

**DEMANDS OF THE
EUROPEAN NETWORK
ON INDEPENDENT
LIVING TO THE**



FREEDOM DRIVE 2026



EUROPEAN NETWORK ON INDEPENDENT LIVING – ENIL

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Demands of the European Network on Independent Living to the **FREEDOM DRIVE 2026**

From the 29 September to the 1 of October 2026, the European Network on Independent Living – ENIL will hold its 11th edition of the Freedom Drive in Brussels. Disabled people from all over Europe will come together to empower each other, claim their place in society and hold decision-makers accountable.

The **Freedom Drive** is one of ENIL's key campaigns – it has taken place every two years since 2003.

ENIL is a Europe-wide network of disabled people. For us, Independent Living is a process of empowerment and emancipation, enabling equal opportunities, rights and full participation in all aspects of society. We advocate for the complete removal of all barriers restricting the inclusion of disabled people in the community.

One of our main goals is the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in the European Union. The UNCRPD promotes full participation, independent living and deinstitutionalisation. The European Union and all 27 Member States ratified the UNCRPD and are obliged to follow it but few do.

For this **Freedom Drive 2026**, ENIL put together the following demands for the European Union, its Member States and other European countries:

The changes we want

- 
1. Eliminate all financing of segregation from the EU-Budget
 2. Make housing accessible and affordable, fight discrimination
 3. Create inclusive employment in the regular labour market
 4. Give us the right to legal capacity and supported decision-making
 5. Make Gender Equality a reality

DEMAND 1:



Problem

The European Union has a budget at its disposal it can use to invest in services and infrastructure. This budget is called Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Unfortunately, large amounts of money are spent on institutions.

Institutions segregate and discriminate against disabled people and are against the UN CRPD. Confining a person to an institution is a severe fundamental rights violation. Under the UN CRPD investments in institutions are not permitted.

There is also a positive example of the EU supporting Independent Living Services like personal assistance. We need more of that!



Facts & Figures

- ✓ For the period 2028-2034 the EU will probably have EUR 1,98 trillion at its disposal.
- ✓ ENILs' Fury project has documented has discovered that over the last two funding periods at least EUR 105,54 Million were spent on the construction and renovation of 23 institutions
- ✓ Until 2028 Portugal will be receiving EUR 36 million from the European Social Fund Plus to provide personal assistance to disabled people.
- ✓ According to article 19 of the UN CRPD disabled people have the right to freely choose where to live and that state parties have an obligation to provide services.
- ✓ General Comment No 5 and the Guidelines on Deinstitutionalisation, including in emergencies, clarified that state parties have to replace institutions with services such as personal assistance. General Comment No 5 states that investments in institutions are not permitted.

AN EU BUDGET WITHOUT SEGREGATION



The changes we want

1. We want the EU to cut all funding to institutions
2. The money that becomes available has to be invested in Independent Living Services
3. The implementation of the UN CRPD has to be made a priority in the EU Budget
4. No spending about us without us! Disabled people's organisations have to be actively involved in decisions that concern disabled people.

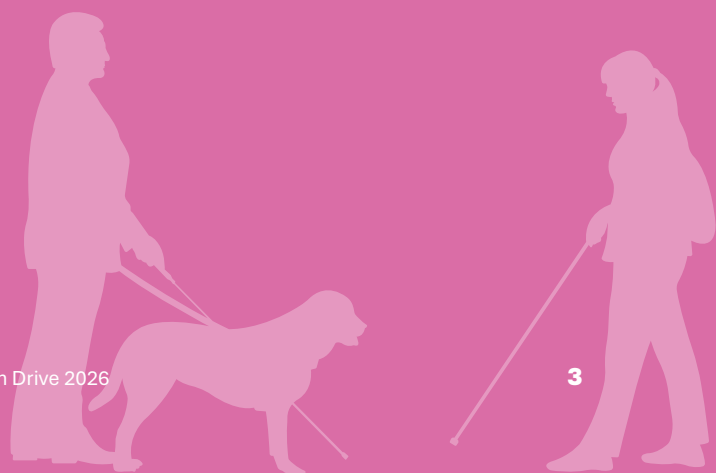


Commitments we are asking for

Members of the European Parliament and representatives of national governments!

Support us in amending the relevant Multiannual Financial Framework Regulations, in particular:

1. The National Regional Partnership Regulation
2. The Budget Expenditure Tracking and Performance Framework
3. The Global Europe Regulation



DEMAND 2:



Problem

The EU Affordable Housing Plan recognises the housing crisis, but it does not ensure accessible housing for disabled people.

Housing is largely inaccessible and unaffordable for disabled people. Disabled people are strongly discriminated against when looking for housing.

Many disabled people still have no choice but to live in institutions because accessible and affordable housing in the community is lacking.

EU funds continue to support institutional care instead of community-based support.

Disabled people are overrepresented among homeless populations and often cannot access the support they need.



Facts & Figures

- ✓ 1.4 million disabled people in the EU are estimated to live in institutional settings, often due to the lack of accessible and community-based housing.
- ✓ 9.3% of persons with disabilities report discrimination when seeking housing more than twice the rate of persons without disabilities.
- ✓ In the ENIL Independent Living Survey most respondents say housing is not accessible
- ✓ 10.4% of persons with disabilities say they are financially overburdened by rising housing costs, while also facing additional disability-related expenses.
- ✓ For example, in 2019 one-quarter of homeless people report a physical and 60% a psycho-social impairment.
- ✓ Inaccessible housing increases the risk of institutionalisation and exclusion, undermining the right to independent living under Article 19 of the UN CRPD

MAKE HOUSING ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE



The changes we want

1. Sufficient affordable and accessible housing
2. Use EU funds for community-based support, not institutions.
3. Combat discrimination
4. Provide housing together with support to tackle homelessness.
5. Include accessible safety and evacuation plans in housing standards.
6. Ensure organisations of persons with disabilities are involved in housing decisions.



Commitments we are asking for

Members of the European Parliament and representatives of national governments!

1. Defend binding accessibility requirements in the
 - a. Affordable Housing Act.
 - b. the Housing Simplification Package
 - c. Construction Services Act
2. Make housing affordable by reducing energy prices for disabled people in the Citizens Energy Package
3. Support action on housing exclusion that includes persons with disabilities.

DEMAND 3:



Problem

Disabled people are much more often prevented from having a good job than non-disabled people. Because we have less income from work, we are often poorer than non-disabled people.

Exclusion from quality education and discrimination are some of the causes. Another important reason is that governments spend high amounts of money on sheltered employment.

Support like personal assistance at work, accessibility modifications or accommodations are very effective in bringing disabled people into jobs. Employment in the regular labour market benefiting from these things is called supported employment.

Many governments spend almost the entire budgets they have for the promotion of disability inclusive work on sheltered employment. Little is left for supported-employment.



Facts & Figures

- ✓ The employment rate of disabled people stands at 51,3%. In contrast, 75,8% of non-disabled people are in employment.
- ✓ According to the EU Statistics Office, 28,8% of disabled people are at risk of poverty, compared to 17.9% of non-disabled people.
- ✓ Evidence shows a strong record for supported employment. In some programmes up to 63% of participants find permanent jobs in the open labour market. The success rates of sheltered employment rarely exceed 1%.
- ✓ Some countries spend 98% of the budgets available for the promotion of employment of disabled people on sheltered employment, despite its terrible success rates.
- ✓ Some countries subsidize providers of sheltered employment with up to EUR 500 Million per year.

CREATE INCLUSIVE EMPLOYMENT IN THE REGULAR LABOUR MARKET



The changes we want

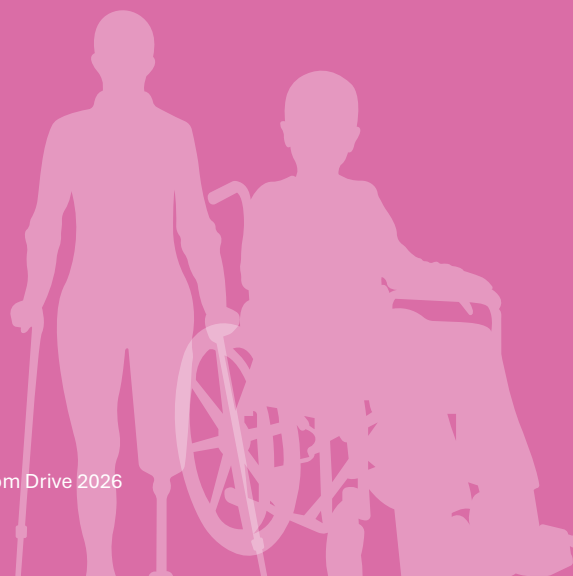
1. Proper jobs for every disabled person that wants to work.
2. Better financing of supported employment
3. The EU can regulate how member states subsidise companies. Use these competences to incentivise more financial support for supported employment.



Commitments we are asking for

Members of the European Parliament and representatives of national governments!

1. Support us in our demands for changes to EU state aid legislation
2. Support a reform of the General Block Exemption Regulation and the Commission Communication on Criteria for the analysis of the compatibility of State aid for the employment of disadvantaged and disabled workers
3. Set the promotion of inclusive employment through state aid on to the agenda of committee meetings. Present the need for legal change to European Commission representatives.



DEMAND 4:



Problem

Everybody has the right to decide where to live, what to do with their property or which contracts to sign. Having the right to take legal decisions about one's life, is called legal capacity.

Disabled people with intellectual or psychosocial impairments are often denied their right to legal capacity. Authorities forbid them from taking essential decisions about their own life and appoint somebody, a stranger or a family member, to do that for them. Having no legal capacity means having no self-determination.

In the EU, some countries have done reforms and have decided to allow people to keep their legal capacity. The legal chances don't always translate into changes in practice because judges and authorities continue using the old rules.

Many countries have not done any reforms.

At the moment, the EU is working on a law that would take us backwards and diminish the right to legal capacity.



Facts & Figures

- ✓ According to a report of the European Disability Forum, full deprivation of legal capacity is allowed in 12 member states. Nine member states allow for partial guardianship. Six countries have abolished guardianship but maintain exceptions. In 13 EU member states some form of supported decision-making has been established.
- ✓ The European Union is working on a law called the regulation on the protection of adults. The objective of this regulation is to establish procedures for the cross-border transfer of measures that deprive people of their legal capacity. The regulation wants to make it so that a guardianship regime established in country A, is automatically recognised when A country moves to country B.

GIVE US THE RIGHT TO LEGAL CAPACITY AND SUPPORTED DECISION-MAKING

The regulation also intends to allow the automatic recognition of placements in institutions.

- ✓ UN CPRD article 12 forbids restrictions of legal capacity and gives every disabled person the right to request support with taking decisions, if they so wish. Article 19 forbids institutions.



The changes we want

1. The full exercise of legal capacity, de-jure and in practice for every disabled person
2. A complete stop or a major revision of the pro deprivation of legal-capacity law pursued by the EU
3. A change of international private law
4. Better legal capacity laws



Commitments we are asking for

Members of the European Parliament and representatives of national governments!

1. Help us to stop or substantially modify the regulation on the protection of vulnerable adults
2. Support a reform of the HCCH Convention on the Protection of Vulnerable Adults on which the regulation on the protection of vulnerable adults depends
3. Support or initiatives at the EU-level to strengthen the right to legal capacity and access to supported decision-making within the member states

DEMAND 5:



Problem

Disabled women and girls face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination based on gender, disability and other identities. They are too often excluded both from the disability rights movement and from mainstream feminist agendas, leaving their specific experiences invisible in policymaking.

Independent living is not gender-neutral. Many disabled women are forced to live in institutions or with family members due to the lack of accessible housing, income and community-based services. This increases their exposure to violence, control and abuse, including in institutional settings. At the same time, guardianship regimes and substituted decision-making continue to deny many women their legal capacity and control over their own bodies, finances and life choices.

Sexual and reproductive rights are still denied or controlled. Disabled women face forced sterilisation, restricted access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, hypersexualisation or widespread infantilisation and desexualisation. Moreover, disabled women are often prevented from enjoying their sexuality freely and without stigma and from accessing parenthood on an equal basis with others. Gender-based violence remains largely unaddressed due to inaccessible reporting systems, lack of support services, and insufficient training of professionals such as police officers, healthcare staff, teachers and social workers. Economic exclusion further reinforces dependence, trapping many women in poverty and abusive environments.



Facts & Figures

- ✓ Within the EU disabled women and girls are 2 to 5 times more likely to experience violence than non-disabled women.
- ✓ 34% of women with a health problem or a disability have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner during their lifetime, compared to 19% of women without disabilities.

MAKE GENDER EQUALITY A REALITY

- ✓ 61% have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15, compared to 54% of women without disabilities.
- ✓ In 13 EU countries forced sterilisation of persons with disabilities is still legal, disproportionately affecting women and girls.
- ✓ Disabled women are also significantly more likely to experience sexual violence, harassment, domestic abuse and violence in institutional settings.
- ✓ About 49% of women with disabilities aged 20–64 are employed, compared to 53.9% of men with disabilities
- ✓ Only 20% of women with disabilities are in full-time employment, compared to 29% of men with disabilities, 48% of women without disabilities and 64% of men without disabilities.
- ✓ Women with disabilities are also more exposed to poverty and social exclusion: 29.5% are at risk, rising to 33.9% for women with severe disabilities, according to EDF.



The changes we want

1. Full inclusion of disabled women and girls in both gender equality and disability policies, ensuring an intersectional approach.
2. Access to independent living through adequate funding for community-based services and user-controlled personal assistance.
3. The abolition of guardianship regimes and the transition to supported decision-making.
4. The criminalisation of forced sterilisation and the elimination of all non-consensual medical treatments, including female genital mutilation and abortions.
5. Accessible, inclusive and high-quality services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

6. Mandatory training for professionals, including police, healthcare staff, teachers, social workers and justice professionals, on disability, gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive rights.
7. Equal access to employment through reasonable accommodation, inclusive education and vocational training.
8. Recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work, with adequate social protection measures.
9. Ensure inclusive, comprehensive sexuality education that reflects the experiences of disabled women and other disabled people with intersecting identities, and guarantee the right to freely and without stigma enjoy sexuality and to access parenthood on an equal basis with others.
10. Comprehensive, disaggregated data collection on gender and disability.



Commitments we are asking for

Members of the European Parliament and representatives of national governments!

1. Mainstream disability in all EU gender equality initiatives and ensure the implementation of an intersectional approach across policies.
2. Ensure the NRP-R and other EU Funds will allocate EU funding to independent living, including personal assistance and community-based services.
3. Prevent a regulation on the protection of adults that supports deprivation of legal capacity from entering into force. Support a reform of the 2000 Hague Convention. Support reforms at the national level to ensure every disabled person can exercise their right to legal capacity.
4. Support investments of EU funds into gender-based violence services, including shelters, hotlines, police procedures and justice systems, are fully accessible and inclusive.
5. Support a reform of EU state aid regulations to improve access of disabled women to supported employment
6. Strengthen data collection in the Budgetary Tracking and Performance Framework on the equal treatment on social inclusion of disabled women

About the European Network on Independent Living

The European Network on Independent Living (ENIL) is a disabled-led, cross-disability network of disabled people and their representative organisations. ENIL promotes the right to independent living, as set out in Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), its General Comments and the Guidelines on deinstitutionalisation, including in emergencies. ENIL's work is guided by the CRPD and the Independent Living principles, enshrined in the Independent Living Pillars. ENIL is active at the European level, and internationally, through cooperation with Centres for Independent Living from around the globe. ENIL's actions and activities are based on the social and the human rights models of disability, and on the principles of inclusive equality, self-determination, solidarity and intersectionality.

ENIL has participatory status with the Council of Europe (i.e. is a member of the Conference of INGOs) and consultative status with ECOSOC.

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