# EU CRPD Framework: activities during the COVID-19 pandemic

## European Parliament

### Plenary

In **April**, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution on the EU coordinated action to combat the COVID-19 pandemic](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0054_EN.html). In this resolution, the Parliament highlights that the measures adopted should respect the rights of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD and particular attention should be given to equal access to social and healthcare services. It should be ensured that community-based care and support services are funded and well equipped and staffed. The Parliament stressed that public information concerning the COVID-19 pandemic should be accessible to the widest range of persons with disabilities, and that persons with disabilities should be included in all income protection measures. Measures should be based on consultations and involvement of persons with disabilities, through their representative family members or organisations.

In **June**, the EP adopted a [resolution on the European Disability Strategy post 2020](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0156_EN.html) based on an EMPL motion for resolutions. In this resolution, the Parliament calls on the Commission to prepare an evaluation of the challenges and rights violations experienced by persons with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic, the measures adopted by Member States in response to the pandemic, and the gaps and shortcomings in legislation. It further calls on the Commission to propose relevant and specific recovery and mitigation measures in the Post-2020 Disability Strategy to overcome such shortcomings and to prevent them in the future. It recalls that such measures must be developed on the basis of consultations with persons with disabilities and the family members or organisations representing them, as well as the European Parliament’s CRPD network.

### Committees

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, PETI prioritized all petitions related to it. Among them, there was a [petition](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/PETI/DV/2020/05-19/5_sir470-2020-EN.pdf) submitted on behalf of Inclusion Europe on the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families during the COVID-19 crisis. Following discussing the petition in committee, a motion for resolution was [adopted](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/meeting-of-the-committee-on-petitions-16/product-details/20200608CAN55624) (plenary vote on 8 **July**, see adopted text [here](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2020-0183_EN.html)).  The resolution draws attention to the situation in some Member States where persons with intellectual disabilities have been denied medical treatment, have been locked down in institutions, were excluded from daycentres and schools with the no support for their families, faced social isolation and discriminatory triage guidelines have been introduced. It showed that the concept of inclusive education is not yet a reality, and that in many Member States learners with intellectual disabilities have not been able to continue their learning during the lockdown and families lacked support, in particular with regard to accessible digital and innovative technologies and distance-learning applications.

The Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group (DRFMG) of the LIBE Committee was set-up during the 8th legislature and it was attributed a broader mandate at the beginning of the current term. With the developments in Member States linked to the coronavirus outbreak, the Monitoring Group focused its attention on the impact of emergency measures from a fundamental rights’ perspective. To this purpose, several meetings via remote means were organised weekly since April 2020. Members could exchange views with the Commissioner for Justice, representatives of the Commission and EEAS, the Director of FRA, the Director General for Human Rights and Rule of Law at the Council of Europe and representatives of different Council of Europe bodies, the Croatian Presidency of the Council, civil society, national authorities and other relevant stakeholders. The Monitoring Group discussed the impact of COVID-19 related measures on vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities and the discriminatory treatment those groups might have experienced in accessing health care and other services during the pandemic ([DRFMG report](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/LIBE/DV/2020/07-13/1204406EN.pdf)).

### MEPs

48 Members across all political groups in the European Parliament addressed an [open letter](http://edf-feph.org/request-take-immediate-actions-mobilise-crii-eu-funds-guarantee-continuity-care-and-support-services) to the President of the European Council and the European Commission highlighting the “threat to the human rights of persons with disabilities and other persons with support needs due to COVID-19, in particular due to difficulties in accessing care and support services”. They “call on the European Commission to take new actions to mobilise essential investments and resources to guarantee the continuity of care and support services, in line with the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Pillar of Social Rights”. In the letter, they also highlight that “The Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative (CRII and CRII +) must therefore include specific guidance to help Member States ensure such resources, including the European Social Fund, which are used to support persons with disabilities and other persons with support needs.” Furthermore, the signatories of the letter “recommend targeted efforts to ensure that both front-line professionals in care and support and the users they support have access to personal protective equipment thus enabling them to work safely.”

## EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

### COVID-19 Bulletins

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, FRA has initiated new regular reporting about the fundamental rights impact of the public measures taken to fight the virus. FRA’s primary contribution is a series of Bulletins on COVID-19 and fundamental rights. The Bulletin, on a monthly basis, examines the fundamental rights-related issues across the EU, drawing on data from across the 27 EU Member States. It is intended as a resource for policy makers and others at national and EU-levels. Since April 2020, FRA has published four bulletins specifically looking at the impact of COVID 19 pandemic on fundamental rights. A fifth bulletin is expected to be published on 29 September 2020.

Published on 8 **April** 2020, [Bulletin #1](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-april-1)  highlights the implications of the initial measures introduced by the Member States in different areas of life, such as restrictions on freedom of movement, disruptions to the judicial systems, disinformation and fake news relating to the virus, implications of responses on data protection and privacy. It also describes the impact of these measures on particular groups in society, including asylum seekers and migrants, women and children at risk of domestic violence, persons with disabilities, alongside examples of increased racist and xenophobic incidents in several Member States. It covers the period 1 February - 20 March 2020.

Published on 26 **May** 2020, [Bulletin #2](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-may-1) has a focus on technological solutions (in particular, contact tracing apps) developed to protect public health and to overcome the pandemic. It refers to findings from FRA’s forthcoming [Fundamental Rights Survey](https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2015/fundamental-rights-survey) with regards to people’s awareness of privacy settings on their mobile phones (based on a representative sample of 35,000 respondents from across the EU). The Bulletin also examines other areas where restrictions continue to apply: states of emergency, daily life, and impact on vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities. It covers the period 21 March - 30 April 2020.

Published on 30 **June** 2020, [Bulletin #3](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-june-1) has a focus on older people, looking in particular at issues such as access to treatment and testing, the situation in institutional settings, access to services and the impact of isolation. As with previous Bulletins, it also examines other areas (where restrictions began to be lifted) such as states of emergency, daily life and again the impact to vulnerable groups including persons with disabilities. It covers the period 1-30 May 2020.

Published on 29 **July** 2020, [Bulletin #4](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/covid19-rights-impact-july-1) outlines some of the measures EU Member States put in place to protect public health during – and following the first peak of – the Coronavirus pandemic, with a focus on their impact on daily life and the progressive easing of measures. It also highlights how vulnerable groups were uniquely affected by some of the measures introduced, including persons with disabilities and those living in institutional settings. It covers the period 1-30 June 2020.

FRA will continue to collect evidence and produce periodic reports to support policymakers in devising rights-compliant responses to the crisis, fully acknowledging that the main goal of all Member States is to ensure the life and health of people living in the EU.

### Other publications and events

Besides its targeted regular reports, FRA is mainstreaming, where appropriate, the impact of COVID-19 on fundamental rights across its ongoing and planned work. For example, FRA has examined the COVID-19 related fundamental rights challenges in the area of asylum, migration and borders. The latest [FRA’s migration quarterly bulletin](https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2020/covid-19-puts-asylum-seekers-higher-risk-conditions-camps-deteriorate-and-asylum) (27 **May** 2020) identifies the key fundamental rights concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic, as a result of the restrictive measures taken to protect the EU borders to address public order, public health or national security challenges. These include overcrowded reception centres with limited possibility to practice physical distancing or follow hygienic measures, suspended asylum procedures in some countries, etc. Furthermore, together with the Council of Europe Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, FRA published a note summarising [key human and fundamental rights safeguards at borders](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/fundamental-rights-refugees-asylum-applicants-and-migrants-european-borders), which includes a section on special measures in case of a pandemic.

In **June** 2020, FRA published an [updated compilation of search and rescue vessels in the Mediterranean Sea](https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2020/2020-update-ngos-sar-activities), held in ports due to COVID-19 restrictions or for other reasons. Finally, FRA resumed its visits to the Eastern Aegean islands in Greece in June 2020, to observe the fundamental rights situation in the COVID-19 context.

FRA has marked the launch of its [Fundamental Rights Survey](https://fra.europa.eu/en/project/2015/fundamental-rights-survey) through interactive online sessions (24-25 **June** 2020). While the discussions drew on the survey results based on people’s views prior to the Coronavirus outbreak, the impact of COVID-19 on people’s human rights, as evidenced by the Agency’s COVID-19 bulletins, was addressed.

The Agency’s Management Board has decided to devote the focus chapter of the FRA Fundamental Rights Report for the year 2020 to the impact of COVID-19 on fundamental rights (publication in June 2021).

### Communications

FRA rolled-out a series of ‘stories of hope’ on social media showing how civil society helps protect and promote fundamental rights in these difficult times – especially professional organisations bringing together health practitioners, social workers etc. An upcoming FRA consultation of its civil society network, the Fundamental Rights Platform, will gather inputs from civil society on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic and measures taken had on their work.

FRA has issued statements on relevant fundamental rights issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic; for example, FRA and EIGE issued a [joint statement](https://eige.europa.eu/news/eu-rights-and-equality-agency-heads-lets-step-our-efforts-end-domestic-violence) calling on the EU and Member States to bolster measures to protect victims, particularly in this time of crisis (29 **April** 2020).

FRA and the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) highlighted that persistent Roma inequality increases COVID-19 risk in [a joint statement](https://fra.europa.eu/en/news/2020/persistent-roma-inequality-increases-covid-19-risk-human-rights-heads-say) (7 **April** 2020).

In a [joint statement (22 **June** 2020),](https://edps.europa.eu/press-publications/press-news/press-releases/2020/joint-fra-edps-statement-eu-rights-and-data_en) FRA and EDPS underlined that respect for fundamental rights, including privacy and data protection, has to be at the centre of contact tracing apps, or any other technology, while renewing their cooperation agreement.

FRA has set up a [dedicated website page](https://fra.europa.eu/en/themes/covid-19) that brings together all the released outputs related to the Covid-19 pandemic, including tweets and the Director’s vlogs on the topic.

## European Disability Forum

### Letters

Publication of an [open letter to leaders at the EU and in EU countries](http://edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/open-letter-leaders-eu-and-eu-countries-covid-19-disability-inclusive-response) calling for a disability inclusive response to COVID-19.

A wide range of letters were also sent to EU leaders, including:

* + In **March**, to the European Commission’s [Commissioner for Equality](http://edf-feph.org/letter-commissioner-dalli-covid-19-disability-inclusive-response#overlay-context=) (13 March);
  + In **April**, to the EU’s [Commissioner for Health](http://www.edf-feph.org/letter-eu-commissioner-health-stella-kyriakides-covid-19-and-persons-disabilities) (6 April), to its [Commissioners for Crisis Management and for International Partnerships](http://www.edf-feph.org/letter-commissioner-urpilainen-and-lenarcic-covid-19-disability-inclusive-response) (7 April) and to its [Commissioner for Budget and Administration](http://edf-feph.org/letter-commissioner-hahn-european-equality-networks-covid-19-and-eu-funding-request-flexibility#overlay-context=) (7 April); to the [Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](http://edf-feph.org/letter-director-european-union-agency-fundamental-rights) (23 April) and a [subsequent reply](http://edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/fra-response-edf-letter-fundamental-rights-people-disabilities-during-covid-19-and) to his answer (30 April); another reply, this time to the EU [Commissioner for Equality](http://edf-feph.org/reply-eu-commissioner-helena-dalli-our-letter-covid#overlay-context=reply-eu-commissioner-helena-dalli) (23 April); and to the EU [Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life](http://www.edf-feph.org/letter-eu-commission-vice-president-schinas-covid-19-and-refugees-and-asylum-seekers-disabilities) (24 April);
  + In **May**, to the [Director of the Joint Research Centre](http://edf-feph.org/letter-director-joint-research-centre-joint-research-centres-work-impact-covid-19-persons) (29 May); the [Director General of European Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control](http://edf-feph.org/letter-european-centre-diseases-prevention-and-control-right-health-persons-disabilities-ecdcs-work) (29 May); the [President of 8 EU Bodies: COVID 19 economic recovery planning – planning for sustainable inclusive societies](http://www.edf-feph.org/letter-president-8-eu-bodies-covid-19-economic-recovery-planning-planning-sustainable-inclusive);
  + In **June**, a reply to the [EU Commissioner for Health](http://edf-feph.org/reply-commissioners-kyriakides-and-dalli-covid-19-and-persons-disabilities)’s letter (30 June)

The full list is available [here](http://edf-feph.org/covid19letters).

### Publications and events

EDF held a series of webinars with organisations of people with disabilities and other key stakeholders (FRA, European Parliament, NHRIs, Equality bodies, European Commission).

* [Online meeting of the Disability Intergroup “Impact of COVID 19 outbreak to persons with disabilities”](http://www.edf-feph.org/online-meeting-disability-intergroup-impact-covid-19-outbreak-persons-disabilities) - April 2020
* [Lockdown measures during COVID 19 - how it affects persons with disabilities - April 2020](http://www.edf-feph.org/webinar-lockdown-measures-during-covid-19-how-it-affects-persons-disabilities)
* COVID-19 pandemic: disability issues in the EU
* [Webinar 'Left behind Women with disabilities during COVID 19'](http://edf-feph.org/webinar-left-behind-women-disabilities-during-covid-19)
* [Webinar on EU Structural Investment Funds and COVID 19](http://www.edf-feph.org/webinar-eu-structural-investment-funds-and-covid-19#overlay-context=)
* [Webinar on COVID 19 recovery and the EU Budget: Influencing the process](http://www.edf-feph.org/webinar-covid-19-recovery-and-eu-budget-influencing-process)
* [HLPF side-event: Inclusion Counts - disability data in crisis response](http://www.edf-feph.org/hlpf-side-event-inclusion-counts-disability-data-crisis-response)

All recordings are available [here](http://edf-feph.org/edf-webinars).

EDF also prepared a human rights report on COVID-19 to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on persons with disabilities (to be published in December 2020). Actions and responses of EDF members are already available on the EDF [website](http://www.edf-feph.org/covid19members).

### Communications

EDF and EDF members published a variety of [statements](http://edf-feph.org/covid19letters) on various issues specifically affecting persons with disabilities during COVID-19 (discrimination in triage, deaths in residential institutions, etc.). EDF statements include:

* [COVID 19 - medical guidelines should not discriminate against persons with disabilities](http://edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/open-letter-covid-19-medical-guidelines-should-not-discriminate-against-persons) and the [response of the World Health Organisation](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/blog/idas-letter-world-health-organisation-response-covid19-pandemic).
* [Persons with disabilities stripped of support and protective equipment during COVID 19 crisis](http://www.edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/persons-disabilities-stripped-community-based-support-and-protective-equipment-during)
* [Residential institutions are becoming hotbeds of infection and abuse – governments need to act now](http://edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/residential-institutions-are-becoming-hotbeds-infection-and-abuse-governments-need-act)
* [EU funding for economic recovery must ensure social inclusion](http://www.edf-feph.org/letter-president-8-eu-bodies-covid-19-economic-recovery-planning-planning-sustainable-inclusive)
* [Romania: disability organisations condemn withholding of medical treatment to persons in residential institutions](http://edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/romania-disability-organisations-condemn-withholding-medical-treatment-persons)

It also created a [COVID-19 webpage](http://edf-feph.org/covid19), including online accessible resources on COVID-19 from EDF membership and others.

## European Ombudsman

On 3 **June** 2020, the European Ombudsman launched a [strategic initiative (SI/2/2020/MMO)](https://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/en/case/en/56950) on “how the European Commission accommodates the special needs of staff members with disabilities in the context of the COVID-19 emergency”. The Ombudsman wrote to the Commission, setting out a series of questions on issues such as the measures in place for remote working and health insurance, as well on lessons that could be learned for the Commission's wider interaction with members of the public with disabilities.