



Your rights in the European Union

Easy-to-read version

Easy-to-read is information that is written in a simple way so that people with intellectual disabilities and all people can understand it. You can find more information about easy-to-read at:
www.inclusion-europe.eu/easy-to-read



Who are we?

We are the **European Disability Forum**.

We are an organisation of people with disabilities in Europe.

In short, we are called '**EDF**'.



At EDF, we work to protect the rights of all people with disabilities in Europe.

We think that people with disabilities should have the same chances in life and take part in the community as everyone else.

We also think that people with disabilities should decide about their lives.

Nothing should be decided about us without us!

What is this booklet about?

We wrote this booklet to talk about the rights of people with disabilities in Europe.

This booklet can help you learn:

- What the European Union is and how it works,
- What the European Union does for people with disabilities,
- What still needs to be done so that people with disabilities have better lives,
- Who you can contact if you feel that your rights are not respected and that you are treated unfairly.

This is a list of topics that you will find in the pages of this booklet.
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What is the European Union?

The European Union is a group of 27 countries in Europe.
These countries came together
to make things better, easier and safer for people.
They agreed to work together and help each other.

These countries are:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal



- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden

How does the European Union work?

The European Union has 3 main bodies:

- **The European Commission**

The people of the European Commission suggest laws for the European Union. They also manage the everyday work of the European Union.



- **The European Parliament**

The people of the European Parliament are elected by all people in Europe to protect their rights.



- **The Council of the European Union**

People who make decisions in every country of the European Union come together and make the Council of the European Union.



These 3 bodies are very important for the European Union.
They work closely together to make things better in Europe:

- The **European Commission** suggests laws.
- The **European Parliament**
and the **Council of the European Union**
discuss these laws and decide if they want these laws
to happen in Europe.
- If they decide that a law must happen in Europe,
all countries of the European Union
must work to make this law happen.

How does the European Union protect people with disabilities?

The European Union should work to protect the rights of all people.
It should protect the rights of people with disabilities too.
It must make sure that they are treated fairly
and they have the same chances in life as all other people.

- **The European Union and its countries have signed the 'UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'.**
In short, we call it the '**UN Convention**'.

The UN Convention is a document that says
what rights people with disabilities have
and how countries should protect these rights.



By signing the UN Convention,
the European Union agreed to do what the UN Convention says
to protect people with disabilities.

For example, the European Union agreed to make sure that all people with disabilities:

- Have the same chances in life as all other people,
- Are not treated unfairly or badly just because they have a disability,
- Can take part in the community like everyone else.

- **The European Union has made an important law that protects the rights of all people.**

This law is called the '**European Charter of Fundamental Rights**'.

This law protects people with disabilities too.

For example, it says that people with disabilities have the right to:

- Live an independent life,
- Have a job,
- Be part of the community,
- Take part in all things in life like all other people.



It also says that it is against the law to treat people unfairly just because they have a disability.

- **The European Union makes important plans in order to better organise its work on the rights of people with disabilities.**

We call these plans '**Disability Strategies**'.

These strategies help the European Union to plan their work ahead and make things better for people with disabilities in Europe.

In March 2021, the European Union agreed on the Disability Strategy for 2021-2030.

This is a plan of work for the next 10 years to make sure that all people with disabilities in Europe:

- Enjoy their rights,
 - Have the same chances in life as everyone else,
 - Make their own choices and live independently,
 - Move freely and get the right support in any country of the European Union,
 - Are not treated differently or unfairly just because they have a disability.
- **The European Union asks its countries to use the European money for the good of all people.**

The European Union gives money to its countries.
The countries should spend this money to make schools, streets and other things that are important for people.

This money is very important for people with disabilities too.
It can be used to make things accessible so that people with disabilities can use them.
For example, this money can be used to make schools, offices, metros, buses and other things accessible. This way people with disabilities can study, work and take part in life like everyone else.



To get this money from the European Union, countries should agree to use this money for the good of people with disabilities too. They should not use this money for things that leave people with disabilities out. They should use this money to make things accessible for them.

- **The European Union has made laws that allow people and things to move freely among its countries.**
We call this '**Freedom of Movement**'.

Freedom of movement means that all people in the European Union have the right to:

- Move, work, study and live in any country of the European Union.
For example, a German person can move to France to study or work.
- Buy and sell things and services in other countries of the European Union more easily.
For example, a Spanish person can buy a computer from Italy without extra taxes.
- Transfer money, open a bank account or buy a house in other countries of the European Union.
For example, a French person can buy a house in Greece and pay the same price as people who live in Greece.

Freedom of movement is a very important right.
The European Union works to make sure that people with disabilities enjoy freedom of movement too.



In the following pages, you will read how the European Union tries to make freedom of movement happen for people with disabilities and what rights people with disabilities have in the European Union.

Your rights when you travel

Did you ever have problems
when travelling in the European Union?
The European Union has laws that protect you.

For example:

- **Companies cannot refuse people from entering a plane, a boat, a train or a bus just because they have a disability.**
They can only refuse if travelling could be dangerous for people with disabilities.
However, in practice there are exceptions and people with disabilities are often left out.
- **People with disabilities have the right to get help when they are travelling by plane, train, boat or bus.**
They have the right to get this help for free.
It is better if people with disabilities ask for this help in advance so that it is ready when they need it.

When travelling by plane, boat or train,
people with disabilities should say
they need help 48 hours before their trip.

When they travel by bus,
they should say they need help
36 hours before their trip.

This way,
the air, bus, train or boat companies
have enough time to prepare
and give people with disabilities
the help they need.

If people with disabilities
ask for help at the last moment,



companies should still try to help them
but there may not be enough time to do so.

- **If your wheelchair gets lost or damaged by the company you travel with, the company should pay for the cost to fix it or get a new one.**
- **When you travel by bus or boat, you can have a person with you to help you.**
This person can travel with you for free.

[You can find more information about your rights when you travel by clicking here](#)

Travelling by plane

You have certain rights when you travel by plane.

If they don't accept you in the plane
or if your flight is cancelled
or late for more than 3 hours,
the company should:



- Offer you another flight
or
- Give you your money back.

In some cases, the company should give you
250 to 600 euros for the trouble you had at your trip.
That happens only if the delay was the company's fault.
If the delay was due to other problems like bad weather,
the company doesn't pay you any money.

[You can find more information about your rights when traveling by plane by clicking here](#)

Travelling by train

You have certain rights when you travel by train.

If your train is late for more than 1 hour, you can:

- Leave the train and ask the money of your ticket back.
- Take another train without any extra charge.
- Stay on the train and wait.
In this case, you have the right to get back part of the money you paid for the ticket. But if the delay was not the company's fault, you don't get money back.



[You can find more information about your rights when traveling by train by clicking here](#)

Travelling by bus

You have certain rights when you travel by bus.

If you plan to take the bus for a long distance and it is cancelled or late for more than 2 hours,

the company of the bus should:

- Give you back
the money you paid for the ticket
or
- Help you take another bus
with no extra cost.
If the company doesn't help you with this,
you can make a complaint.
This way, you may get money for the trouble you had.



[You can find more information about your rights when traveling by bus by clicking here](#)

Travelling by boat

You have certain rights when you travel by boat.
If you travel by boat and the boat is cancelled
or late for more than 1.5 hour,
the company of the boat should:

- Give you back the money you paid for the ticket
or
- Help you take another boat with no extra cost.

If you arrive at your destination late for more than 1 hour,
the company should pay you some money for the trouble you had.



[You can find more information about your rights when traveling by boat by clicking here](#)

The European parking card

The European Union has made a parking card for people with disabilities. With this card, you can have access to parking areas for people with disabilities in all countries in the European Union. You can get your parking card from the responsible office in your country.



However, every country may have its own rules about the use of the card. For example, how long you can park using this card. So if you want to use this card in another country of the European Union, you should check the rules of that country.

[You can find more information about the European parking card by clicking here](#)

The right to work

The European Union has laws that protect the right of people with disabilities to work.



The laws say that people with disabilities have the right to work like everyone else.

They should not be treated badly or unfairly just because they have a disability.

Offices and other things should be accessible for people with disabilities. For example:

- Offices should have ramps so that people in wheelchairs can go in.
- Blind or deaf people should have access to the right technology so that they can work without problems.

Also, the European Union makes it possible to move to another country of it and work there.

You will then have the same rights as the people who live in this country.

[You can find more information about the right to work in any country of the European Union by clicking here](#)

Social security benefits

‘Social security benefits’ means that a country gives money or other things to people in need.

For example, a country may:

- Give people with disabilities some money to help them have a better life.
- Give poorer people some money or a house to live in.
- Give money to people who do not have work or help them find a job.
- Pay for a person who is sick to go to the hospital.
- Give money to older people when they stop working.

These social benefits are really important for all people.

Anyone may need support sometime.

So it is important that all people have access to social benefits.



The image shows a close-up of a person's hand filling out a 'Social Security Benefits Application Form'. The form is titled 'Social Security Benefits Application Form' and includes a certification statement: 'By signing and submitting Social Security Benefits, I certify that this application is complete and all information provided is true and accurate and contains no willful falsifications or misrepresentation. I understand that falsifications, representations, or omissions may disqualify me from consideration to this position. I hereby authorize responsible person to contact current and previous employers for verification, conduct a background investigation, and check my driving record.' The form has fields for 'Full legal', 'Last Name', 'First', 'Middle', 'Home Street', 'City', 'E-mail Address', 'Education: Highest school grade', 'Do you have a high school', 'Number of years of post', and 'Name and Location of'. A hand is visible writing in the 'First' field. In the background, there are a pair of black-rimmed glasses and a white calculator.

Thanks to the European Union, you can get these benefits wherever you live in the European Union.

If you move to another country of the European Union, you have the right to get social benefits from this country

like the people who live there.

[You can find more information about Social Security Benefits by clicking here](#)

The rights of young people

The right to study

The European Union gives people the right to study at the university of any country in the European Union. For example, a Belgian student can go study at a university in Romania and pay the same money as students in Romania.

The European Union has programmes that help students go study in other countries in the European Union.

For example, the **‘Erasmus+ programme’**.

With the Erasmus+ programme, the European Union gives money to students to do part of their studies in another country of the European Union.

This way, students have the chance to get to know another country and its culture, meet other students, learn and have a good time.



Students with disabilities should have this chance too.
They can also ask the European Union for more money
if they need to have a support person with them or another kind of help.

[You can find more information about the Erasmus+ programme by clicking here](#)

Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee is an agreement
that countries in the European Union have made
to help young people up to 30 years old to:

- Get a good job,
- Get training to learn new skills,

within 4 months of being without a job or finishing their studies.

[You can find more information about the Youth Guarantee by clicking here](#)

The European Youth Card

The European Union has made
the **European Youth Card**.
Young people up to 30 years old
can get this card
and use it in many countries in Europe.
With this card, young people get discounts
in many activities.
For example, they pay less to visit a museum,
eat out or get a place to stay.



[You can find more information about the European Youth Card by clicking here](#)

The right to justice

The European Union has laws that protect people who have been treated badly or unfairly. These people can go to court and report the bad things that happened to them. This way, the court can act to protect them. In all this process, people with disabilities and all people should have the right to:



- Understand all steps and make their point clear,
- Be informed about their rights,
- Get the support they need for free,
- Be safe from the people who treated them badly and from any other risk.

People who are taken to court because they did something against the law, also have certain rights.

For example, they have the right to:

- Be informed about their rights,
- Have a person to help them understand if they do not speak the language,
- Have a lawyer to help them make their point clear at the court.

[You can find more information about the right to justice by clicking here](#)

The right to health care

As a person living in the European Union,
you have the right to health.
That means you can go to the hospital, see a doctor
and buy the medicine you need when you are sick.



If you travel in another country of the European Union,
you have this right too.
If you need to pay for the hospital or the doctor
in another country,
you may get the money back when you go back to your country.

[You can find more information about your right to health
by clicking here](#)

You can also get a free
European Health Insurance Card.

This card is really helpful
if you travel to another country in Europe
and you need to go to the hospital.
With this card, you can go to the hospital
in the same way and with the same cost
as the people who live in this country.
You can ask for this card at the responsible office in your country.



[You can find more information about
the European Health Insurance Card
by clicking here](#)

Buying things from other countries

The European Union protects your rights
when you buy things from other countries of the European Union.
For example, you have the right to:

- Get clear and right information about the thing you want to buy and how much it costs.
You should also get this information in accessible ways that work for you. For example, people with intellectual disabilities should get information in easy to read.



- Buy things at the same price as the people of this country. You should not pay more just because you are from another country.
- Return a thing you bought online and get your money back if it has a problem.
- Cancel your order or return a thing up to 14 days later.

[You can find more information about your rights when you buy things or services in the European Union by clicking here](#)

Accessible things and services

Things and services in Europe should be accessible so that people with disabilities can use them to take part in the community as all other people. EDF has been asking the European Union to make a strong law that will make things and services accessible so that all people can use them.

As a result of this work, in 2019 the European Union made this law happen.

We call this law the **'European Accessibility Act'**.

In the coming years, all countries in Europe should work to make this law happen in each of them.

If that happens, many things and services in Europe will become accessible for people with disabilities.

For example:

- Cash machines
- Computers
- Televisions
- Ticket machines



Right now, the countries of the European Union work to change their laws to respect the rules of the European Accessibility Act.

[You can find more information about the European Accessibility Act by clicking here](#)

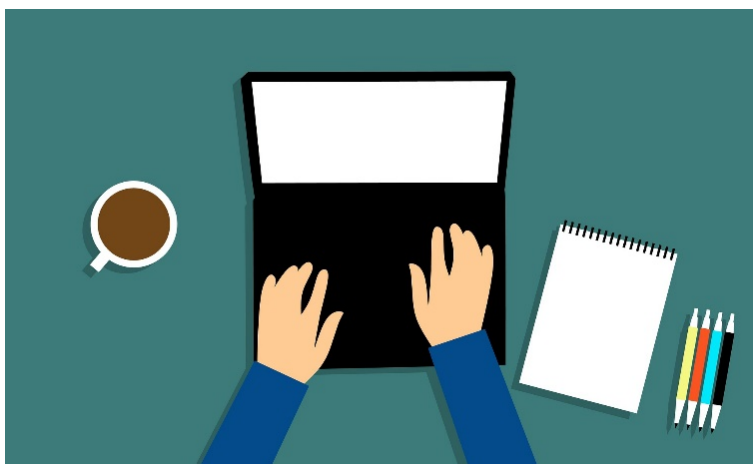
Accessible websites

The European Union made a law that says that public websites in Europe should be accessible.

For example, the website of your hospital or the community you live in should be accessible.

This way, people with disabilities and all people could use them and find important information.

We call this law 'the Web Accessibility Directive'.



[You can find more information about the Web Accessibility Directive by clicking here](#)

Accessible phones and internet

Today we use different kinds of technology to communicate. For example, phones and the internet. This technology should be accessible so people with disabilities can use it like other people. For example, blind people may need a system that reads them the text messages they get on their phone.



The European Union has laws and rules to make sure that this technology is accessible so people with disabilities can use it as everyone else.

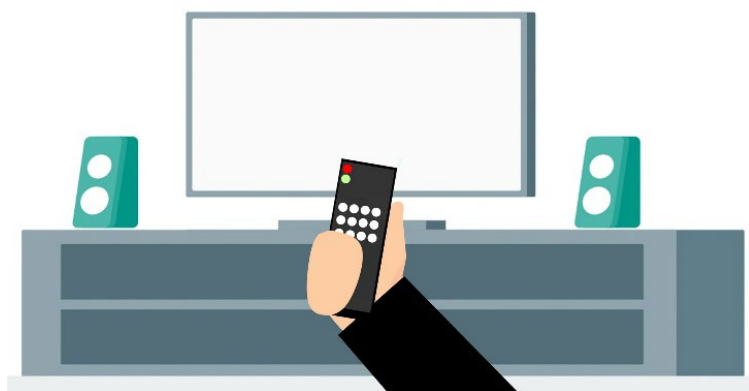
In the coming years, all countries in Europe should work to make technology, like phones and internet, accessible so people with disabilities can use it.

The European Union has also made an emergency number you can call from anywhere in Europe if you need to ask for help. For example, if you have an accident in the street or if you are in danger. This number is 112 and you can call it for free from anywhere you are in Europe.

[You can find more information about this emergency number by clicking here](#)

Access to television

The European Union works to make sure that programmes we watch on television or on the internet are accessible for people with disabilities. For example, there should be subtitles and sign language for deaf people and people who cannot hear well.



The European Union has made important laws to make these things more accessible for people with disabilities. All countries in the European Union should respect these laws and work to make them happen.

If the programmes on television or on the internet are accessible, people with disabilities can watch the programmes they want like all other people.

Also, these laws say it is forbidden to make fun or talk badly about people with disabilities on television programmes.

[You can find more information about access to television and other services by clicking here](#)

Access to books

Books should be accessible
so people with disabilities can read them too.



Sadly, many books are not accessible and people with disabilities cannot read them like everyone else.

The European Union works to make more books accessible for people with disabilities.

In 2018, the European Union signed the **‘Marrakesh Treaty’**.

This is a text that talks about what countries should do to make access to books easier for blind people and other people with disabilities who cannot read.

By signing this text, the European Union agreed to work to make access to books easier for these people.

[You can find more information about the Marrakesh Treaty by clicking here](#)

The right to vote

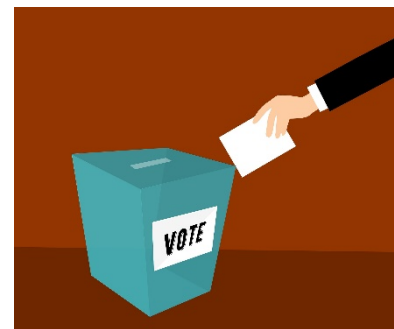
The right to vote is very important.
All people in Europe
should have the right to vote and choose
who will make decisions and laws in Europe.

It is also important to stand for elections.
That means that people can vote
and choose you to make decisions in Europe.

All people with disabilities
should have the right to vote too.
Their voice counts like everyone else's.

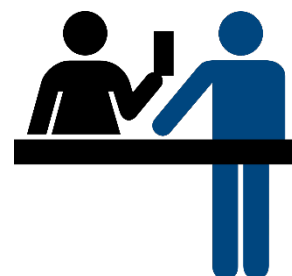
If you live in another country of the European Union,
you have the right to vote or stand for elections in this country
like all other people of this country.
You should not be left out from elections
just because you come from another country.

[You can find more information about the right to vote by clicking here](#)



The European Disability Card

The European Union made the **'European Disability Card'**. This card could make things easier for people with disabilities when they visit or live in another country of the European Union.



The card gives people with disabilities some advantages in culture, sports and other activities. For example, people with disabilities can use this card to pay less when they buy tickets for museums or football matches. Or people with intellectual disabilities can use this card and get information that is easy to read and understand.

The European Commission promised that by 2023 there will be a common European Disability Card in all countries of the European Union. But for the moment, only 8 countries in the European Union use this card:

- Belgium
- Cyprus
- Estonia
- Finland
- Italy
- Malta
- Romania
- Slovenia

That means that the card can be used by people with disabilities only if they are travelling among these countries. For example, a person with disability from Belgium who travels to Italy can use this card.

[You can find more information about the European Disability Card by clicking here](#)

COVID-19 certificate

‘COVID-19’ is a new disease that can pass easily from one person to another. You may have heard it also as “Coronavirus” or ‘the Pandemic’.

Sadly, too many people in the world have been ill from COVID-19. Most of the people recover, but many people die from it.



COVID-19 is very dangerous because it can pass very easily from one person to another.

In July 2021, the European Union made the ‘COVID-19 Certificate’. This is a document that shows you have either:

- Got vaccinated against COVID-19,
- Had a test that shows you do not have COVID-19 or
- Recovered from COVID-19.

In these cases, you are less likely to spread COVID-19.

When you travel to another country of the European Union you will be asked to show your COVID-19 certificate. This certificate should be accessible for all people with disabilities too. Otherwise, they will not be able to use it and will be left out.

[You can find more information about the COVID-19 Certificate by clicking here](#)

Problems people with disabilities still face in Europe

The rights we talked about in the previous pages are very important. The European Union has done much work to make things better for people with disabilities.

But there are still many problems that make it hard for people with disabilities to enjoy their rights as all other people.

For example:

- **It is still hard for people with disabilities to travel to another country in the European Union to study or work.**

This is because many things are still not accessible so people with disabilities cannot use them. For examples, many trains and buses may not be accessible, so people with disabilities cannot use them to move around.



- **If you move to another country of the European Union, it may be hard to get the support you need to have a good life in this country.**

This country may take a long time to recognise that you have a disability and accept to give you the help you need.



- **Some people with disabilities have lost their legal capacity.**

That means that they cannot take decisions for their lives.

Someone else is taking decisions for them.

They cannot vote in the elections either.

That is really unfair.

All people should have the right to decide for their lives.

- **Too many people with disabilities in Europe do not have jobs.**

Without a job,
it is hard to be independent
and be part of the community.
Things are even harder
for women with disabilities.
But even if people with disabilities
have a job,
they are often paid less
than people without disabilities.
This is unfair.



- **It is still hard for people with disabilities to go to the police or to court if they are treated badly or unfairly.**

That is because too many things
are still not accessible for them
and they may not get the support
they need.
For example,
people with intellectual disabilities
may not get information
in easy to read.
This way, they may not be able
to understand the steps they have to take
to report something bad that happened to them.



- **The European Union does not always ask for the views of people with disabilities and their organisations, when they make laws and decisions.**

Laws and decisions in Europe
concern people with disabilities too,
so their voices should be heard.
Things that concern the lives of people with disabilities
should be decided together with people with disabilities.
Nothing should be decided about us without us!



What else should the European Union do to protect people with disabilities?

The European Union should:

- Listen to people with disabilities and their organisations.
Nothing should be decided about us without us!
- Make sure that people with disabilities are treated fairly and have the same chances in life as everyone else.
- Work to make all things and services in Europe accessible so that people with disabilities can use them like everyone else.
- Make sure that all people with disabilities enjoy their rights and have access to health care, jobs, schools and other things.
- Make sure that people with disabilities have social security benefits wherever in Europe they decide to live.

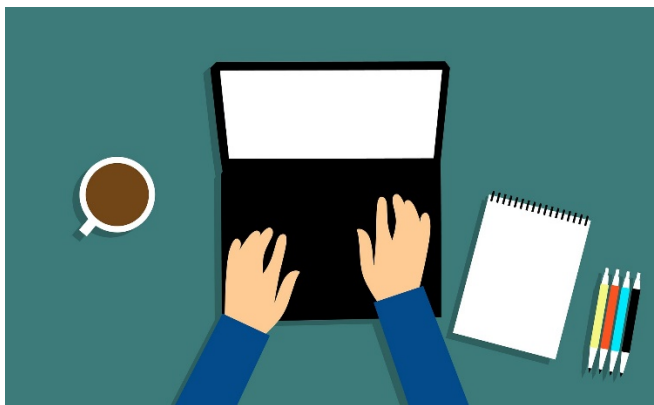


- Make sure that transport like planes, boats, trains and buses are accessible so that people with disabilities can travel anywhere they want without problems.
- Make sure that the European money is spent on things that are accessible for people with disabilities too.
- Understand the big impact COVID-19 had on people with disabilities and make sure all decisions take into account their needs too.

What to do if your rights are not respected

If you feel that your rights are not respected or that you are treated unfairly, it is important to raise your voice.

There are many organisations you can send your complaint to. They can help you deal with the problem you face.



For example:

- **The European Commission**

[You can send your complaint to the people of the European Commission by clicking here](#)

[Or you can contact the office of the European Commission in your country by clicking here](#)



- **European Ombudsman**

The European Ombudsman deals with complaints against offices and bodies of the European Union. If you think an office of the European Union does not respect people's rights,

[You can make a complaint to the European Ombudsman by clicking here](#)



- **'Equinet'.**

'Equinet' is an organisation that fights for the right of all people to be treated fairly.

'Equinet' has members in all European countries.

[You can find more information on Equinet's website by clicking here](#)



- **The 'UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities'.**

This person is working to protect the rights of all people with disabilities and may be able to help you with your problem.

[You can find more information about the UN Special Rapporteur by clicking here](#)

- **The European Disability Forum**

We can advise you on your rights and help you to find who to contact when you have a complaint.

You can send us an email at:

info@edf-feph.org.

You can also contact our members in different countries.

[You can find a list of our members on our website by clicking here](#)

