



Visit to the European Union



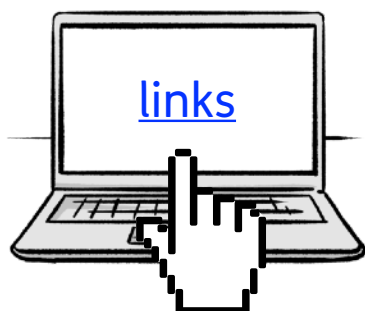
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In this Easy Read document, hard words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after we have used them.



Some words are [blue and underlined](#).

These are links that will go to another website which has more information.

Introduction



This report is from Gerard Quinn, who is the **Special Rapporteur** on the rights of persons with disabilities.



Every year, the **Special Rapporteur** writes reports for the **United Nations** about **human rights** for people with disabilities.



Human rights are the things that every person should have or be able to do, by law.



The **United Nations (UN)** is an organization made up of many countries working together. It works to make the world a safer and better place.



This is an Easy Read version of the Special Rapporteur's report of 2023 (A/HRC/52/32/Add.1) on his visit to the **European Union**.



The **European Union (EU)** is a group of countries in Europe whose governments work together.

The visit



The Special Rapporteur visited the EU in March 2022.



He met people from different EU organizations.

He wanted to visit the EU because:



- There are about 87 million persons with disabilities in the EU.

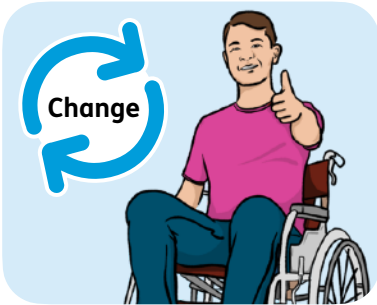


- It is important that persons with disabilities in the EU are treated well.

He also wanted to visit the EU because:



- The EU follows UN rules about the rights persons with disabilities should have.



- The EU has the power to make changes and improve the lives of persons with disabilities.



- The EU can get enough money to make a lot of changes and improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

The Special Rapporteur wanted to:



- Find out what the EU is doing well.



- Let other groups of countries know about what the EU is doing well.

Rights for people with disabilities



The EU has done a lot of work to support persons with disabilities in the past.



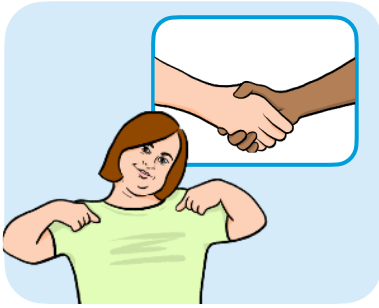
It has laws and plans for treating persons with disabilities in the same way as everyone else.



It wrote its newest plan in 2021, called the Disability Strategy 2021 - 2030.



Different parts of the EU are listening to persons with disabilities when they write new rules and plans.



An **international agreement** called the United Nations Disability Convention says persons with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else.



An **international agreement** is something that has been agreed by countries around the world.



In this report, we will call this agreement 'the Disability Convention'.



The EU agreed to the Disability Convention in 2010.



This means they must make sure persons with disabilities get their human rights.



It is important that the EU works with the different governments in Europe to make sure all persons with disabilities get their rights.



The EU wrote a report for the **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** once, in 2014.



The **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** are a group of experts in the UN.



They are in charge of checking persons with disabilities get their rights.

The Committee said that the EU should have a plan for:



- Moving persons with disabilities out of **institutions**.

Institutions are places where some persons with disabilities live for a long time. Sometimes they are called long-stay hospitals or mental health hospitals.



- Supporting persons with disabilities to live in their local community.



But the EU has not been doing enough on this.

The Special Rapporteur thinks the EU should:



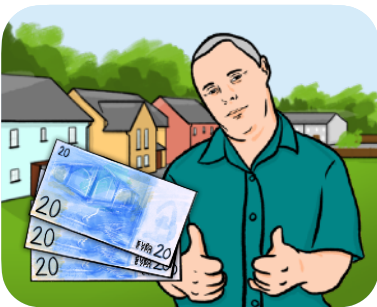
- Be clear that persons with disabilities should not live in institutions.



- Make sure money is not spent on putting persons with disabilities in institutions.



Putting persons with disabilities in institutions is against UN rules and plans.



This money should be spent on supporting persons with disabilities to live in the local community.

What the EU is doing



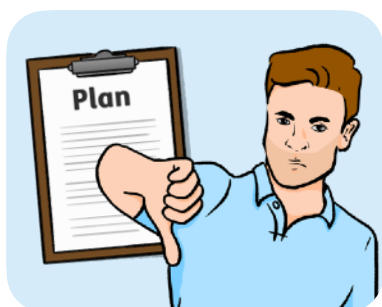
The EU has a lot of new laws and ways of working to support persons with disabilities.



The EU has a plan to support persons with disabilities with a new law.



The new law will make sure they are treated in the same way as all other people in all parts of their lives.



But for now some countries in the EU do not agree with this plan.



The Special Rapporteur thinks the EU should make sure this plan happens.

Jobs



The EU only has 1 law to make sure persons with disabilities are treated the same as everyone else.



The law says that companies cannot treat persons with disabilities who work for them worse than others.

Living in the community



The UN says that persons with disabilities have the right to live in their local community.



The EU has money that can be used to support persons with disabilities to live in their local community.



The Special Rapporteur said that the EU should not spend this money on institutions.

But part of the EU said that:



- Having persons with disabilities living in institutions did not count as treating them worse than others.



- Sometimes, money can be spent on institutions.



The EU has written a new plan on supporting persons with disabilities for the next 10 years.



It says that they will have new rules on supporting persons with disabilities to live in their local community.



It is important that the EU does this.

The rest of the world

The EU:



- Supports other countries.



- Gives money to other countries that have less money.



- Works with organizations around the world.



So it is important that, when the EU works with other countries, it supports persons with disabilities in the best way.



The EU have a plan called The European Union Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy.



It talks a lot about disability.



It wants to help other countries follow UN rules on supporting persons with disabilities.



People from the EU work around the world with different ideas to support persons with disabilities.



The plan follows the Disability Convention, and says that the EU will work with other organizations.



The Special Rapporteur thinks it would be good if the EU wrote reports about what it was doing in different countries.



This would help other countries learn about the best ways to work.



The EU said that it talks about the rights of persons with disabilities a lot.



The EU knows that it is important to support persons with disabilities to live in their local community.



The Special Rapporteur thinks that the EU would be very good at helping other groups of countries to support persons with disabilities.



The EU has good plans to make its **embassies** around the world easy to use for persons with disabilities.



Embassies are buildings where other countries are in charge. People from those countries can go to embassies for help and support.

Nearby countries



The EU has been helping nearby countries to support persons with disabilities in the best way.



Some of these countries want to join the EU.

The EU has worked to help these countries support persons with disabilities to:



- Join groups, and take part in helping others. This is called civil society.



- Live in their local community.

Helping other countries



When the EU helps other countries, it does so in a way that is good for persons with disabilities.



Part of the EU helps groups of persons with disabilities to work with their governments.



They have worked on a set of ways to check that persons with disabilities get their human rights.



If a country is having an emergency, like not having enough food or water, the EU thinks about what help persons with disabilities might need.

How the EU will change



The EU will change to be better at supporting persons with disabilities.



To do this, it has started a group called the Taskforce on Equality.

This will check that the EU is being fair to everyone when it works on different issues.

The EU is a big organization and it is important that all parts:



- Work together well.



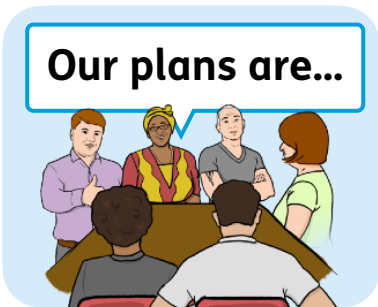
- Talk to each other about their work for persons with disabilities.



The EU has also started a group that looks at disability and including people.



This group works with countries in Europe, and groups of persons with disabilities.



They speak about plans and projects about disabilities and look at ways to work better.



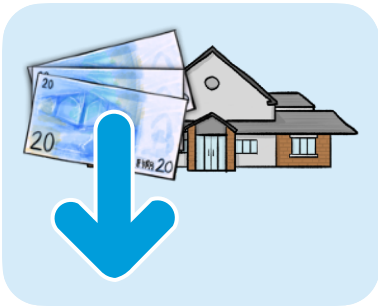
The different parts of the EU should work together more to support persons with disabilities.

Checking what they do

There are different parts of the EU that check what it is doing:



- The Agency for Fundamental Rights is an organization that helps countries in the EU to give people their rights.



Sometimes they have helped to think about how to spend less money on institutions.



- The European Ombudsman is an organization that listens to people's complaints.



This includes complaints from persons with disabilities about being treated unfairly.

There is also:



- The European Network of Equality Bodies, which is a group of organizations that work together to make sure everyone is treated fairly.

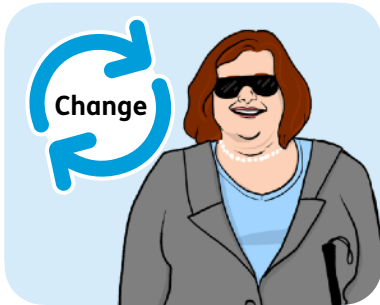


They help different parts of the EU to share ideas.



Charities also help check how the EU spends its money to support persons with disabilities.

How the EU works



The EU is changing how it works, to better include people with disabilities.



It is working hard to support its staff.



But the EU does a lot of health tests for new staff.



The Special Rapporteur thought this might be unfair to persons with disabilities.



The EU also gives staff a health check to see if they need a **reasonable accommodation**.

Reasonable accommodations are changes that places and services can make so that people with disabilities can take part like everybody else.



This might not be the right way to support staff members with disabilities.



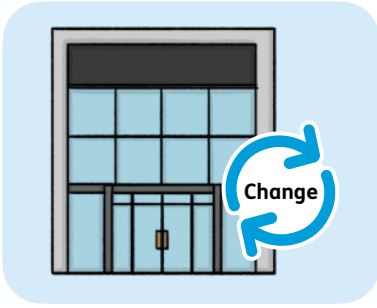
There are groups in each service that are in charge of making sure staff get their reasonable accommodations.



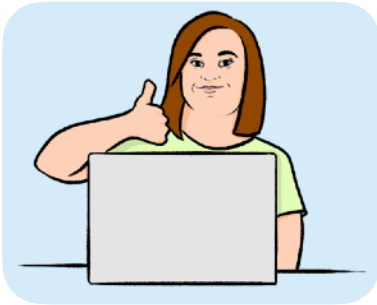
Staff need proof from doctors to get reasonable accommodations for some disabilities.



The Special Rapporteur thought it would be better to find a different way of doing this.



The EU has changed its buildings and computer systems so that everyone can use them.



This supports staff with disabilities, who can work just as well as everyone else.



The EU pays for some schools, called European schools. Children of EU staff can go to them.



These schools have not always been good at including everyone.



But they are getting better at including everyone.

What the EU should do

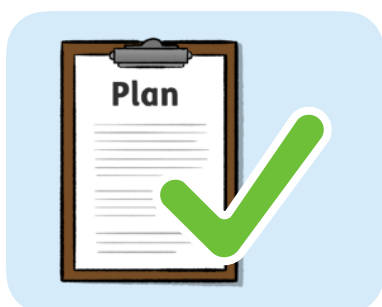
Staff at the EU knew a lot about:



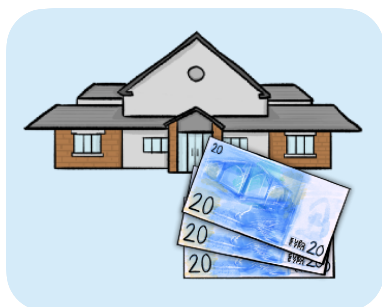
- Including persons with disabilities.



- Making sure persons with disabilities got their rights.



The EU has a good plan for supporting persons with disabilities in Europe and around the world.



But the EU is still spending money on institutions in some countries in Europe.



This means that those institutions may stay open longer, when they should be closing.

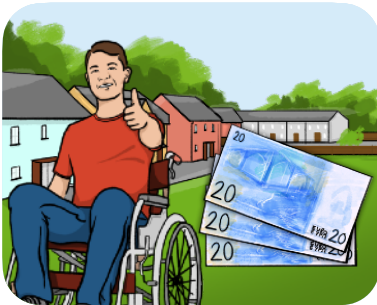


Not all of the organizations in the EU agree that they should be spending money in this way.

The Special Rapporteur thinks the EU should:



- Change the law, so that putting persons with disabilities into institutions counts as treating them unfairly.



- Make sure that it only spends money on supporting persons with disabilities to live in their local community, not in institutions.



- Help organizations in EU countries to check that EU money is not being spent on institutions.



- Work with other groups of countries, to support persons with disabilities around the world to get their rights.

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