[Protect human rights and public health in fighting COVID-19](#)

"We clearly need strong public health responses to protect life during the pandemic. But we can protect our health and respect human rights. It is not a zero sum game," says FRA Director **[Michael O'Flaherty](#)**. *"The more we respect human rights, the better will be our public health strategies. These strategies must also ensure that any limitations to people's fundamental rights should only last as long as necessary and that they protect already vulnerable people who may face even greater risks from COVID-19."*

The FRA report [‘Coronavirus pandemic in the EU: Fundamental Rights Implications’](#) looks at the measures EU Member States use to address the pandemic to highlight rights-respectful approaches that other Member States can learn from.

It focuses on four issues underlining the need to carefully and regularly assess the impact on people's fundamental rights as governments react to the ever-developing pandemic:

1. **Daily life:** Government responses have had a wide-ranging impact on fundamental rights, such as the rights to freedom of movement and of

assembly, as well as rights relating to work, health and education.

- **Social and physical distancing measures** — While countries ordered at different times and with varying intensity such measures, they should not lead to social isolation.

1. **Vulnerable groups:** some people are more vulnerable than others, for example the elderly and children, people with pre-existing medical conditions, Roma, refugees, homeless people, prisoners, people in institutions.

- **Greater protection** — EU countries should protect but not isolate people in institutional settings, such as nursing homes, prisons or refugee centres. They should develop targeted measures to address the specific needs of other vulnerable groups such as shelters for victims of domestic violence and accessible healthcare information to those who regular messaging may not reach.

1. **Racism:** The COVID-19 pandemic triggered an increase in racist and xenophobic attacks particularly against people of perceived Asian background.

- **Reporting** — EU countries should closely monitor racist and xenophobic incidents and effectively report, investigate and prosecute such crimes.

1. **Disinformation and data protection:** Almost all EU countries face disinformation on the pandemic. Many collect data to help curb the spread of the virus.

- **Ensure data protection** — EU countries should stay vigilant and ensure they implement all data protection safeguards when protecting health.

This is the first in a series of three monthly reports on the impact of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) across the 27 EU Member States. It looks at the impact of government measures in place in February and March on people's fundamental rights.

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