

FRA Press Release
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On the road to a rights-based recovery from COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed gaps in respecting the fundamental rights to health, education, employment and social protection across society. FRA's Fundamental Rights Report 2021 plots the pandemic's wide-ranging impact on rights and suggests how best to address increasing inequalities and threats to societal cohesion.

"COVID-19 tested the resolve of fundamental rights protection systems across the EU," says FRA Director [Michael O'Flaherty](#). "Governments need to put in place lasting structures to tackle inequality, racism and exclusion. Only a rights-based approach allows governments to build inclusive societies."

FRA's [Fundamental Rights Report 2021](#) reflects on the developments and shortfalls of human rights protection in the EU over the past year. Its [Coronavirus focus chapter](#) reviews the pandemic's fundamental rights impact on people's daily lives, particularly on vulnerable groups such as older people, people with disabilities, Roma and migrants.

Moving forward, governments should consult with national human rights bodies to assess how their public health actions affect fundamental rights. They should also:

- boost the resilience of educational, healthcare and social support services to meet everyone's needs;
- adopt digital solutions, bridge the digital divide and tackle disinformation;
- pay attention to high-risk groups like those in care, detained or homeless;
- ensure fair and equal access to vaccines.

Other key issues in 2020 include:

- **Racism** – the pandemic fuelled discrimination, hate crime and hate speech towards minorities, particularly people with immigrant backgrounds and Roma. At the same time, the Black Lives Matter movement and the first-ever [EU Anti-racism action plan](#) mobilised efforts to tackle racism in Europe. EU countries should step up efforts to counter racism through national action plans, penalise hate crime, support victims and tackle discriminatory ethnic profiling in policing.
- **Migration** – respecting fundamental rights at borders remained challenging in the EU. Migrants died at sea, faced violence and pushbacks at land borders, and overcrowding at reception centres. In line with the proposed EU Migration and Asylum Pact, EU countries should carry out effective and independent monitoring to counter rights abuses at borders. They should also provide adequate facilities at reception centres.
- **Child rights** – many children suffered during the pandemic, particularly those from economically or socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Remote education was difficult without internet access or computers. Child abuse also rose during lockdown and quarantine. The EU should support initiatives under the future [European Child Guarantee](#) targeting areas and groups most affected by the pandemic. EU countries should ensure all children have equal access to education and are protected from abuse.

The report summarises and analyses major human rights developments in the EU in 2020. It contains [proposals for action](#) covering the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and its use by Member States; equality and non-discrimination; racism and related intolerance; Roma inclusion and equality; asylum, borders and migration; information society, privacy and data protection; child rights; access to justice; and implementing the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD).

For more please contact: media@fra.europa.eu / Tel.: +43 1 580 30 653