



## **The rights of people with mental health problems and intellectual disabilities to take part in politics**



# What is in this booklet

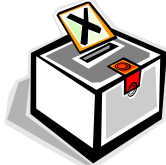
Inside this booklet you will read about:



- **Who made this booklet**
- **Why this booklet was made**



- **Guidelines from around the world about a person's right to vote**



- **The right to vote in different European countries**



- **What type of work will be done next**

## About this booklet



The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights wrote this booklet.

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights is called FRA for short.

The FRA is an organisation.

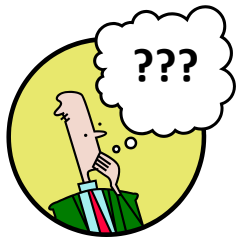
An organisation is a group of people working together.



This booklet will tell you about the FRA's report about some of the laws in Europe.

These laws are about the rights of people with mental health problems and people with intellectual disabilities to vote and to take part in politics.

To take part politics means helping to write or change laws.



People with mental health problems

sometimes find it hard to cope with the normal stresses of life.

People with intellectual disabilities find it hard to learn new things.



This booklet provides information about people with intellectual disabilities.

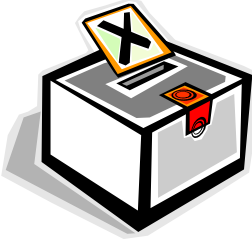


Rights are things all people are entitled to.

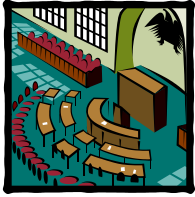
For example, the right to be part of a community.

This means that all people have the right to join in things in your community along with everyone else.

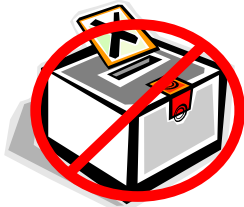
Another word for entitled is allowed.



All people who live in Europe have the right to vote.



They also have the right to be part of government. This means that every person can help choose the people to run your local area, your country and Europe.



In some countries in Europe, people with mental health problems are not allowed to vote.



This is discrimination. Discrimination is when one person or a group of people are not treated in a fair way and do not have the same rights as everybody else.

# The right to vote

## Guidelines from around Europe and the world



There are important documents that say everyone has the right to vote or be part of government.

These documents are called:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The European Convention on Human Rights.



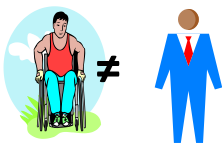
These documents are agreements between different countries about a set of rights that apply to everyone.

An agreement is a joint decision.

Countries who sign the agreements should do what the agreements say.



The law says that all people have the right to take part in the government of their country. But some people understand this law differently.

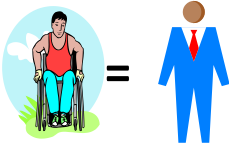


This means they believe that people with disabilities do not have the same rights to vote or be part of government as everyone else.

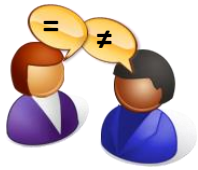


The United Nations created another important document in 2006.

It is called the Convention on the rights of people with disabilities.



Countries who sign the agreement must make sure people with disabilities also have the same rights as other citizens.



But some people think that people with intellectual disabilities should not have the right to vote.

The European Court of Human Rights looked at the law. The European Court of Human Rights Court said that people with mental health problems or intellectual disabilities should have the right to vote.



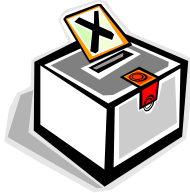
People in Europe who think they are not treated fairly can ask the European Court of Human Rights to look into it.

The European Court of Human Rights will then make a decision.








# The right to vote in different European countries



Different countries in Europe have different rules for people with mental health problems or intellectual disabilities.



In some countries people with mental health problems or intellectual disabilities can vote and take part in government. These countries are:

-  Austria
-  Finland
-  Italy
-  Netherlands
-  Spain
-  Sweden
-  United Kingdom



In other countries they cannot. This is because the law says you cannot marry, buy a house, or look after your own money, so you cannot vote.

These countries are:

-  Belgium
-  Bulgaria
-  Czech Republic
-  Denmark
-  Estonia
-  Germany
-  Greece
-  Hungary
-  Lithuania
-  Latvia
-  Luxembourg
-  Malta
-  Poland
-  Portugal
-  Romania
-  Slovakia



In some other countries, a doctor or judge decides if each person with mental health problems or intellectual disabilities can vote.

These countries are:

-  Estonia
-  Cyprus
-  France
-  Malta
-  Slovenia
-  Spain

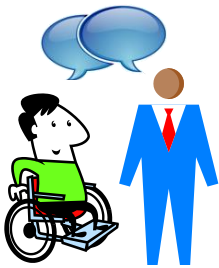


## What type of work will be done next?



The report tells us that some countries need to change their laws

so that these countries can do what the United Nations Convention on the rights of people with disabilities says.



To change the law, these countries should talk to people with disabilities to make sure the changes are practical and useful. Doing this will make a real difference to the lives of people with disabilities.



The Council of Europe has written a plan to make things better for disabled people.

The plan says what things will make it easier for people with disabilities to participate in politics.

The Council of Europe is made up of 47 countries in Europe.



One example is to provide help to people with mental health problems and intellectual disabilities to vote. Denmark changed its laws to allow this.

Another way to help people with intellectual disabilities to vote



is to make information about voting, elections and the EU that is easy to read and understand.

In the United Kingdom, political groups wrote their plans for government in an easy-to-read format.



The FRA will speak to people with mental health problems and intellectual disabilities in some countries.



This will help the FRA to better understand what changes need to happen.

The agency will also share this information with other countries.

Acknowledgements:

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