

FRA Press Release
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Systemic change needed to end violence against people with disabilities in institutions

Neglect, abuse and violence against people with disabilities living in institutions are widespread across the EU. A new report from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shows how the normalisation of violence, barriers to reporting abuse and a lack of effective monitoring undermine the rights of people with disabilities. FRA calls on EU countries to take urgent action to prevent violence, protect victims and hold institutions accountable.

Over 1.4 million people with disabilities in the EU live in institutions. As the European Union and Member States fail to realise their obligations around deinstitutionalisation under the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), many people in such settings face violations of their fundamental rights. FRA's latest report, '[Places of care = places of safety? Violence against persons with disabilities in institutions](#)', shows gaps in the protection and prevention of violence, abuse and neglect.

The forms of violence highlighted in the report include shouting and insults, involuntary treatments and overmedication, arbitrary use of restraints, labour and financial exploitation, and physical and sexual violence. People with intellectual disabilities, children and older people are at higher risk of abuse.

Violence and abuse in institutions are enabled by chronic understaffing and limited resources. Many victims have come to see abuse as normal and are not made aware of their rights and the channels for reporting abuse. This creates persistent barriers, and a culture of silence and impunity.

To address these systemic failures, FRA calls on EU countries to:

- **End institutionalisation** and prioritise the inclusion of people with disabilities in the community, in line with EU and Member States' commitments under Article 19 of the UN CRPD.
- **Strengthen protection from violence.** Ensure that national laws on institutional care comply with international and EU legal obligations. Collect reliable, comparable and timely data to better assess the situation, and to prevent, protect against and respond to violence in institutions.

- **Improve monitoring.** Ensure monitoring bodies are fully independent and have sufficient resources to conduct regular, transparent and unannounced visits to institutions. The European Commission should suspend and recover EU funds from institutions where violations occur.
- **Ensure accessible reporting.** Provide victims with access to safe and confidential reporting mechanisms, without the fear of retaliation and which effectively protect whistleblowers.
- **Provide guidance and training.** Create practical guidelines on how to effectively prevent and respond to violence in institutions. Develop compulsory, multidisciplinary training for institutional staff, monitoring teams, the police and the judiciary.
- **Ensure full participation of people with disabilities** and their representative organisations in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes on violence in institutions.

Quote from FRA Director Sirpa Rautio:

"Violence against people with disabilities in institutions is a systemic problem that requires systemic change. The EU and its Member States must fulfil their legal obligations and protect the fundamental rights of people with disabilities by prioritising their inclusion in the community, treating them with dignity and respect, and effectively protecting them from violence and abuse."

The report draws on research in 27 EU countries and three candidate countries (Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia), complemented by interviews in 10 EU countries (Croatia, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia).

FRA previously published a report on [transition from institutions to community living for people with disabilities](#) and on [violence against children with disabilities](#).

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