COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor

Summary –

# Submissions

Total submissions: 143 (last week: 231)

## Type of respondents

**Persons: 140**

Of the 140 respondents, 88 are women, 44 men and 8 preferred not to disclose or selected other. They identified themselves as:

* Persons with disabilities 82 – 58.57%
* Family member 32 – 22.86%
* DPOs 15 – 10.71%
* Other 11 – 7.86 %

The category “other” includes a long-term rehabilitation center for people with acquired brain injury, a patient with rheumatic disease (Slovenia), NGOs for protection of human rights (Uganda, Turkey, Bulgaria), PNFP Health Facility that deals directly with PWDs, a Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for youth with disabilities, Church organization (Uganda), a voluntary trustee of a local disability charity (United Kingdom), Cooperation Agency for projects for people with disabilities (Bolivia), and a representative of a person with a disability (Belgium).

**Government: 2**

* Slovenia - Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning
* Spain – Dr Rodriguez Lafora Public Psychiatric Hospital

**NHRI – 1**

* Malta – Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability

## Submissions per country

In the week of 11 to 17 May, there were submissions from 23 countries. Countries with most responses were France (55), Slovenia (17) and Belgium, Canada and Malta (11 respondents each).

GRAPH PRESENTING RESPONSES FROM THE DIFFERENT COUTRIES

# Analysis of narrative responses

**2.1 Access to information**

Many respondents stated that even though they received information, the information was general and not structured to meet the needs of persons with disabilities. Additionally, it was deduced that even though information was increasingly being adjusted, governments did not take additional effort to ensure that it reaches persons with disabilities. As such, there is a lot of confusion over what rules continue to hold and which have since been modified. However, NGOs and staff at institutions have taken it upon themselves to deliver this information to persons with disabilities.

“The measures were implemented, but the more I address this questionnaire, the more it is clear to me that the measures were probably not presented to them in a way that was understandable to them” (Slovenia)

“Too many changes in the rules, so that everyone has to switch and improvise too quickly and no longer know what is and is not allowed” (Belgium)

“Having a telephone call to ask what would happen if I became ill or my pa became ill, does not solve the problem of no assistance with shopping, no assistance with understanding the rules and how to follow them. I have to search for information and then interpret it. I'm given no clear, reliable and easy to follow instructions” (United Kingdom)

**2.2 Protection of PWDs in communities, institutions as well as homeless persons**

Persons with disabilities in communities and institutions have also indicated that very few measures have been particularly taken towards protecting and keeping them safe during this pandemic. The only efforts that have been undertaken in this regard have been for persons with disabilities who also face a greater risk such as having an underlying health condition. In similar ways, governments have not paid attention to homeless persons with disabilities. In some countries, NGOs have taken on the responsibility to provide shelter and protection while some countries have altogether rejected this initiative

“We are not aware that specific measures have been taken to protect people with disabilities in the community - in particular, there have been no such measures for people with mental health problems, other than instructing organizations to close non-placement programs and work through interactive tools” (Slovenia)

“…They will claim they have but, as an example, Bristol City Council will have received £29m from govt by the end of May but have needed to spend £80m to support the city (including such support as is available to Disabled people), so I would argue that they've been far more concerned with funding the private sector than either local government or the charitable sector” (United Kingdom)

“Only if your disability is linked to coronavirus do you count as vulnerable do get support. If your disability such as deafness isn’t then trying to get any support is impossible” (United Kingdom)

“Many of the measures for seniors are also applicable for persons with disabilities. But some individuals living in their own home may not be receiving the same level of support that they received pre-Covid because of staff shortages” (Canada)

“Official government communications are not intended to be received by people with disabilities, there are no interpreters in all communications.” (Bolivia)

“In small villages like mine, no action has been taken for the disabled and / or information has not been disseminated!” (France)

“The only measure I know of is confinement, which has led me to be even more isolated, has made it difficult for me to do my shopping and has led to the cessation of my treatment for my depression, apart from calls 5 minute telephone calls by nurses 2 to 3 times a week.” (France)

“Older people are not properly informed about severity and become even more confused than they already are, leading to dangerous behavior towards healthy people and other vulnerable people.” (Belgium)

“The government has encouraged a cavalier disregard for the needs of older persons and older persons with disabilities to be protected as much as possible from heightened risk due to the coronavirus. They do so through inadequate protections at elder care facilities, inadequate in-home assistance, under resourcing hospitals in poor and working class areas, and reversing the protection measures.” (United States)

“Seniors with disabilities are not the central focus of the government at this time. Because we are in the pre-electoral stage, the greatest benefits are focused on the electorally active population. (Parents with young children, unemployed youth, college students, and unemployed people)” (Bolivia)

“I still know some people sleeping rough who have disabilities. Measures to protect the safety of homeless people, but nothing specifically for disabled.” (United Kingdom)

“Far too little, because homeless centers often only focus on ex-addicted men, making women, people with disabilities or people with other problems feel unsafe, because they are often victims of theft and abuse.” (Belgium)

“Non profit organizations have been handling this and begging the government for help. But the government only shut down all the services helping them to begin with before the pandemic, to minimize spread. They have avoided all questions and critique regarding this issue. Hotel chains offered their empty hotels for the homeless to live in, but the government would not support this.” (Norway)

“Some legal challenges have been attempted, there is no working mechanism for complaining before that level” (United Kingdom)

**2.3 Living independently and adequate standard of living**

Most of the respondents stated that no measures had been taken by their governments. Respondents from countries where governments are providing relief support indicate that the support is not only irregular and urban-centric but also insufficient to meet the need. Visits to institutions continue to be restricted in most countries. In some countries, persons with disabilities have even been barred from leaving their own homes. In almost all countries movement for persons with disabilities in institutions is highly restricted. Persons with disabilities have also expressed concern about being subjected to penalties, financial and otherwise, arising from breaking state of emergency measures.

“Food is given to very few people and not all” (Uganda)

“no food or essentials related support. No preference when I could shop. Shopping anxiety provoking” (United Kingdom)

“No measures marked for people with severe disabilities like mine.” (Belgium)

“They have even forbidden people with disabilities living in their own bought homes from leaving or receiving visits from anyone, even their legal guardians.” (Norway)

“I couldn't move to walk and go to get treatment.” (France)

“No but worried my family will be fined for looking after me” (United Kingdom)

“People who are unable to sufficiently explain that their journey is essential, those who need to rest during essential trips.” (United Kingdom)

“I have a physically disabled acquaintance in my city who was aggressively accosted and made to move on by the police for sitting down on a public bench (she was taking a rest while carrying her heavy shopping bags home).” (United Kingdom)

“People are arrested and taken to court.” (Uganda)

“Indirectly - my son cannot go back to school because it is not allowed to bring an assistant, but the school has made attendance compulsory. If you do not come you should be able to provide a note from the doctor, but I do not go to the doctor and risk risking sick myself. This could potentially have financial consequences for us.” (Belgium)

“Any exit from the home requires an official documentary proof for the entire population. Otherwise, we risk a fine of € 135.” (France)

**2.4 Right to education**

The responses also indicated that with regard to education of children in facilities, most governments have implemented a blanket closure of schools and other education facilities. However, most respondents whose children with disabilities were sent home expressed concern about the ability to take care of their children while at the same time maintaining their essential jobs. On whether measures have been taken by governments to protect families of children with disabilities, the responses are varied.

“The government sent these children home for home care. The problem was if the parents could not properly care for the child with a disability because of the jobs.” (Slovenia)

“Boarding schools in special education are open, but boredom lurks there because it is only used as an emergency shelter and no activities are allowed to take place.” (Belgium)

“All schools shut down, government said children with disabilities would be followed up by local government/their school. They said they would, but it is now May 2020, and they still have no answer to why children with disabilities have not been followed up by their local government/ school.” (Norway)

“With a limited benefit if you can make ends meet everything has become so expensive it is financial drama ... working people get money extra for their hard work. We do not, because we are just the parasites of society ... we do not contribute anything … feels very bitter.” (Belgium)

“Food distribution to vulnerable communities though not done upcountry.” (Uganda)

“A few kids can continue at school. No respite and no therapeutic play/exercise.” (United Kingdom)

“No increase in state benefits for carers, left to figure out sourcing PPE and equipment themselves.” (United Kingdom)

“The government did not take any measures to ensure that parents who had to go to work and have people in a home would have to. Parents have to take leave.” (Malta)

“A voucher has been awarded to people with profound disabilities during the emergency. That alone is not enough. Other support is also necessary.” (Bolivia)

**2.5 Right to health**

Although the degree and manner differed, several responses indicated that access to medical care facilities had been severely restricted or limited for persons with disabilities during the pandemic. In some countries, access could only be done over the telephone while in others a priority list was generated and did not include persons with disabilities. In yet other countries, all medical appointments were cancelled. In Countries where they were not cancelled, persons with disabilities were not permitted to move with their carers when they went for treatment.

“I have received no information from my healthcare providers (NHS Scotland) about continuing my healthcare - all my appointments and my surgery were cancelled in early March 2020 and I have received no information since” (United Kingdom)

“Some measures for those who need hospice care but for those with less severe medical conditions we are left to our own devices. Telephone consultations by a GP cannot adequately diagnose and my GP struggled to bring my recent pneumonia under control without face to face assessment. Ongoing physiotherapy and orthotics treatments have been cancelled. Cannot obtain a neurology referral for new and potentially serious symptoms.” (United Kingdom)

“There are people with disabilities who had to leave the hospital because of aggressive behavior while they have not recovered enough to go home. The reasons are often: unpredictability, no visitors, no access to assistance, isolation, inaccessible information, ... and they have no possibility to file a complaint anywhere.” (Belgium)

“Conditions like mine need continual care and medical expertise - I cannot see my consulting specialist physician as he is an ID specialist at one of the hospitals here and won’t see his normal patients for fear of spreading the virus. I can’t see my pain specialist, and he can’t operate on me, because he works out a hospital that isn’t allowing “visitors” in - you either go through the ER or you don’t go in at all” (South Africa)

**2.6 Examples of good practice**

In Slovenia, it has been widely stated that communication, workshops, interviews have been provided through zoom and other technological means to try and ensure that work continues as usual by organisations such as ALTRA.

In Bulgaria, there have been some supportive activities with children with special needs as well as telephone for questions in MLSP. Specifically, one respondent stated that USA, Virginia, Richmond had very good social support for people with disabilities!

In Canada, Public Health has provided directives which have been tailored for persons with disabilities

In the United Kingdom, voluntary organisations and charities are covering the gaps in inclusion. Persons with disability are being included via online meetings in education.

In Belgium, ambulatory counselling at home continues by phone.

In Malta, the disability pension was sent directly to bank account and not sent in cheque to protect person from going to the bank.