**Europe for Us**

Number 2 / 2020

**Impact of the Coronavirus on the lives of   
people with intellectual disabilities and their families**

**Topics**

[Introduction 3](#_Toc43280781)

[Protect people with disabilities in the Coronavirus emergency 4](#_Toc43280782)

[Reflection on the Coronavirus emergency 7](#_Toc43280783)

[Helena Dalli’s speech on the impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities 9](#_Toc43280784)

[Briefing: impact of the Coronavirus shutdown of schools 11](#_Toc43280785)

[Petition to defend the rights of people with intellectual disabilities in times of COVID-19 emergency 13](#_Toc43280786)

[Self-advocacy activities during the Coronavirus emergency 15](#_Toc43280787)

[Letter from our president: 13 weeks of heart-breaking separation 18](#_Toc43280788)

[General assembly – 29 June 2020 21](#_Toc43280789)

[Explanations 23](#_Toc43280790)

# Introduction

The main topic of this issue of Europe for Us   
is news and impact of the Coronavirus   
on the lives of people with intellectual   
disabilities and their families.

In this issue of Europe for Us, we also share   
guidelines on how to protect people   
with disabilities in the Coronavirus emergency,   
and we talk about the self-advocacy   
activities during the Coronavirus emergency.

**We hope you like this issue of Europe for Us!**

# Protect people with disabilities in the Coronavirus emergency

**Inform clearly**

Inform clearly about what people should do

to protect themselves and others.

Deliver the information to people

with **intellectual disabilities** and their families.

Easy to understand information is important.

Especially when there are many news and information.

Tell people clearly what they need to do to

protect themselves and others.

Provide a phone number and email address

where people can get more information.

Here are:

* Examples of [easy-to-read](https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read-information-about-coronavirus/) about the Coronavirus
* More information on [easy-to-read is and how to produce it](https://easy-to-read.eu/).

Easy to understand is not only about written text.

Video can also be produced in that way. We have [examples](https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read-information-about-coronavirus/).

**Deliver the information**

[Reach out](https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/about-us/#members) to organisations of people with intellectual disabilities

and ask them for help to get the information out.

We can also help spread the message:

<comms@inclusion-europe.org>

[Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/inclusioneurope/)

[Twitter](https://twitter.com/InclusionEurope)

[LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/931737/admin/)

Ensure the accessibility of apps, websites and phone-lines

by providing support during the emergency.

**Help to deal with the emergency**

Help to deal with the emergency,

limited services and crisis plans.

Help to overcome social distancing measures.

Provide protective equipment to people with

disabilities and to those who support them:

Does your distribution reach families of

children and adults with disabilities?

Many day-care centres are closed.

This means families taking over and being

exposed to many risks:

loss of income, high levels of stress.

Look for ways to [support them](https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/coronavirus-pandemic/#1584977115025-1ebd5d7f-b126).

Apply emergency social security measures to

families caring for people with disabilities, including adults.

Support people with disabilities and

families in [crisis planning and arrangements](https://www.enable.org.uk/get-support-information/families-carers/future-planning/emergency-planning/).

If you take part in voluntary activities such as

grocery shopping for others, please consider

people with disabilities and their families.

Learn from countries and organisations

are [doing for people with disabilities](http://www.edf-feph.org/newsroom/news/covid-19-activities-our-members).

It’s one thing juggling work, home-schooling

and isolation for you or me.

It’s something else for parents who care for

children with severe disabilities.

When it comes to education, the priority seems to

be on the administration of exams, and we are yet to hear

about schools for children with disabilities during this crisis.

Even if things go back to normal, it still means people

with disabilities being segregated from their

communities and from schools.

Families will still have to provide most

care and support, and to fight for

progress and recognition.

We have seen the impact of the 2009 financial crisis:

closed services, disability and social benefits lowered,

unemployment and the tool on peoples’ wellbeing and lives.

Inclusion Europe invites the **governments** and

The **European Union** to ensure financial support

first for people with disabilities and

their families.

# Reflection on the Coronavirus emergency

**Inclusion Europe’s** director Milan Šveřepa

wrote a reflection about the Coronavirus emergency.

This is a summary of what Milan wrote:

Coronavirus changed many things.

But it highlights the ongoing segregation and

For many people with intellectual disabilities

the situation is even more challenging.

Especially for those who live

**segregated** in **institutions** and their families.

Large groups of people including staff are

being completely left alone and

locked-down in institutions for weeks, months even.

It’s one thing juggling work, home-schooling

and isolation for you or me.

It’s something else for parents who care for

children with severe disabilities.

When it comes to education, the priority seems to

be on the administration of exams, and

we are yet to hear

about schools for children with disabilities during this crisis.

Even if things go back to normal, it still means people

with disabilities being segregated from their

communities and from schools.

Families will still have to provide most

care and support, and to fight for

progress and recognition.

We have seen the impact of the 2009 financial crisis:

closed services, disability and social benefits lowered,

unemployment and the tool on peoples’ wellbeing and lives.

Inclusion Europe invites the **governments** and the **European Union** to ensure financial support

first for people with disabilities and

their families.

# Helena Dalli’s speech on the impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities

Helena Dalli gave a speech on the impact

of COVID-19 on people with disabilities.

Helena Dalli is the **European Commissioner** for Equality.

Helena Dalli gave the speech to the Disability Intergroup

in the **European Parliament**.

Helena Dalli said that people with disabilities

and old people who live in **institutions** are having

hard time because of COVID-19.

Dalli said that the **European Union**

and countries in Europe need to respect

the rights protected by the **United Nations Convention on**

**the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

The safety and well beings of all the citizens

is the most important thing for the **European Commission**.

The European Commission has already put in

place many different solutions in the domain of health to

help citizens and **Member States** during COVID-19.

The European Commission created guidance on

how to use European materials to get financial support.

The European Commission is facilitating the

possibility to get protective equipment in the European Union.

The European Commission created the “Solidarity for

Health Initiative”.

This plan helps the healthcare systems of the Member States.

The European Commission made it easier to use

the European Union funds during this crisis.

Helena Dalli talked about some aspects of the Covid-19 crisis:

* Confinement measures are very difficult for

persons with disabilities and their families.

* Online schooling is difficult or not **accessible**

for all children and students.

* Parents have to take care of their children

because there is no support.

* Measures should be taken to stop **discrimination** against

people with disabilities.

* Remote education must be accessible.
* Information about Covid-19 also needs to be accessible.
* People with disabilities who are living in the community

must not be institutionalised because of the Covid-19 crisis.

* People with disabilities in institutions are being isolated.

Helena Dalli said no-one should be left behind,

without support or essential services.

# Briefing: impact of the Coronavirus shutdown of schools

**Inclusion Europe** is publishing a briefing on

the lack of education for children with **intellectual disabilities**

in the Coronavirus emergency.

Coronavirus changes many things.

But it highlights the ongoing **segregation** and

**discrimination** of people with intellectual disabilities.

In the Coronavirus emergency,

schools are closed.

The shutdown of schools is a major problem for

students with intellectual disabilities,

their families and their teachers.

Most students with intellectual disabilities are not able to

continue their learning during the Coronavirus lockdown.

Schools and **governments** must ensure that

discrimination and exclusion of students with intellectual

disabilities do not become normal.

Schools and **governments** need to ensure that

students with intellectual disabilities are not disadvantaged

from other students.

This briefing reminds governments to provide education to

students with disabilities

during the Coronavirus emergency.

Here is what the brief contains:

Situation analysis that

show how students with intellectual disabilities are being

further excluded from education by the Coronavirus measures.

Potential solutions and suggestions that

could improve the lives of students

with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Issues and error to watch out for

and mistakes to avoid when schools start again.

Resources on **inclusive education**

in times of Coronavirus.

A survey for completion by

parents, teachers and children with intellectual disabilities.

# Petition to defend the rights of people with intellectual disabilities in times of COVID-19 emergency

**Inclusion Europe** submitted a petition to protect

the rights of people with **intellectual disabilities**

and their families

during and after the Coronavirus emergency.

The Coronavirus emergency puts

the rights of people with disabilities

at risk.

Several national laws and practices did not respect

European legislation and the **UN CRPD**.

Some rules denied people with disabilities healthcare.

People with intellectual disabilities could no longer

access the support and care they need.

Most of children with intellectual disabilities

are not able to continue their learning

because schools cannot communicate with them.

Families are left on their own.

People in care homes or **institutions**

were being locked down.

They could not see their families and friends.

A lot of people with disabilities have been infected and died

from the virus in institutions.

The petition calls for:

* Post-Corona financial measures that reach out to

people with intellectual disabilities.

* Post-Corona health measures that protect

people with intellectual disabilities.

On 19 May 2020,

the Committee on Petitions of the **European Parliament**

heard the petition.

The Committee on Petitions is a group of people.

This group of people examines petitions

submitted by citizens of the **European Union**.

The petition was well received by all **MEP**s.

7 out of 8 MEPs declared their support

to keep the petition open.

Ádám Kósa is a MEP.

He agrees with the petition.

He said that:

“it is important that people with intellectual disabilities

are treated with respect”.

Monica Semedo is also a MEP.

She said that:

“safety and access to healthcare should be

guaranteed to everyone”.

# Self-advocacy activities during the Coronavirus emergency

On Friday 22 May 2020,

**Inclusion Europe** held an online meeting about

**self-advocacy** activities during the Coronavirus emergency.

László Bercse was one of the speakers.

He is **Chair** of the **European Platform of Self-Advocates** and

Vice-President of Inclusion Europe.

Here is his statement. (here Is a summary of what he said

**How are self-advocacy and self-advocate**

**organisations advocating in these times?**

The COVID-19 changed the way we work and live.

We had to adapt ourselves to this new reality.

Most of our organisations and support networks are closed

and not available as before.

Our families are also dealing with changes in the way they live.

In some cases, we are now all staying together 24 hours.

This can be stressful for us and for our families.

Some of us are “locked down” inside the institutions or living

facilities, without any visits.

This is tough for us and for our families.

We are not able to see our friends or family.

We cannot go to work as usual.

Attending online meetings can be a challenge

if our supporters are not with us.

This is especially true for European network,

because of the translations.

We are struggling with getting the care and support

that we used to have and need.

**How did we respond to this?**

The most important thing for us is to be connected.

We need to feel that we are not alone.

In some cases, our organisations were able to

distribute smartphones.

So, we can attend the online meetings and chat with our friends, family, and supporters.

We are organizing online meetings or chats.

This is helping us to deal with our feelings of anxiety and fear.

Some of us are also doing online teaching for self-advocates.

But for some of us it’s more difficult to get this type of support.

We may not know how to do it or we may not have computers, mobile phones or internet access.

This is creating differences among us.

**What are the main problems we see?**

Self-advocates and their organisations may have big problems in

connecting with each other.

It’s important to be able to share our experiences and how are we dealing with the situation.

We see big problems on the way persons with intellectual disabilities are accessing education now.

Distance learning and online classes are not accessible to all of us.

We do not see any measures in place to make sure

we are not left behind.

We are worried about the effect of the COVID-19 on employment of persons with intellectual disabilities.

We know that we are the first ones to be pushed outside the labor

market when a financial and social crisis happens.

Violence against women and girls with disabilities and the disrespect for their rights is also worrying us.

People have now less access to complaints mechanisms and

are less visible.

This may cause more violence inside the homes and the institutions.

**What do we want?**

We want to be included in the discussions

about the way the services will be provided in the future.

Nothing will be done in the same way.

We need to make sure that our rights are respected and

that we are not left behind.

Self-advocates have a voice. We want to be heard.

Letter from our president: 13 weeks of heart-breaking separation

Jyrki Pinomaais the President of **Inclusion Europe**.

He is from Finland.

He wrote a letter about his experience in Finland

in times of COVID-19 emergency.

This is a summary of what Jyrki wrote:

During Coronavirus emergency,

I could not see my sons

who have an **intellectual disability**

for several weeks.

Their names are Markus and Robin.

I saw Markus and Robin for the last time

when they came at home

for their regular one-night visit.

It was in March.

After their visit

my wife and I went

on holiday to Spain.

But a few days later,

Coronavirus emergency was declared in Europe.

The news in Finland were saying that supermarkets were running of things for people to buy in supermarkets.

Finish **government** called for

all travelers abroad to stay

two weeks at home

after returning to Finland.

When my wife and I got back to Finland,

We had to stay two weeks at home

without seeing our children.

**The pause stretched to thirteen weeks**

On March 18th,

the care home for the two boys said that

They were no visit allowed for the time being.

I couldn't visit my sons.

My sons couldn't come home.

To keep contact with my sons,

I bought an iPad.

We had video calls together.

My sons said that they wanted to go home.

The situation was complicated for

all the residents and their families.

In mid-May

I asked with other families to

the service provider to

stop prohibit home visits.

The service provider accepted our request.

Home visits are not forbidden anymore.

After 13 weeks of separation,

I can finally be reunited with my sons

# General assembly – 29 June 2020

Under exceptional circumstances, theGeneral Assembly of **Inclusion Europe** took place online on the 29th of June 2020.

At the online meeting, we launched

Inclusion Europe’s Annual report 2019.

The report covers our activity and projects of 2019.

We also presented the financial report 2019.

And we adopted the budget for the next year.

**EPSA** presented Ana Martínez from Spain as

the new member of its Board of Directors.

Ana has spent years at GADIR

defending the rights of people with intellectual disabilities.

We welcomed 2 new members to our network:

* All Ukrainian NGO Coalition of persons with intellectual disability
* Learning Disability England

1. members left the Board:

* **José Smits**
* **Harry Roche**
* **Maria Antonia Fortuño Cebamanos**
* **Denise Roza**

Thank you for their great work!

We elected 3 new members of the Board of 2020:

* **Anastasiya Zhyrmont** ​
* **Jeanne Nicklas-Faust**

**Maria Cristina Schiratti**

Welcome to Anastasiya, Jeanne, and Maria Cristina!

We decided on the dates of

the next Europe in Action conference.

It will take place from 9 – 11 June 2021 in Tampere, in Finland.

# Explanations

**Accessible**

Something that is easy to use for people with disabilities.

Such as:

* Ramps to get into a building.
* Information in **easy-to-read.**
* Information in sign language.

**Commissioner at the European Commission**

A Commissioner is a person who is responsible

for a field of work at the **European Commission**

and manages a lot of people.

**Discrimination**

Discrimination means that you are treated worse than others or  
that you do not get the chances you deserve.

It is discrimination when it happens because of your disability.

It can also happen to other people.  
For example, people who have a different skin colour.   
Or older people.

**Easy-to-read**

Easy to read is information that is written in a simple way

so that people with **intellectual disabilities** can understand.

It is important to use simple words and sentences.

If there are words that are difficult to understand,

an explanation is provided.

The text needs to be clear to see,

for example, black writing on a white background is good.

It needs to be well-spaced.

Easy-to-read often uses pictures

to explain what the text talks about.

Someone with an intellectual disability needs to

check the information is easy to understand.

Easy-to-read documents often have this logo,

so it is easier to find them.

There are rules on how easy-to-read should be done.

**Educate**

Educate means to teach.

It means to make sure people have access to training

so they can learn new skills.

**EPSA**

The European Platform of Self-Advocates

is made up of organisations of **self-advocates**

from different countries in Europe.

We call it EPSA for short.

It is a part of **Inclusion Europe.**

**European Commission**

The European Commission works

with the **European Parliament.**

The European Commission suggests laws

for the European Parliament

and the **Council of the European Union** to discuss.

It also makes sure that the laws

that have been decided upon

are being followed by the member states.

**European Parliament**

The European Parliament is a place where

important decisions of the **European Union** are made.

For example: laws.

The Members of the European Parliament (in short, MEPs)

make these decisions

and speak for all the people

who live in the European Union.

Every five years,

the people who live in the European Union

**vote** for their country’s MEPs.

**European Union**

The European Union (in short, EU) is a group of 28 countries.

We call these countries “member states”.

They have joined together

to be stronger politically and economically.

The EU makes laws on many important things for the people who live in

those countries.

The EU makes laws in different areas. Some examples are:

* Laws to protect the environment.
* Laws for farmers.
* Laws to protect consumers.

A consumer is someone who buys things.

The EU also makes laws that are important

for people with disabilities.

It also made a law that gives people with disabilities

more rights when they are travelling.

The EU also gives money to its member states.

Some of this money is used for people with disabilities.

**Government**

A government is a group of people  
that make decisions on how to run a country.  
For example,

* about where the money is spent,
* about public transport,
* about schools,
* about hospitals.

Every few years there are **elections**   
to **vote** for a new government.

**Guardianship**

Guardianship allows some people

to make life choices for others.

The person who makes choices for you

is your guardian.

Your guardian can decide things for you,

like where you live.

Sometimes, people under guardianship are not allowed

to vote, get married, or take care of their kids.

**Inclusion Europe**

Inclusion Europe is an organisation

for people with **intellectual disabilities**

and their families.

We fight for their equal rights and inclusion in Europe.

We also want to make a difference to the laws in Europe.

We started in 1988.

We have 79 members in 39 European countries.

We are based in Brussels in Belgium.

**Inclusive education, training, employment**

Inclusive education, training or employment

means that people with **intellectual disabilities**

can learn and work together

with other people without disabilities.

**Institutions**

Institutions are places where

people with **intellectual disabilities** live

with other people with intellectual disabilities.

They live apart from other people.

This is what we call “segregated”.

Sometimes this happens against their will.

People who live in institutions

have to follow the rules of the institution

and cannot decide for themselves.

**Intellectual disability**

If you have an intellectual disability,

that means it is more difficult for you

to understand information

and learn new skills than it is for other people.

This makes some parts of life harder.

People with intellectual disabilities

often need support in learning or at work.

Intellectual disability often starts before you are an adult.

It affects you for your whole life.

There are things that can make life easier

for people with intellectual disabilities.

For example, information in **easy-to-read** language.

Some people say learning disabilities

instead of intellectual disabilities.

**MEPs**

The members of the [**European Parliament**](https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read-term/#EP)

are the [**politicians**](https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read-term/#Politician) who sit

in the European Parliament.

We call them MEPs for short.

**Self-Advocacy**

Self-advocacy is when

people with **intellectual disabilities** speak up for themselves.

These people are called self-advocates.

**Segregation**

Segregation is when someone is set apart from

others for an unfair reason.  
For example, because of their disability.

**UN CRPD**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (in short, UN CRPD)  
is an important document.

It tries to make sure that the rights of people with disabilities are respected.

**Vote**

Voting means choosing

the **politicians** who represent us

and make decisions for us.

You can vote in different areas.

For example:

* in your town or city

when you elect a new mayor

* in your country

when you elect a new president

* or at the European elections**,**

when you choose the new

Members of the European Parliament (**MEPs**).