

Resolution on the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families in the COVID-19 crisis

2020/2680(RSP) - 08/07/2020 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 682 votes to 3, with 10 abstentions, a resolution on the rights of persons with intellectual disabilities and their families in the COVID-19 crisis.

Parliament is deeply concerned about the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 crisis on persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with other mental health problems and their families, which creates an additional burden for family members caring for them, many of whom are women.

Lockdown has been a serious problem, not only for persons with intellectual disabilities, but also for every person with a mental illness, as isolation can only aggravate the problems. Strict confinement measures have a particularly negative impact on persons with disabilities and that greater flexibility is needed on the part of the authorities.

While strongly condemning any medical discrimination against persons with intellectual disabilities, Parliament stressed that persons with intellectual disabilities or mental illnesses deserve the same medical treatment as any other person with COVID-19, including intensive medical care. These persons should be informed immediately and correctly, in an accessible format, about the pandemic and the measures affecting them and their family. Members demanded that all public health communications be accessible to persons with disabilities and be provided in plain language, in a variety of traditional and digital formats, and in their national sign languages. Member States should also provide psychological support for persons with intellectual disabilities to mitigate the impact of confinement measures.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed major flaws in support systems for a number of at-risk groups in society. Therefore, the resolution underlined that investing in the gradual transition from institutional care to community-based services for persons with intellectual disabilities should be a priority. Investment funds should support the provision of personalised support services, as many of the providers of these services have suffered greatly during and after the pandemic and are at risk of being closed down indefinitely.

Parliament called in particular on the Commission to:

- take further steps to mobilise essential investments and resources in order to guarantee the continuity of care and support services, in accordance with the principles of the CRPD and the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- put forward a comprehensive, ambitious and long-term post-2020 European Disability Strategy, including lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis.

The Commission and the Member States are called on to:

- ensure common protocols for possible future risk situations or humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters, based on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis, including the provision of the necessary

protective equipment, information materials and training for health care and social care professionals and regulatory bodies, always taking into account the specific needs and circumstances of persons with disabilities;

- consult and involve persons with disabilities and their representative organisations from the outset when adopting measures responding to a future crisis;
- ensure that there are no financial barriers to access health care.