

# People's right to live independently



Case study  
report: **Bulgaria**



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# Introduction



The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has been looking at the situation of people with disabilities in Bulgaria.



They have been studying:

- People who used to live in **institutions**



An **institution** is where people with disabilities live together away from other people.



- What it is like to live in an **institution**



- What it is like to live in the **community**



The **community** is where all different people live close to each other. They live close to their families and friends.



- What helps more people with disabilities live in the **community**



- What is stopping people with disabilities from living in the **community**



- What should be done about it



This is the report of the study.

# The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights



This report has been written by the **European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights**.



We help to make sure everyone in the **European Union** can use their rights.



The **European Union** is a group of 28 countries in Europe who work together.



**Fundamental Rights** are things that everyone has.



For example, the right to vote and the right to get married.



# How we did it



A group of people working for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights did the study in Bulgaria.



They spoke with many different people including:

- People with disabilities



- Their families



- Social workers



- Politicians



We asked people what it is like to live in an institution and the community.

# Bulgaria



In Bulgaria many people with disabilities live in institutions.



Some people with disabilities live in the community.



Only a few people with disabilities have moved from institutions to live in the community.



Most people with disabilities living in institutions are old.



Most children and young people with disabilities have moved from institutions to live in the community.



The government wants to close all institutions for children with disabilities.



There are rules in Bulgaria saying children with disabilities should not live in institutions anymore.



They should live in the community instead.



It is difficult to make these rules work.

It is still hard for people with disabilities to live independently in Bulgaria.



# Living in an institution



People said that living in an institution is very different from living in the community.



In institutions:

- Every day is similar



- People cannot decide what to do each day



- It is difficult to make friends outside the institution



- It is difficult to have privacy



In institutions, people with disabilities are treated like patients in a hospital.

Some people with disabilities living in institutions feel like they are in prison.

# Living in the community



In the community people can decide what to do each day.



It is easier to:

- Make friends



- Decide what you need and what you like.



- Get the help you need. You don't have to share your support with other people.

It is better for people with disabilities to live in the community because:



- They have more freedom



- They can learn many things



- They have more privacy



- They have more self confidence



- They can meet other people



People with disabilities who live in the community are often happier. They have a better life.

# What helps more people with disabilities live in the community?



People said that it helps if:

- People with disabilities speak up for themselves. They say what they think and what they want.



- More people realise that institutions are bad for people with disabilities.



- The organisations that help people with disabilities get money from the government.



- People talk to each other and work together.



- Families want their children with disabilities to live in the community.



- People with disabilities who have already moved to the community help other people with disabilities to move.



- People who work in institutions and in the community want to help people with disabilities to live in the community.



- Government gives more money to help people with disabilities live in their homes.



# What stops more people with disabilities living in the community?



## Time

Moving from an institution to live in the community is difficult. It takes a long time.



## Not enough help

Families of people with disabilities feel like they are alone.

They do not get enough help.



There are not enough assistants to help people with disabilities.

Families have to leave their job to help people with disabilities.



## Learning to live independently

Some families of people with disabilities don't want their sons and daughters to live independently.

They want to protect them.



People with disabilities do not learn how to live independently.

## Attitudes

Some people have a bad **attitude** about people with disabilities.



They think that people with disabilities can hurt themselves or other people.



An **attitude** is the way that people think about something.



## Jobs

It is difficult for people with disabilities to find a job.



## Money

People with disabilities do not have enough money to live independently.



## Problems with services

Healthcare and employment services are not accessible for people with disabilities.

Some people working in hospitals don't want to help people with disabilities.



## Not enough information

People don't have enough information about the right of people with disabilities to live in the community.



## Different needs

There are not enough services for people with different disabilities.

They do not get the help they need.

## Legal capacity



**Legal capacity** is about whether the law says people are able to make decisions for themselves.



Some people think that people with disabilities cannot make decisions for themselves.



## Social housing

It is difficult for people with disabilities to live in social housing like other people.

Most social housing is not accessible.



**Social housing** has lower rents and is usually run by local government



## Help from families

Some people with disabilities who live in institutions don't see their parents very often.

Some parents don't want to meet their sons and daughters with disabilities.



## Different types of people

Some people think that moving from an institution to live in the community is not good for:

- People with severe disabilities
- Older people with disabilities.



Sometimes people working in institutions are afraid of losing their job.



They do not have enough information about what will happen to them if the institution closes.



# What to do next?



To help people with disabilities to move from institutions to live in the community we need:

## Government

The government needs to give people with disabilities more support like:



- Personal assistants



- Education



- Accessible social housing



- Accessible public spaces



We need the government to make better rules.

The government needs to make a national plan for how to help people with disabilities to live in the community.

## **Working together**

We need people to work together.



We need people working for different parts of the government to meet more often.

They need to talk to each other more.



People who work in national government need to work together more with people working in villages, towns and cities.



## **More information**

We need more information.

People need to get more information so they can help people with disabilities to live in the community.



## Instructions

We need written instructions about how to help people with disabilities move from an institution to live in the community.



## Better services

We need the government to create more services for people with disabilities.



Different people with disabilities need different kinds of help.

They need to get the right help for them.



We need more and better healthcare services for people with disabilities.



We need more help for people with disabilities who live in their own homes.

We need more help for people with severe disabilities.



We need services to be accessible for people with disabilities who live in small villages and towns.

## **Attitudes**

We need people to change their bad attitude about people with disabilities.



We need people who live in the community to get to know people with disabilities more.

We need to explain to people why living in the community is important for people with disabilities.



## **Help for families**

We need more help for parents of children with disabilities.



## **Employment**

We need more jobs for people with disabilities.

# For more information

If you need more information please contact us by:



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