

Responses to our enquiry on persons with disabilities in prison and COVID-19

Prison administration responses to European Disability Forum (EDF) enquiry on the situation of persons with disabilities in prison and COVID-19. In this document:

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Introduction

EDF is an umbrella organisation that defends the rights of persons with disabilities in Europe. We are 100 member organisations advocating at national levels, European Union (EU) level, and beyond.

We reached out to European national prison administrations with three questions on 7 May 2020:

1. Could you inform us on any measures taken to protect prisoners with disabilities?
2. Is information on the measures taken in relation to COVID-19 given to prisoners in accessible formats when necessary



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(large print, easy to read, braille, sign language interpretation)?

3. Is there any information you require in order to better assist persons with disabilities under your custody?

In this document you will find the answers we have received so far (the information specifically about persons with disabilities) and links to their pages on covid-19 measures on [the European Organisation or Prison and Correctional Services \(Europris\)](#) website. We have included information on Albania and Ireland, which have specific information on persons with disabilities on their pages, and links to the administrations we are waiting to hear from.



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Administrations who reference persons with disabilities on their page

Albania – General Directorate of Prisons

- Chronic patients and the elderly prisoners are kept under constant control.

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Ireland – [Irish Prison Service](#)

- Prisons are isolating suspect cases to prevent the risk of ongoing transmission of infection and cocooning vulnerable prisoners.
- The National Forensic Mental Health Services team provide access to vital services for prisoners with long term mental health issues. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions this has impacted on the work of NFMHS in-reach team who are continuing to provide their services remotely and are conducting patient assessment where necessary. In addition, the NFMHS have agreed to introduce a new model of short term care which will allow for the short-term transfer of a prisoner to the CMH for treatment and stabilisation before being returned to the prison.

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Administration responses to our enquiry

Catalonia – [Directorate General of Prison Services in Catalonia](#)

They are gathering information.

→ [Contact](#)

Denmark - [Danish Prison and Probation Service](#)

- Prison health staff are identifying chronic diseases/disabilities of prisoners at the admission to the institutions and in some prisons this has been done again after the outbreak of covid-19.
- Guidelines have been provided for prison staff regarding the prevention of covid-19 among prisoners vulnerable to the infection
- Special departments have been established for prisoners with chronic deceases or/and disabilities.
- Moving prisoners to departments/cells with access to a bathroom which is for their own individual use
- Pictograms and posters in different languages with information regarding covid-19 have been provided for the prisoners
- Interpretation has been provided during covid-19 when needed



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Hungary - Hungarian Prison Service

They are gathering information.

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Latvia - [Latvian Prison Administration](#)

- A special attention is paid to elderly prisoners and those suffering from chronic diseases, especially, lung, cardiovascular and diabetic patients, as well as the disabled, and their health conditions are regularly monitored.
- Information materials have been distributed in all prisons of the Administration, both among prisoners and in cells and common areas, on behavior during a pandemic of COVID-19 infection in order to protect themselves from COVID-19 infection. The text is in an understandable format, but not in all places of imprisonment in Braille or sign language.
- Information on the spread of COVID-19 in Braille and sign language should be organized in prisons.

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Lithuania - [Lithuanian Prison Department](#)

- No specific preventive measures were implemented to protect prisoners with disabilities.
- Visual, verbal and written information and trainings were provided (pictures, video films)



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- The penitentiary establishments used public information with explanations and adapted for the use in penitentiary establishments.

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Luxembourg – [Ministry of Justice : Department of Prisons](#)

- No specific measures for persons with disabilities.
- The information is accessible to all detainees, there is currently no need for large prints or sign language.

→ [Contact](#)

Romania - [National Administration of Penitentiaries of Romania](#)

- Limited contact between inmates known to have lung diseases or inmates that have a weak immune system.
- Penitentiary population kept informed using various information points located within penitentiaries or other detention places.
- Additional measures taken to monitor vulnerable inmates to maintain their health status.
- All the measures taken by the National Administration of Penitentiaries of Romania, in order to maintain the quality of life and health are addressed to all inmates, so far we have not had any difficulties in keeping informed inmates with



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disabilities about what is happening and why some measures are taken.

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Scotland - [Scottish Prison Service](#)

They are gathering information.

→ [Contact](#)

Slovakia - [General Directorate of the Corps of Prison and Court Guard of Slovakia](#)

- Inmates are classified at entry i.e. the capability for work and assessment of placement by a medical examiner. People who require increased medical attention or assistance by other persons when performing daily basis activities are placed mainly in the Units for Handicapped Prisoners or Specialized Treatment Units.
- The system continues with penitentiary treatment/care provided by regime prison officers, case managers, the social care provided by social workers when processing of social benefits entitled, up to an inpatient and outpatient health care.
- The prison staff provides information to these persons individually, according to the degree of disability and in adequate forms and appropriate extent according to their physical and mental capabilities not only on COVID-19 infection but also on other important topics. In connection to



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COVID-19, the inmates were informed mainly in the form of lectures, sessions, individual consultations with prison staff but also via media (TV, radio).

- The Corps would welcome any appropriate form of help for these inmates provided by NGOs that would not be in contrary with the purpose of pre-trial detention or prison sentence execution.

→ [Contact](#)

Spain – [General Directorate of Prison Administration](#)

- Prison administration working in contact with a NGO that works specifically with persons with disabilities in prison
- Inmates may contact the NGO for specific needs
- Information in Easy to read has been distributed

→ [Contact](#)

Sweden - [Swedish Prison and Probation Service](#)

- Cooperation with multiple organizations for disabled persons.
- Strategies for sectioning prisoners who belong to the risk categories
- The information is given in different languages and if necessary, with the help of an interpreter or adjustments to secure that all prisoners are given the information.



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- Regulated adjustments made according to all prisoners need, including disabilities.

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Administrations we have contacted

Austria – [Federal Ministry of Justice](#)

→ [Contact](#)

Belgium – [Belgium Prison Services](#)

→ [Contact](#)

Bulgaria – [General Directorate Execution of Sentences](#)

→ [Contact](#)

Cyprus - [Ministry of Justice and Public Order :
Department of Prisons](#)

→ [Contact](#)

Czechia – [Prison Service of the Czech Republic](#)

→ [Contact](#)

Estonia – [Estonian Prison Service](#)

→ [Contact](#)

Finland – [Criminal Sanctions Agency \(RISE\)](#)

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France – Ministry of Justice : Department of Prisons

→ [Contact](#)



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Italy – [Ministry of Justice : Department of Prison Administration](#)

→ [Contact](#)

Poland - [Central Board of Prison Service of Poland](#)

→ [Contact](#)

Portugal - [Directorate-General of Reintegration and Prison Services of Portugal](#)

→ [Contact](#)

More information

If you would like to contribute information on persons with disabilities in prison including on organisations that work with persons with disabilities in prison, please contact us at the email address at the bottom of the page.

EDF is part of the EU funded Just4All project on Access to Justice for persons with disabilities through the training of legal practitioners (just4all.eu) led by Fundacion ONCE with the partners European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities (EASPD), Carlos III University of Madrid, and Thomson Reuters.

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