

# Impact of coronavirus on people with disabilities



## Easy to read version

Easy to read is a way to make information accessible so people with intellectual disabilities and all people can understand it. This text is written by Lila Sylviti and checked by Soufiane El Amrani.



## Who we are

We are the **European Disability Forum**.  
We are an organisation of people with disabilities  
in Europe.  
In short, we are called '**EDF**'.



At EDF, we work to protect the rights  
of all people with disabilities in Europe.  
We think that people with disabilities  
should have the same chances in life  
and take part in the community like everyone else.

We also think that people with disabilities should decide about their lives.  
**Nothing should be decided about us without us**

## What this booklet is about

We wrote this booklet to talk about coronavirus  
and its impact on people with disabilities in Europe.  
**'Coronavirus'** is a new disease  
that can pass easily from one person to another.  
We also call it 'COVID-19'.

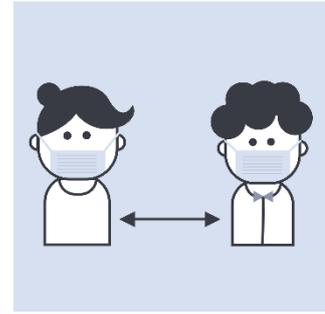


Sadly, too many people in the world  
are now ill from coronavirus.  
Most of the people recover,  
but many people die from it.

Coronavirus can pass very easily  
from one person to another  
in the air from coughs and sneezes.  
That is why we must be very careful  
and stay at home as much as possible.



If we need to go out of the house,  
we must keep a safe distance from other people  
and wear face masks  
to cover our mouths and noses.  
We must not go to places with many other people.



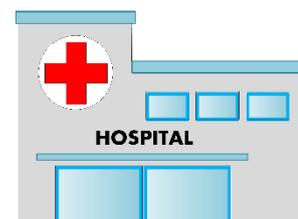
To stop the coronavirus from passing  
from one person to another,  
many places stay closed.  
For example, schools, shops and restaurants.  
Many people who worked at these places  
lost their jobs and they do not have enough money  
to support their families.  
Other people work from home  
instead of going to the office.  
Also, many children study at home  
instead of going to school with their friends.



## Why people with disabilities are at high risk

People with disabilities are at even higher risk  
of getting sick and dying from coronavirus  
than other people.  
This is because:

- Many people with disabilities  
already have serious problems with their health.  
Having coronavirus on top of that  
puts their life in even bigger danger.
- People with disabilities may not get  
the support they need when they are sick.  
Many things and services are not accessible  
and it may be hard for them  
to go to a hospital or see a doctor.



- Older people are at higher risk of dying from coronavirus. Many older people have a disability.



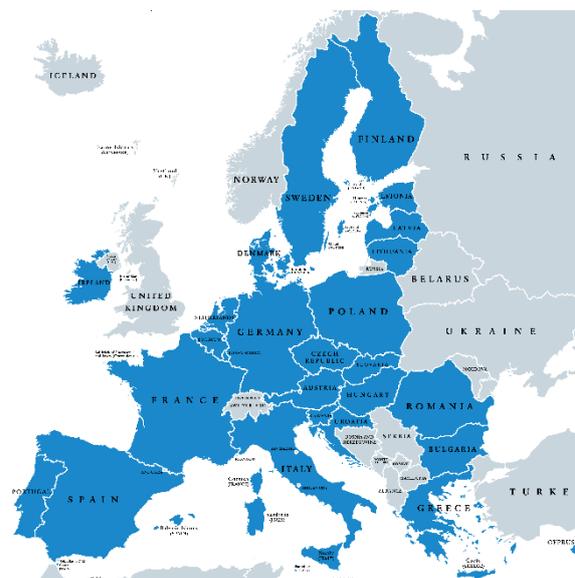
- Many people with disabilities are closed in institutions away from the community. There, they may not be able to keep a safe distance from other people. They may not have access to information and services to protect themselves from coronavirus.

- It may be hard for some people with disabilities to follow the rules that countries have put in place against coronavirus. Things are even harder for people with disabilities who live in institutions, in prisons or on the streets. It may be hard for them to wear face masks, keep their hands clean or keep a safe distance.



## Situation in Europe

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.



The European Union and all its countries have signed 'the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'. In short, we call it '**the UN Convention**'. The UN Convention is a document that says what rights people with disabilities have and how countries should protect these rights.



By signing the UN Convention, the European Union agreed to do what the UN Convention says to protect people with disabilities.

Among others, the UN Convention says that countries should protect people with disabilities in risky situations, like we have now with coronavirus. It also says that countries should listen to people with disabilities when they make decisions about their lives.

Sadly, the European Union and its countries failed to do this.

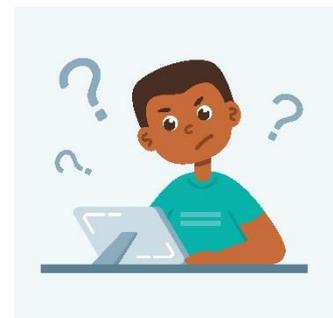
During the hard times of coronavirus, people with disabilities were left behind. Their views were not taken into account when countries were making plans of how to recover from coronavirus.

Many people with disabilities in Europe died from coronavirus alone and without support.



Also:

- With many schools closed, students had to use technology like computers to study and talk with their teacher and classmates. This could be harder for students with disabilities



because computers and other technology are often not accessible for them. Many students with disabilities need a support person to help them study at school. Due to coronavirus, they could not meet their support person. That made things hard for the parents of students with disabilities too, because they were left all alone to take care of their child.

- With offices closed, many workers had to do their work from home via a computer. This can be hard or impossible for workers with disabilities because computers and other technology are often not accessible for them.



- With coronavirus, there were more cases of violence. Many people with disabilities were treated badly, and did not have a way to ask for help. Things are even harder for women and people with disabilities who live in institutions and prisons.



- Many people with disabilities feel confused and afraid because they did not get the right information and support to protect themselves from coronavirus. Or they did not get information in ways that they can read and understand it. For example, people with intellectual disabilities did not get information in easy to read.



- Many people with disabilities were left alone without any support. They could not even go to the hospital, get medicine or food.



## What the European Union should do

At EDF, we ask the European Union to:

- Protect the rights of people with disabilities and make the UN Convention happen in Europe.
- Make all things and services accessible for people with disabilities so that they have the same chances in life as everyone else.
- Think of the needs of people with disabilities when they make plans and decisions.
- Ask for the views of people with disabilities and their organisations when they make decisions and plans about their lives.
- To be better prepared to protect people with disabilities in risky situations like we have now with coronavirus.
- To collect important information about people with disabilities. For example, to know how many of them are women, older people or living in institutions. This way nobody will be forgotten or left behind.



- Spend part of their money to:
  - make things accessible for people with disabilities,
  - help them to take active part in the community,
  - support the work of their organisations.
- Close down institutions and support people with disabilities to live independently as part of the community.
- Protect women and girls with disabilities from being treated badly and make sure that they get the support and services they need.



## More information

For more information about EDF and our work, you can visit our website at [www.edf-feph.org](http://www.edf-feph.org). You can also send us an email at [info@edf-feph.org](mailto:info@edf-feph.org).

