



ENIL demands housing and support first approach for deinstitutionalisation

The European Network on Independent Living welcomes [the proposal by the Danish social affairs minister](#) to link the EU Affordable Housing Plan to deinstitutionalisation. We regret that [the Danish Presidency of the EU Council did not make use](#) of the Council Conclusions in Independent Living to propose effective new initiatives. [In our input](#) to the European Parliament Draft Report on the housing crisis and to [the European Commission consultation](#), we outlined concrete plans to improve access to housing for disabled people.

For ENIL the lack of progress on deinstitutionalisation is a major cause for concern. Independent research showed that [in 2007 1,2 million disabled people](#) in the EU were confined to institutions, whereas in 2020 [a figure of 1,4 million](#) was identified. Confinement to an institution is a severe discrimination and a grave human rights abuse, as it not only eliminates a person from participating in life but also [exposes to violence](#). [It has been found](#) that confinement to institutions reduces life expectancy.

The evidence [produced by Eurofund](#) according to which institutionalisation has severely increased in the last decade confirms the feedback we are receiving from thousands of disabled people, giving us cause [to regularly protest](#).

The lack of access to housing is a major barrier for deinstitutionalisation to succeed. Disabled people confined to institutions frequently state that living independently was possible, if only housing was available for them.

There are various causes for the scarcity of housing.

1. Discrimination

Disabled people are telling us that landlords, when given the choice, rather select non-disabled tenants. Banks prefer to give loans to non-disabled applicants and sellers prefer to pick non-disabled buyers. In 2024, 9,3% of persons with disabilities indicated to feel [discriminated against when looking for housing, more than twice as much as people](#) without disabilities.

2. Inaccessible housing stock

Disabled people are informing us that housing is very often inaccessible. Houses have steps at the entrance, there are no lifts, universal design standards are not being applied. [A recent survey](#) conducted by ENIL produced evidence in that regard. On a scale from 1



(the right is not guaranteed at all) to 5 (the right is fully guaranteed), respondents rated accessibility of housing with a 1,9 on average.

3. Affordability

The last years have seen a step rise in housing costs. [For example in Portugal](#), housing costs have increased by 39% between 2019 and 2023. The average cost of a house is over EUR 1000 per month, while the disability allowance is EUR 298,4. According to EURO-STAT, 10,4% of persons with disabilities indicate to be financially overburdened by quickly raising housing costs. Disabled people confined to institutions have very limited access to income and thus cannot afford current prices. Due to the exclusion from the labour market, disability employment gap [has increased from 18,6% in 2010 to 24,5% in 2023](#), disabled people [are much more often](#) depending on social protection.

The consequences

The resulting in-availability of housing significantly contributes to:

- the increasing rates of institutionalisation
- [the fact that](#) persons with disabilities continue to reside with their families of origin long after life course expectation
- [the overrepresentation](#) of disabled people among the homeless population

A housing first agenda

To improve the situation the following measures need to be taken:

1. Housing and support first for deinstitutionalisation

In line with the housing first approach adopted to combat homelessness, disabled people confined to institutions need to be matched with affordable and accessible housing in the community. While housing should be identified first, being allocated [a personal budget](#) and [personal assistance](#) are a close second step. Income support needs to be provided. Every disabled person confined to an institution needs to receive an offer for a housing and support package. Housing and support services must never be provided as a package but offered independently from each other.

Housing first programmes targeting homeless people need a special focus persons who are disabled, to ensure for example that the housing provided is accessible and that access to personal budgets and personal assistance is offered.



2. Stop discrimination

We call on the EU member states, to finally adopt the Equal Treatment Directive which would ban discrimination in accessing housing. The proposal needs to be amended to explicitly state that disabled people confined to institutions must not be discriminated against when it comes to accessing housing in the community. In parallel to supporting EU-level action, member states should adopt strong national anti-discrimination laws. We need better access to justice, so that disabled people can claim their rights.

3. Universal Design for accessibility

We need binding standards to ensure all new residential buildings are constructed according to the Universal Design Standards. We expect that the Construction Services Act, which was announced in the European Commission work programme 2026, will contain provisions making it compulsory to follow this standard. We need well-resourced renovation programmes to bring existing buildings into line with Universal Design.

4. Improve affordability

Social housing and non-profit housing are complementary concepts that are needed to improve the stock of affordable housing. Under social housing public entities construct houses which are rent controlled at the beginning but after a while become the property of private owners or companies. [Under non-profit housing](#), private companies or organisations receive far reaching tax exemptions if they commit to limiting their profits to no more than 4% and provide rent-controlled housing long-term. Non-profit housing is effective in mobilising private actors to provide housing. [The concept is widely applied](#) in Austria, a country which is often cited as a good practice example for the provision of affordable housing. The concept also exists in the Netherlands and was recently re-introduced in Germany. It is seen as having great potential to produce stable housing prices, since a significant amount of housing is removed from profit-oriented commerce. The EU should actively promote investments in social housing and non-profit housing to enlarge the available housing stock. The next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) should earmark funding for the construction of public housing and for support of construction activities by private entities. There need to be effective control mechanisms to ensure housing build with the use of EU funds is available, affordable and accessible to persons with disabilities with a special focus on those confined to institutions. We need



effective safeguards which ensure EU funds do not finance institutions in any way, including group homes.

The Member States and the EU should introduce the concept of non-profit housing into national and European law. Member States should provide provide adequate housing support to persons with disabilities.

Call to action

We call on the European Commission to closely consult representative organisations of persons with disabilities and to take the input we provided into account while preparing the EU Affordable Housing Plan. It is imperative to adopt a housing and support first for Deinstitutionalisaiton approach. In addition, the future MFF and the Construction Services Act need to reflect our input. We call on the EU Council to adopt the Equal Treatment Directive and the Member States to adopt their own anti-discrimination legislation.

For additional input please visit www.enil.eu or contact:

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