*7 March 2025, Brussels*

**PRESS STATEMENT**

**The Commission encourages EU countries to invest in residential institutions for persons with disabilities - when will this practice stop?**

*Internal documents reveal the European Commission ongoing violation of the right to independent living for persons with disabilities*

Validity Foundation, the European Network on Independent Living and Bridge EU call attention of the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) and other parties that internal policy documents of the European Commission continue to strongly support building residential institutions in EU countries for people with disabilities, including children. This approach is embedded in the investments through European funds, which represents a critical financial resource for many Central and Eastern European countries.

Through a transparency request, we received 37 internal documents of the European Commission on disability policies. These include guidance on the use of European funds, internal policy instructions, as well as complaints and responses to them. Alarmingly, most of these documents explicitly mention the construction or renovation of residential institutions as an acceptable policy measure. This is particularly concerning in light of an exchange between the Chair of the CRPD Committee and the Head of Cabinet of the President of the European Commission.

In this exchange, the European Commission stated:

*“[The]legal framework does not prevent Member States from using the Funds for investments in the benefit of residential institutions, as long as these investments serve to achieve the objectives of the applicable legal framework”.*

This approach was also highlighted in the [report](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRPD%2FC%2FEU%2F2-3&Lang=en) submitted by the European Union to the CRPD Committee in 2023:

*“…national authorities can in some cases use EU funding for residential care facilities, since investments in institutions are not prohibited by the applicable legal framework”.*

We urge the European Commission and EU Member States to ensure policies, legislations and EU funds are fully aligned with the EU’s fundamental rights standards and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We further call on the CRPD Committee to instruct the European Commission to immediately revise its legislation and policies, and to work closely with representatives of the disability community in all future policymaking processes.

The internal documents of the European Commission are available [here](https://www.bridge-eu.org/post/deinstitutionalisation-and-eu-funds-internal-european-commission-documents-now-public).

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**Note to the editors**

* In March 11 and 12 of 2025 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee) will review the European Union how the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have been implemented. In this session the Committee members will have the opportunity to ask questions how European policies, European funds and other instruments are in line with basic human rights standards. The representatives of the European Union should provide answers and clarify why the current practices are still in violation of the right to independent living. Further information about the session is available [here](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=2692&Lang=en).
* Residential institutions are places where persons with disabilities live together, solely because of their impairment. Many are placed in institutions because of the lack of support services in the community. Institutionalisation amounts to discrimination, according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Convention was ratified by the EU and all 27 Member States.
* In line with General Comment 5 on living independently and being included in the community published in 2017 by the CRPD committee, EU countries should adopt and implement deinstitutionalisation strategies to ensure independent living conditions for people with disabilities. A report by the European Network on Independent Living found that where countries have strategies, these often provides for alternatives to institutions that do not support independent living. For more information see: ENIL, 2020, [Independent Living Survey - Summary report](https://enil.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IL-Survey_Summary-report_Dec2020.pdf)