

Your rights in the European Union

Easy to read version



Who are we?

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 as everyone else.

We also think that people with disabilities should decide about their lives.

Nothing should be decided about us without us!

What is this booklet about?

We wrote this booklet to talk about the rights of people with disabilities in Europe.

This booklet can help you learn:

- What the European Union is and how it works.
- What the European Union does for people with disabilities.
- What stills needs to be done so that people with disabilities have better lives.
- Who you can contact if you feel that your rights are not respected and that you are treated unfairly.

What is the 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
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain



- Sweden

How does the European Union work?

The European Union has 3 main bodies:

- the **European Commission**
The people of the European Commission suggest laws for the European Union.
- the **European Parliament**
The people of the European Parliament are elected by all people in Europe to stand for their rights.
- the **Council of the European Union**
People who make decisions in every country of the European Union come together and make the Council of the European Union.



These 3 bodies are very important for the European Union. They work closely together to make things better in Europe:

- The **European Commission** suggests laws.
- The **European Parliament** and the **Council of the European Union** discuss these laws and decide if they want these laws to happen in Europe.
- If they decide that a law must happen in Europe, all countries of the European Union must work to make this law happen in them.

How does the European Union protect people with disabilities?

The European Union must work to protect the rights of all people. It should protect the rights of people with disabilities too. It must make sure that they are treated fairly and they have the same chances in life as all other people.

- **The European Union and 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. For example, the European Union agreed to make sure that all people with disabilities:

- Have the same chances in life as all other people,
 - Are not treated unfairly or badly just because they have a disability,
 - Can take part in the community like everyone else.
- **The European Union has made an important law that protects the rights of all people.** This law is called the '**European Charter of Fundamental Rights**'. This law protects people with disabilities too.

For example, it says that people with disabilities have the right to:

- Live an independent life.
- Have a job.
- Be part of the community.
- Take part in all things in life like all other people.



It also says that it is against the law to treat people unfairly just because they have a disability.

- **The European Union makes important plans in order to better organise its work on the rights of people with disabilities.** We call these plans '**Disability Strategies**'. These strategies help the European Union to plan their work ahead and make things better for people with disabilities in Europe. Right now, the European Union is preparing a plan for the next 10 years.

- **The European Union asks its countries to use the European money for the good of all people.** The European Union gives money to its countries. The countries should spend this money to make schools, streets and other things that are important for people.

This money is very important for people with disabilities too.

It can be used to make things accessible so that people with disabilities can use them.

For example, this money can be used to make schools, offices, metros, buses and other things accessible.

This way people with disabilities can study, work and take part in life like everyone else.



To get this money from the European Union, countries should agree to use this money for the good of people with disabilities too. They should not use this money for things that leave people with disabilities out. They should use this money to make things accessible for them.

- **The European Union has made laws that allow people and things to move freely among its countries.**

We call this '**Freedom of Movement**'.

Freedom of movement means that all people in the European Union have the right to:

- Move, work, study and live in any country of the European Union. For example, a German person can move to France to study or work.
- Buy and sell things and services in other countries of the European Union more easily. For example, a Spanish person can buy a computer from Italy without extra taxes.
- Transfer money, open a bank account or buy a house in other countries of the European Union. For example, a French person can buy a house in Greece and pay the same price as people who live in Greece.

Freedom of movement is a very important right.

The European Union works to make sure that people with disabilities enjoy freedom of movement too.



In the next pages, you will read how the European Union tries to make freedom of movement happen for people with disabilities and what rights people with disabilities have in the European Union.

Your rights when you travel

Did you ever have problems when travelling in the European Union? The European Union has laws that protect you.

For example:

- **People with disabilities have the right to get help when they are travelling by plane, train, boat or bus.** They have the right to get this help for free. It is better if people with disabilities ask for this help in advance so that it is ready when they need it.

When travelling by plane, boat or train, people with disabilities should say they need help 48 hours before their trip.

When they travel by bus, they should say they need help 36 hours before their trip.

This way, the air, bus, train or boat companies have enough time to prepare and give people with disabilities the help they need.

If people with disabilities ask for help at last moment, companies should still try to help them but there may not be enough time to do so.

- **If your wheelchair gets lost or damaged by the company you travel with, the company should pay for the cost to fix it or get a new one.**
- **Companies cannot refuse people from entering a plane, a boat, a train or a bus just because they have a disability.**
They can only refuse if travelling could be dangerous for people with disabilities.
- **When you travel by bus or boat, you can have a person with you to help you.**
This person can travel with you for free.



You can find more information on the website of the European Union here:
<https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/passenger-rights>

Travelling by plane

You have certain rights when you travel by plane.

If they don't accept you in the plane
or if your flight is cancelled
or late for more than 3 hours,
the company should:



- offer you another flight
or
- give you your money back.

In some cases, the company should give you
250 to 600 euros for the trouble you had at your trip.
That happens only if the delay was the company's fault.
If the delay was due to other problems like bad weather,
the company doesn't pay you any money.

You can find more information
on the website of the European Union here:
<https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/passenger-rights/air>

Travelling by train

You have certain rights when you travel by train.
If your train is late for more than 1 hour, you can:

- Leave the train and ask the money of your ticket back.
- Take another train without any extra charge.
- Stay on the train and wait.
In this case, you have the right
to get back part of the money you paid for the ticket.

But if the delay was not the company's fault, you don't get money back.



You can find more information on the website of the European Union here: <https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/passenger-rights/rail>

Travelling by bus

You have certain rights when you travel by bus. If you plan to take the bus for a long distance and it is cancelled or late for more than 2 hours, the company of the bus should:

- give you back the money you paid for the ticket
 - or
 - help you take another bus with no extra cost.
- If the company doesn't help you with this, you can make a complaint. This way, you may get money for the trouble you had.



You can find more information on the website of the European Union here: <https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/passenger-rights/bus-and-coach>

Travelling by boat

You have certain rights when you travel by boat. If you travel by boat and the boat is cancelled or late for more than 1.5 hour, the company of the boat should:

- give you back the money you paid for the ticket or
- help you take another boat with no extra cost.

If you arrive at your destination late for more than 1 hour, the company should pay you some money for the trouble you had.



You can find more information on the website of the European Union here: <https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/travel/passenger-rights/ship>

The European parking card

The European Union has made a parking card for people with disabilities. With this card, you can have access to parking areas for people with disabilities in all countries in the European Union.

You can get your parking card from the responsible office in your country. You can find more information on the website of the European Union here:

<https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/national-contact-points>



The right to work

The European Union has laws that protect the right of people with disabilities to work.



The laws say that people with disabilities have the right to work like everyone else. They should not be treated badly or unfairly just because they have a disability. Offices and other things should be accessible for people with disabilities.

For example:

- Offices should have ramps so that people in wheelchairs can go in.
- Blind or deaf people should have access to the right technology so that they can work without problems.

Also, the European Union makes it possible to move to another country of it and work there. You will then have the same rights as the people who live in this country.

You can find more information on the website of the European Union here:
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=25&langId=en>

Social security benefits

‘Social security benefits’ means that a country gives money or other things to people in need.

For example, a country may:

- Give people with disabilities some money to help them have a better life.
- Give poorer people some money or a house to live in.
- Give money to people who do not have work or help them find a job.
- Pay for a person who is sick to go to the hospital.
- Give money to older people when they stop working.

These social benefits are really important for all people. Anyone may need support sometime. So it is important that all people have access to social benefits.



Thanks to the European Union, you can get these benefits wherever you live in the European Union.

If you move to another country of the European Union, you have the right to get social benefits from this country like the people who live there.

You can find more information on the website of the European Union here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=849&langId=en>

The right to study

The European Union gives people the right to study at the university of any country in the European Union.

For example, a Belgian student can go study at a university in Romania and pay the same money as students in Romania.

The European Union has programmes that help students go study in other countries in the European Union.

For example, the '**Erasmus programme**'.

With the Erasmus programme, the European Union gives money to students to do part of their studies in another country of the European Union.

This way, students have the chance to get to know another country and its culture,

meet other students, learn and have a good time.



Students with disabilities should have this chance too. They can also ask the European Union for more money if they need to have a support person with them or other kind of help.

You can find more information on the website of the European Union here: https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/opportunities/individuals/physical-mental-conditions_en

The European Youth Card

The European Union has made the **European Youth Card**. Young people up to 30 years old can get this card and use it in many countries in Europe. With this card, young people get discounts in many activities.

For example, they pay less to visit a museum, eat out or get a place to stay.

You can find more information on this website: www.eyca.org



The right to justice

The European Union has laws that protect people who have been treated badly or unfairly.

These people can go to court and report the bad things that happened to them. This way, the court can act to protect them. In all this process, people with disabilities and all people should have the right to:



- Understand all steps and make their point clear.
- Be informed about their rights.
- Get the support they need for free.
- Be safe from the people who treated them badly and from any other risk.

You can find more information on the website of the European Union here:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/criminal-justice/victims-rights_en

People who are taken to court because they did something against the law, also have certain rights.

For example, they have the right to:

- Be informed about their rights.
- Have a person to help them understand if they do not speak the language.
- Have a lawyer to help them make their point clear at the court.

You can find more information on the website of the European Union here:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/criminal-justice/rights-suspects-and-accused_en#designingcriminallaw

The right to health care

As a person living in the European Union, you have the right to health. That means you can go to the hospital, see a doctor and buy the medicine you need when you are sick.



If you travel in another country of the European Union, you have this right too. If you need to pay for the hospital or the doctor in another country, you may get the money back when you go back to your country.

You can find more information about your right to health on the website of the European Union here:
https://ec.europa.eu/health/cross_border_care/overview_en

You can also get a free **European Health Insurance Card.**

This card is really helpful if you travel to another country in Europe and you need to go to the hospital. With this card, you can go to the hospital in the same way and with the same cost as the people who live in this country. You can ask for this card from your country through this website:



<https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=563&langId=en#nationalinfo>

Buying things from other countries

The European Union protects your rights when you buy things from other countries of the European Union. For example, you have the right to:

- Get clear and right information about the thing you want to buy and how much it costs. You should also get this information in accessible ways that work for you. For example, people with intellectual disabilities should get information in easy to read.



- Buy things at the same price as the people of this country. You should not pay more just because you are from another country.
- Return a thing you bought online and get your money back if it has a problem.
- Cancel your order or return a thing up to 14 days later.

You can find more information on the website of the European Union here:
https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/consumers/shopping/pricing-payments/index_en.htm

Accessible things and services

Things and services in Europe should be accessible so that people with disabilities can use them to take part in the community as all other people. EDF has been asking the European Union to make a strong law that will make things and services accessible so that all people can use them.

As a result of this work, in 2019 the European Union

made this law happen.

We call this law the **'European Accessibility Act'**.

In the coming years, all countries in Europe should work to make this law happen in each of them.

If that happens, many things and services in Europe will become accessible for people with disabilities.

For example:

- Cash machines
- Computers
- Televisions
- Ticket machines



You can find more information on our website here:

<http://edf-feph.org/european-accessibility-act-1>

Accessible websites

The European Union made a law that says that public websites in Europe should be accessible.

For example, the website of your hospital or the community you live in should be accessible.



This way, people with disabilities and all people could use them

and find important information.

The law says that public websites in Europe should be accessible by September 2020.

You can find more information on our website here:

<http://edf-feph.org/web>

Accessible phones and internet

Today we use different kinds of technology to communicate.

For example, phones and the internet.

This technology should be accessible

so people with disabilities can use it like other people.

For example, blind people may need a system

that reads them the text messages they get on their phone.



The European Union has laws and rules to make sure that this technology is accessible so people with disabilities can use it as everyone else.

In the coming years, all countries in Europe should work to make technology, like phones and internet, accessible so people with disabilities can use it.

The European Union has also made a number you can call from anywhere in Europe if you need to ask for help.

For example, if you have an accident in the street or if you are in danger. This number is 112 and you can call it for free

from anywhere you are in Europe.

You can find more information
at the website of the European Union here:

<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/eu-rules-112>

Access to television

The European Union works to make sure that
programmes we watch on television or on the internet
are accessible for people with disabilities.

For example, there should be subtitles and sign language
for deaf people and people who cannot hear well.



The European Union has made important laws to make these things
more accessible for people with disabilities.

All countries in the European Union should respect these laws
and work to make them happen.

If the programmes on television or on the internet are accessible,
people with disabilities can watch the programmes they want
like all other people.

Also, these laws say it is forbidden to make fun or talk badly
about people with disabilities on television programmes.

You can find more information
at the website of the European Union here:

Access to books

Books should be accessible so people with disabilities can read them too. Sadly, many books are not accessible and people with disabilities cannot read them like everyone else.

The European Union works to make more books accessible for people with disabilities.

In 2018, the European Union signed the **‘Marrakesh Treaty’**.

This is a text that talks about what countries should do to make access to books easier for blind people and other people with disabilities who cannot read.

By signing this text, the European Union agreed to work to make access to books easier for these people.

You can find more information about the Marrakesh Treaty here:

<http://www.euroblind.org/campaigns-and-activities/current-campaigns/marrakesh-treaty>



The right to vote

The right to vote is very important.
All people in Europe
should have the right to vote and choose
who will make decisions and laws in Europe.

It is also important to stand for elections.
That means that people can vote
and choose you to make decisions in Europe.

All people with disabilities
should have the right to vote too.
Their voice counts like everyone else's.

If you live in another country of the European Union,
you have the right to vote or stand for elections in this country
like all other people of this country.
You should not be left out from elections
just because you come from another country.

You can find more information
on the website of the European Union here:
https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/eu-citizenship/electoral-rights_en



The European Disability Card

The European Union made
the '**European Disability Card**'.
This card could make things easier
for people with disabilities
when they visit or live in another country
of the European Union.
The card gives people with disabilities



some advantages in culture, sports and other activities. For example, people with disabilities can use this card to pay less when they buy tickets for museums or football matches.

Or people with intellectual disabilities can use this card and get information that is easy to read and understand.

For the moment, only 8 countries in the European Union use this card:

- Belgium
- Cyprus
- Estonia
- Finland
- Italy
- Malta
- Romania
- Slovenia

That means that the card can be used by people with disabilities only if they are travelling among these countries.

For example,

a person with disability from Belgium who travels to Italy can use this card.

You can find more information on the website of the European Union here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1139>

Problems people with disabilities still face in Europe

The rights we talked about in the previous pages are very important. The European Union has done much work to make things better for people with disabilities.

But there are still many problems that make it hard for people with disabilities to enjoy their rights as all other people.

For example:

- **It is still hard for people with disabilities to travel to another country in the European Union to study or work.**

This is because many things are still not accessible so people with disabilities cannot use them. For examples, many trains and buses may not be accessible, so people with disabilities cannot use them to move around.



- **If you move to another country of the European Union, it may be hard to get the support you need to have a good life in this country.**

This country may take a long time to recognise that you have a disability and accept to give you the help you need.



- **Some people with disabilities have lost their legal capacity.**

That means that they cannot take decisions for their lives.

Someone else is taking decisions for them.

They cannot vote in the elections either.

That is really unfair.

All people should have the right to decide for their lives.

- **Too many people with disabilities in Europe**

do not have jobs.

Without a job,
it is hard to be independent
and be part of the community.
Things are even harder
for women with disabilities.
But even if people with disabilities
have a job,
they are often paid less
than people without disabilities.
This is unfair.



- **It is still hard for people with disabilities to go to the police or to court if they are treated badly or unfairly.**

That is because too many things
are still not accessible for them
and they may not get the support
they need.

For example,
people with intellectual disabilities
may not get information
in easy to read.

This way, they may not be able
to understand the steps they have to take
to report something bad that happened to them.



- **The European Union does not always ask for the views of people with disabilities and their organisations, when they make laws and decisions.**

Laws and decisions in Europe
concern people with disabilities too,
so their voices should be heard.

Things that concern the lives of people with disabilities
should be decided together with people with disabilities.
Nothing should be decided about us without us!



What else should the European Union do to protect people with disabilities?

The European Union should:

- Listen to people with disabilities and their organisations.
Nothing should be decided about us without us!
- Make sure that people with disabilities are treated fairly and have the same chances in life as everyone else.
- Work to make all things and services in Europe accessible so that people with disabilities can use them like everyone else.
- Make sure that all people with disabilities enjoy their rights and have access to health care, jobs, schools and other things.
- Make sure that people with disabilities have social security benefits wherever in Europe they decide to live.
- Make sure that transport like planes, boats, trains and buses are accessible so that people with disabilities can travel anywhere they want without problems.



- Make sure that the European money is spent on things that are accessible for people with disabilities too.

What to do if your rights are not respected

If you feel that your rights are not respected or that you are treated unfairly, it is important to raise your voice!

There are many organisations you can send your complaint to. They can help you deal with the problem you face.



For example:

- You can send your complaint to the people of the European Union by filling this form online here: https://ec.europa.eu/assets/sg/report-a-breach/complaints_en/
Or you can send your complaint by post in this address:

European Commission
Secretary-General
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium

You can also contact the office of the European Union in your country.

You can find more information here:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/about-european-commission/contact/local-offices-eu-member-countries_en

- You can contact **'Equinet'**.
'Equinet' is an organisation that fights for the right of all people to be treated fairly.
'Equinet' has members in all European countries.
You can find more information on their website here:
<https://equineteurope.org/equinet-at-a-glance/#treated-unfairly>
- If you have problems while travelling by plane, boat, train or bus, there are offices in all countries in Europe that can help you with your complaint.
You can find more information here:
https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/passengers/neb_en
- If you find that a public website in your country, like the website of your hospital or the community you live in, is not accessible, you can report it through the website of the European Union here:
<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/member-states-bodies-charge-monitoring-reporting-and-enforcement-web-accessibility-directive>
- If you buy something online and you have a problem with the company that sold it to you, you can ask for help from the European Union through this website:
<https://ec.europa.eu/consumers/odr/main/?event=main.home2.show>
- If you feel you are treated badly or unfairly due to your disability, you can talk to the **'UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'**.
This person is working to protect the rights of all people with disabilities

and may be able to help you with your problem.

You can find more information here:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disability/SRDisabilities/Pages/SRDisabilitiesIndex.aspx>

- You can always contact us at **EDF**.

We can advise you on your rights and help you to find who to contact when you have a complaint.

You can send us an email at: info@edf-feph.org.

You can also contact our members.

We have members in almost all European countries.

You can find a list of our members here:

<http://edf-feph.org/about-us/members/full-member>

- If you want to know more about the rights you have in the European Union

you can check this website here:

https://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/index_en.htm?cookies=disabled