

# Our report on violence against people with disabilities in institutions

## Easy-to-read version

Easy-to-read is information that is written in a simple way so that people with intellectual disabilities and all people can understand it. You can find more information at: [www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read](http://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read)



## Who we are

We are the 'European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights'.

In short, we are called 'FRA'.

At FRA, we work to protect the rights of all people in Europe.

We want to make Europe a better place for everyone to live and work.



## What our report is about

At FRA, we made a report to talk about the situation of people with disabilities who live in **institutions**.

Institutions are places where people with disabilities often live away from other people.

Our report is based on a study we made in 30 countries in Europe.

Among other things, in our study, we checked:

- How is the situation for people with disabilities living in institutions?
- What laws and rules do countries have to protect people with disabilities from violence?
- How do countries check if people are safe in institutions?



- Is it possible for people with disabilities who are treated badly in institutions to report it and get help?

Our report has all the information we gathered from our study.

[The full report is available here](#)

This text is a short version of the report in easy language.

Some difficult words in the text are marked in **bold**. You can find their explanation at the end of this booklet.



## Is living in institutions safe for people with disabilities?

**Institutions** are places where many people with disabilities live away from other people.

People who live in institutions must follow the rules of the institution and cannot decide for themselves.

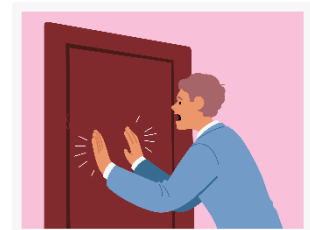
Our study showed that in institutions people with disabilities are often treated badly and against their rights.

Violence in institutions can have many forms.



For example, violence can be when the staff or other people in the institution:

- Hits us;
- Shouts or talks badly to us;
- Forces us to have sex or do other things against our will;
- Forces us to take medicine against our will;
- Scares or threatens us;
- Locks us in a room;
- Punishes us by not giving us food or other things we need.



These are things that happen often behind the closed doors of institutions.

At FRA, we believe that countries in Europe should work harder to close institutions.

We also believe that the **European Union** should stop giving money to countries that use it to build institutions.

Instead, the money of the European Union should be used to help people with disabilities live independently and be part of the community like everyone else.



# What laws protect people with disabilities from violence?

The **European Union** has many laws that protect people with disabilities and all people from being treated badly or unfairly.



For example, the European Union has laws that say that:

- No one should be hurt or treated badly in places where they cannot leave, like prisons or **institutions**.
- If a person is treated badly, they should get help to report it and be safe.
- People who look after people with disabilities and other people should treat them well and respect their rights.



Also, each country in Europe has its own laws and rules.

Some countries have laws and rules to protect people with disabilities in **institutions** from violence.



But every country has different laws and understands and deals with violence differently.

So something that is against the law in one country may be allowed in another.



Also, in many countries in Europe, people with disabilities do not have the right to speak for themselves.

Other people make the decisions for them.

This way, people with disabilities cannot speak up and ask for help when they are treated badly.

A law that the **European Union** and all its countries have in common is the 'UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'.

In short, we call it '**UN Convention**'.

This is a law that says in detail:

- What rights people with disabilities have;
- How countries must work to protect these rights.

The European Union and all its countries have signed the UN Convention.

This means that they have agreed to do what the UN Convention says and make sure that people with disabilities have the same rights as everyone else.

Among other things, the UN Convention says that people with disabilities:

- Should be protected from all forms of violence;
- Should not live in **institutions** away from other people;
- Should get support to live independently and make their own choices in life.





At FRA, we believe that the **European Union** and its countries should make sure that all their laws and rules respect the rights in the **UN Convention**.

Also, countries should make better rules to protect people with disabilities from violence and make sure they get the support they need.

Countries should also make sure people with disabilities can share their ideas and help make decisions about rules that affect them.

## How do countries check institutions?

In every country in Europe, there are offices that check how **institutions** work and if they respect the rights of people who live in them.



People who work in these offices may visit the institutions and talk with the staff and the people with disabilities who live there.



Some of these offices work for the **government**. Others are independent offices that are not part of the government.

Some make regular visits to the institutions and others visit the institutions only if they receive a complaint.

Some let institutions know when they will visit them, and others go without a warning.



Some are only allowed to propose changes.

Others can also punish **institutions**

that do not treat people well.

For example, by making them pay fines

or by closing them down

until they make things better

for people who live there.



Sadly, these checks are not enough to protect

people with disabilities who live in **institutions**

from violence.

For example, in many countries,

the offices in charge of checking how institutions work:



- May not have training to understand the needs and rights of people with disabilities;
- May not do a good check about how people live in these institutions;
- May not have enough staff to do this job well.



At FRA, we think that countries in Europe should make sure the offices that check **institutions** have enough staff and training to do these checks well.

All offices that check institutions should work together to have better results.

Organisations of persons with disabilities and organisations that fight for the rights of people should be part of these offices.

They know well what rights people have and they can check if institutions respect these rights.



## Is reporting violence possible for people with disabilities in institutions?

The **UN Convention** says that people with disabilities who are treated badly have the right to report it and get help.

For people with disabilities in **institutions**, this can mean talking about their problem to a staff member they can trust. Or to the people who come to check the institutions.

But in reality, reporting the staff of an institution for treating you badly is very hard.

Among other reasons, this can be because people with disabilities in institutions:

- May not know their rights;
- May not know how and to whom to make a complaint;
- May not be allowed to speak to anyone outside the institution;
- May be used to being treated badly and think of it as normal;
- May think it is their fault because of their disability;
- May be afraid that the staff will treat them even worse if they speak up;
- May be afraid nobody will believe them.





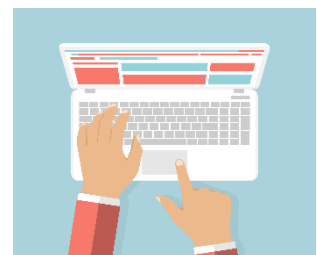
At FRA, we think that countries in Europe should:

- Make it easy and safe for people with disabilities in **institutions** to report violence and get help.
- Help people with disabilities in institutions know their rights, understand what violence is and where to go for help.  
This information should be easy for everyone to understand.
- Give training to staff and families of people with disabilities to see the signs when a person is being treated badly and is afraid or unable to say it.
- Make sure different offices work together to protect people with disabilities in institutions from violence.  
For example, the offices that check the institutions should work together with the police and other offices to help people at risk quickly.

## More information

You can find more information about the work we do at FRA on our website at:  
[www.fra.europa.eu](http://www.fra.europa.eu).

If you have any questions, you can send us an email at:  
[disability@fra.europa.eu](mailto:disability@fra.europa.eu).



# Explanation of difficult words

## European Union

The European Union is a group of 27 countries in Europe. These countries came together to make things better, easier and safer for people. They agreed to work together and help each other.

These countries are:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czechia
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania



- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden

## Government

A government is a group of people that make decisions on how to run a country. All people in a country vote for the government they want to stand for their rights.



## Institutions

Institutions are places where people with disabilities live away from other people.

People who live in institutions must follow the rules of the institution and cannot decide for themselves.



## UN Convention

'The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' is an agreement that many countries in the world have signed.

In short, we call it 'UN Convention'.



The UN Convention says  
what rights people with disabilities have  
and how countries should protect these rights.

The UN Convention was made by the UN.  
The UN stands for the United Nations.  
This is a big world organisation  
that works for peace and a better world.

## More information about this document

This document belongs to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, which is called 'FRA' in short.

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