



FRA Press Release

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Protection gaps risk exposing children with disabilities to abuse

Boys and girls with disabilities are more likely to be victims of physical and sexual violence, and neglect, than those without disabilities. They are also more likely to be less well protected, as they can fall between the cracks of generic protection for children and for people with disabilities, finds the latest report from the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). There is therefore a need to target children with disabilities explicitly in national child protection systems, as well as in relevant policies and actions, so they are fully included into society, living a life free of violence.

"We must protect children with disabilities more effectively against violence, abuse and bullying," says FRA Director a.i. Constantinos Manolopoulos on the eve of the international day of persons with disabilities. *"The EU and its Member States need to take steps to address this largely invisible issue. Children with disabilities need to be able to live without fear in a society where they are fully integrated."*

The report '[Violence against children with disabilities: legislation, policies and programmes in the European Union](#)' examines the forms, causes and settings of violence against children with disabilities and suggests steps to tackle it.

While official figures on the numbers of children with disabilities and the extent of the violence they suffer are not available, this report points to the vulnerabilities of such children resulting from social isolation, stigmatisation and their greater reliance on care and support.

The report also indicates where the EU and its Member States can best intervene to better protect children with disabilities:

- **An integrated approach to child protection:** Child protection services should provide comprehensive support to children with disabilities and their families, taking into consideration all aspects of the child's life.
- **Countering isolation and separation:** Greater efforts are needed to ensure inclusive education, combat prejudice and build more inclusive societies.
- **Enhanced and coordinated support:** Member States should ensure appropriate coordination mechanisms, such as a focal point, to bridge the work of different professionals. This includes professionals in areas such as healthcare, social services, education, the judiciary, and victim support services.
- **Promoting child-focused prevention and child participation:** Member States should ensure that children with disabilities are represented, directly and through representative and family organisations, when designing,

implementing and monitoring laws, policies, services and measures addressing violence.

The report also refers to examples of existing protection and prevention measures that address professionals, families or children with disabilities themselves.

To read the report, see: [*Violence against children with disabilities: legislation, policies and programmes in the European Union.*](#)

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Notes to editors:

- FRA will present the report during the [European Commission's Day of Persons with Disabilities conference](#) which will take place on 7-8 December in Brussels. This year, the conference will focus on children and young people with disability.
- Other FRA work on the [rights of children](#) and [people with disabilities](#) can be found on FRA's website. FRA provides evidence-based assistance and expertise to EU and national decision makers, thereby contributing to more informed and better targeted debates and policies on fundamental rights.