly, we need to see strong strategic and organisational leadership with resources, across government and public services and engagement with us that is specifically and openly focused on the protection of disabled people and their families.

Secondly, there must be a focus on those managing to leave with only the clothes they are wearing. Wheelchairs, medicines, special foods, aids and appliances, assistive technologies and communication aids, all left behind.

Thirdly, every effort must be made with Ireland's allies to get support to those who cannot flee. They are in the most perilous and dire situation.

Fourthly, government and public bodies must specifically name disabled people and their families in all public engagements and directly include them in all planning, actions and delivery of support.

DFI alongside its organisations will, as we did during Covid, work together and offer whatever support and comfort that we can. We need to urgently see planning and action across government and its agencies so that we

can effectively engage and deliver in partnership as disabled refugees arrive here.

In this regard your role as Chief Executive of the HSE is central and critical to ensuring that effective and coordinated action is taken in keeping with the obligations set out in the UN CRPD. Similar correspondence is issuing to An Taoiseach, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Inclusion and Youth, Minister for Health and Minister of State for Disability, Anne Rabbitte. We are already engaging with your colleague Bernard O Regan.

Our Covid response demonstrated that we have the expertise and relationships at family and community level to complement the state services.

I would welcome an early response.

Yours Sincerely,



John Dolan,
Chief Executive Officer