

## European disability movement during the Coronavirus emergency

On Wednesday 15 April 2020, Inclusion Europe held an online meeting with **Catherine Naughton, president of the [European Disability Forum](#)** (EDF) discusses about the impact of the Coronavirus emergency on people with disabilities in Europe. Other topics of the conversation: What are the issues that European Disability Forum is addressing? What resources are there to deal with the situation?

### **Impact in the lives of persons with disabilities and their families**

Catherine talked about how Coronavirus crisis is reflecting on the lives of persons with disabilities and their families in Europe. She noted that the coronavirus crisis is having immediate impact on the lives of persons with disabilities, and that families also feel the burden of this crisis. As schools and habilitation services ceased, families are giving all the support.

Persons with disabilities face the same risk as the rest of the population, compounded by many other issues: disruption of services and support, in some cases, pre-existing health conditions which leave them more at risk of developing serious illness or dying, being excluded from health information and mainstream health provision, living in an inaccessible world where barriers to good and services are everywhere, being disproportionately more likely to live in institutional settings.

Catherine also talked about the situation of persons with disabilities in residential institutions. The news has been more focused on institutions for elderly people, but the situation in institutions for persons with disabilities is not receiving the same attention. **“The coronavirus crisis is showing the cracks in the system that we knew already existed, and it is our job to make sure we advocate to fix them now.”**

Many member organizations of EDF have been reporting about the effects of measures taken by the officials and about the very negative language in the media towards the older population and people with disabilities. There are many examples of parents are now caring for their children with disabilities alone, 24/7, without any assistance, without rest, with more demand for the intensive care.

**“With support services closed, families must provide care and support, leaving them unable to work and facing financial consequences.”**

### **Making public health communication accessible**

Every person has the right to immediate and correct information on the epidemic and the measures they and their families should take. This includes:

- ensuring all information is in plain language and easy to read
- providing alternative and accessible methods of accessing general information, not only relying on websites (automatic phone lines, videos, leaflets, etc)
- appropriate sign language interpretation and captioning
- information provided in plain language and in easy to read format

## EDF's work at the EU level

In relation to EDF's work, Catherine gave an overview of what they are doing and advocating at the European level in order to mitigate the effects of the crisis to persons with disabilities. National organizations have an important role in EDF's work, as they provide information of what is happening in the countries, and the lives of persons with disabilities and their families are being affected.

EDF is writing [recommendations](#), communicating with EU commissioners and all this material is available in their website. They are part of IDA's task force, they are also gathering examples of good practices and sharing them broadly. In the light of the current pandemic and its disproportionate impact on persons with disabilities, the European Disability Forum (EDF) has developed the recommendations for policy makers, through discussion with our members., based on our members' current work, and priorities. These recommendations aim to address the range of risks persons with disabilities face.

## Post-crisis period

Catherine emphasized that EDF is also working on the advocacy work in the re-opening process. **"Persons with disabilities must be included in the recovering plans that will come. Economic relief should have people in its focus not business"**.

Actions need to be taken to avoid the long-term damage to societies: Considerable EU funds need to go to social inclusion, including persons with disabilities.

Open letter from European Disability Forum to the presidents of European bodies about COVID 19 economic recovery planning can be read here: <http://www.edf-feph.org/letter-president-8-eu-bodies-covid-19-economic-recovery-planning-planning-sustainable-inclusive>

## EDF's material about the COVID-19

List of links to resources on COVID-19 including our statements and open letters can be found here: <http://www.edf-feph.org/covid19>

## Inclusion Europe's material about the COVID-19

Inclusion Europe created a webpage gathering the [materials relevant to the Coronavirus emergency](#). The webpage is updated daily with new content and can be accessed [here](#).

Inclusion Europe organises online exchange about the Coronavirus emergency.

Follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#) or [subscribe to our newsletters to know about them first](#).

[5 steps to prevent harm to people with intellectual disabilities and their families in Coronavirus emergency](#)