

EDF's booklet on refugees with disabilities



Easy to read version

Easy to read is a way to make information simpler and clearer so people with intellectual disabilities and all people can understand it.

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You can find more information about easy to read at www.easy-to-read.eu



Explanation of difficult words

Here you can read an explanation of the difficult words you may find in this booklet.

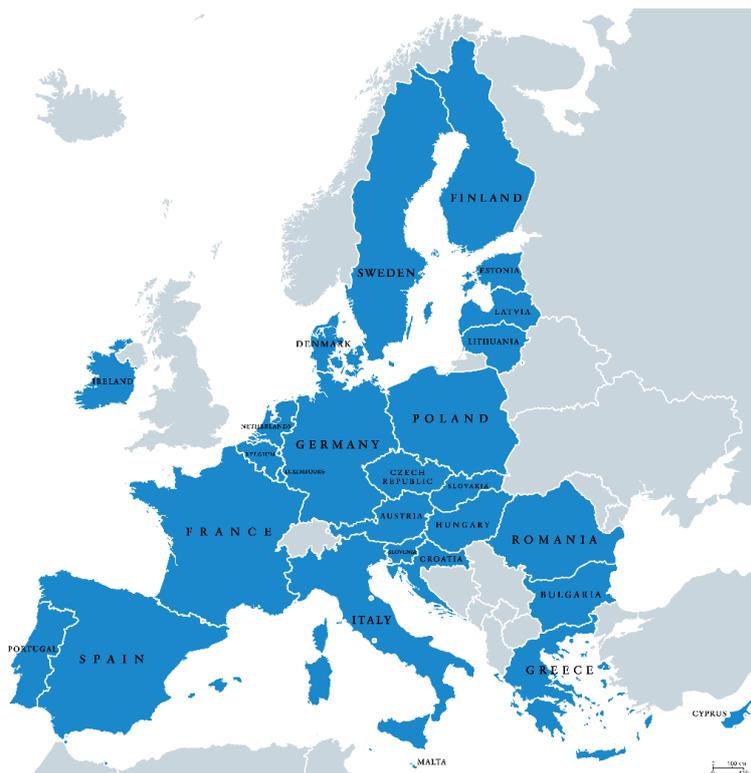
You can always come back to this page to remember the explanation of these words.

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.

In this map, you can see all the countries that are part of the European Union:



Accessible

Things are accessible when they are possible to use by people with disabilities and all people.

If things are not accessible,
people with disabilities can be left out.
For example:

- If buildings do not have ramps,
people in wheelchairs
will not be able get in.
- If information is not easy to read,
persons with intellectual disabilities
will not be able to understand it.



Refugees

Refugees are people who leave
their country and their home
because it is not safe for them
to live there anymore.

For example,
they may have war in their country
and their life may be in danger.
In recent years,
many refugees have come to Europe
hoping for a better life.



Refugee camps

These are places where refugees have to stay at
when they arrive in a new country.
They often have to stay there
for a long time
until the new country finds out more
about their case
and until a decision is made
about their future.



Sadly, things can be hard
in refugee camps.

There may be too many people together
and they may live in bad conditions.

For example, they may live in tents even when the weather is cold.

Things can be even harder for refugees with disabilities
because many things in the refugee camps are not accessible for them.

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 as all other people.

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 refugees with disabilities.
In the next few pages, you will learn:

- How things are for refugees with disabilities who come to Europe.
- What laws and agreements there are to protect the rights of refugees.
- How organisations like us work to help refugees with disabilities to have better chances in life.
- The story of a young refugee woman with disability.



How things are for refugees with disabilities

Refugees are people who left their country and their home because it was not good or safe for them to live there anymore. In recent years, many refugees have come to Europe hoping for a better life.



Their trip to Europe is hard and dangerous. Too many people die on the way.



But even if they make it to Europe, things keep being very hard for them. Countries in Europe keep them in refugee camps until it is decided where they will go next. This can take a long time and it is very stressful for people who have left their country.



Things are even harder for refugees with disabilities because:

- Even basic things in the camps may not be accessible for them. For example, toilets may have stairs but no ramp so people in wheelchairs cannot use them.
- The people who work at the camps may not understand if a refugee has a disability. Or even if they understand it, they may not know the right way to help them.



- Refugees with disabilities may not be able to see a doctor and get health care when they are sick.
- Important information and documents may not be accessible so refugees with disabilities may not be able to understand them. For example, there may be no information in sign language for deaf refugees, or information in easy to read for refugees with intellectual disabilities.



Laws and agreements that protect refugees

There are many laws and agreements in the European Union and in the world that protect the rights of refugees.

For example:

- **The ‘1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees’**
This is a law that all countries in the European Union have agreed to. It helped countries to recognise who refugees are and how to protect their rights.
- **The ‘UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities’**
This is an agreement that all countries in the European Union have signed. It says what rights people with disabilities have and how countries should protect these rights.



Among others, it says that countries should protect people with disabilities who are in danger such as refugees with disabilities.

- **The ‘Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union’**

This is a law that the European Union made to protect the rights of all the people in the European Union.

Many of the rights written in this law are important for refugees with disabilities too.

For example:

- the right to not be left out because of your disability,
- the right to go to school and study,
- the right to get health care when you are sick.

- **The ‘Common European Asylum System’**

This is an agreement that the European Union made to say that refugees who come to any country of the European Union should be treated in the same fair way and should get the same help.

The European Union has made other important documents about refugees and people who leave their countries.

But often these documents do not take into account refugees with disabilities.

Also, the European Union gives money to its countries to help the work they do for refugees including refugees with disabilities.



Helping refugees with disabilities

Many of our members and other organisations work to help refugees with disabilities.

They have organised many projects and activities to make things easier for them when they arrive in Europe.

For example:



- In Sweden, there is a project called 'Disabled Refugees Welcome'. This project tries to make things easier and more accessible for refugees with disabilities who arrive in Sweden by:
 - Understanding their needs,
 - Telling people who work with refugees what they can do to help refugees with disabilities,
 - Helping refugees with disabilities to have access to things and services that are very important for their lives.
- In Greece, our members work on a project that tries to help refugees with disabilities who arrive in Greece by:
 - Training people who work with refugees about the needs of refugees with disabilities. This way, they can learn how to help them.
 - Helping refugees with disabilities and their families to get access to important things and services, such as accessible houses and health care.
 - Bringing refugees with disabilities together so their voices can be heard.



- In Italy, there is a project that tries to make information accessible for refugees with Down syndrome. If they get information in easy to read, it will be easier for them to understand their rights and how things work when they arrive in Italy.



- EDF and our members in Italy and Greece took part in a project to support refugees with disabilities who arrive in Europe. This project tries to make things and services accessible so they are not left out because of their disability.

Ideas for future work

In the future, we will continue working with our members and other organisations to support refugees with disabilities.



We think it is important to:

- Help refugees with disabilities know more about their rights.
- Make sure more things and services are accessible to them.
- Make sure refugees with disabilities are part of our work and listen to their views.
- Pay attention to refugees with disabilities who are at even higher risk of being treated badly, such as women, older people and people with intellectual disabilities. No one should be left behind!

- Help people who work for refugees to understand the needs of refugees with disabilities and know how to help them.
- Work all together to make things better and more accessible for refugees with disabilities.

We also think it is important to work together with the European Union and its countries to make sure that:

- They understand how hard things are for refugees with disabilities and take action to protect them.
- They think of the needs of refugees with disabilities when they make decisions and plans.
- They offer training to people who work with refugees so that they know how to help them.



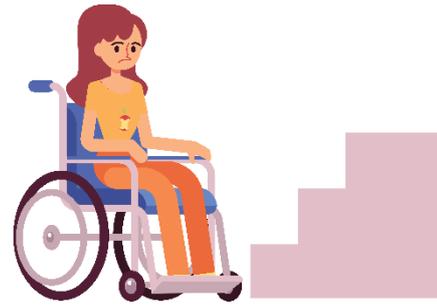
Nujeen's story

Nujeen Mustafa is a young woman from the country of Syria. She has a disability and she uses a wheelchair. When war started in her country, it was hard for her to leave because of her disability. But she and her family managed to escape and come to Europe.

The trip was long and dangerous and many people told her family to leave her behind because of her disability. But her family did not give up on her and despite the hard trip, they all made it to Europe.

First, they arrived in Greece which is a country of the European Union.

She had to stay in refugee camps where many basic things were not accessible for her. Even toilets had steps but no ramps so Nujeen could not get in with her wheelchair.



After a long and hard time, Nujeen and her family started a new life in Germany. Nujeen went back to school and made dreams for her future.

But she could not forget other refugees with disabilities who go through the same things as she did. Now she is using her voice to talk about the rights of refugees with disabilities. She also wrote a book about her story to show people how hard things are for refugees with disabilities. She hopes that countries will work to help refugees with disabilities and make things and services accessible for them.

More information

For more information about EDF and our work, you can visit our website at www.edf-feph.org. You can also send us an email at info@edf-feph.org.

