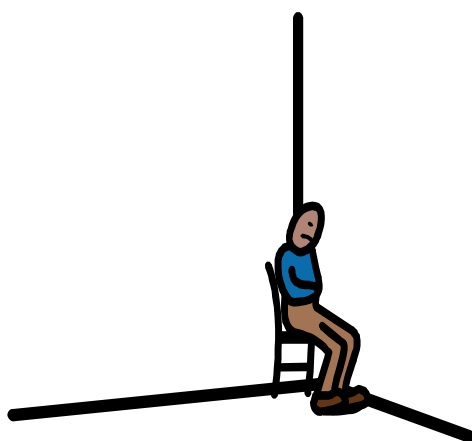


# What is happening to people with an intellectual disability or mental health needs in Croatia

October 2014



Easy to read





We are called **Human Rights Watch**.



We work to make sure people everywhere are treated fairly.



This information is about a country in Europe called Croatia.



It is about people in Croatia who have an intellectual disability or a mental health need.



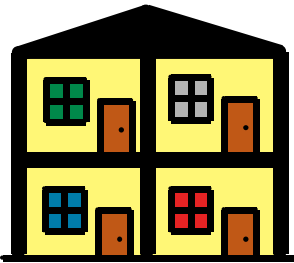
A mental health need is when you may need support with the way you think or feel.



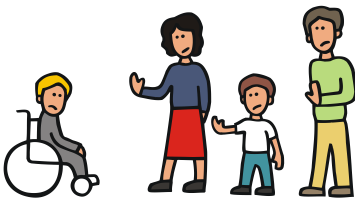
A mental health difficulty can make someone feel sad, angry, excited, or worried a lot of the time.



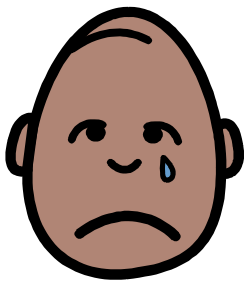
An intellectual disability is when you may need support to do everyday things or understand information.



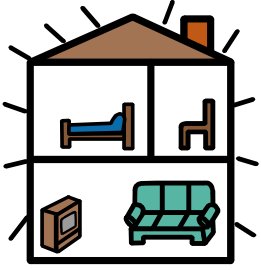
In Croatia many people with an intellectual disability or mental health need live in special homes or hospitals.



These places are far away from other people.

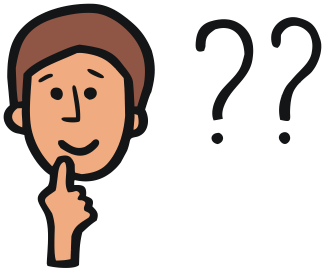


People in these homes and hospitals are not allowed to do the same things as other people.



Many people are not allowed to make their own choices about things like:

- where they live
- getting married or having a family
- having a job
- their healthcare

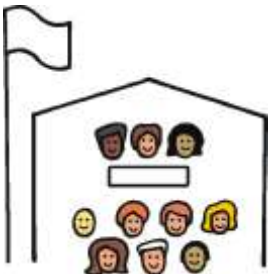


Other people make choices for them.



The law in Croatia says this is OK.

This needs to change.



Now the United Nations will look at what Croatia is doing to make life better for people with disabilities.



The United Nations is a group of countries that work together to make the world a better and safer place.

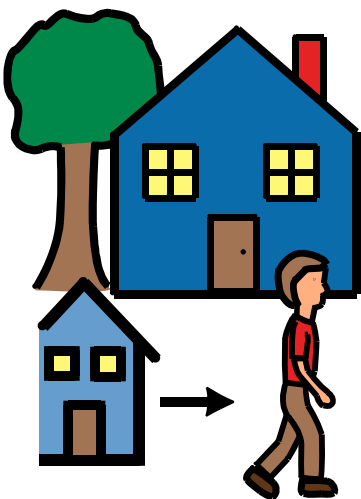


Lots of countries have agreed to make life better for people with disabilities.



Croatia agreed to this too.

Croatia has done some work to make sure people with disabilities get their rights.



But Croatia has not done enough to move people out of the homes and hospitals to better places.

Croatia needs to:

- move people with disabilities out of **all** special homes and hospitals where they don't want to live into better places for them to live



- change the law so that people have the right to make their own choices

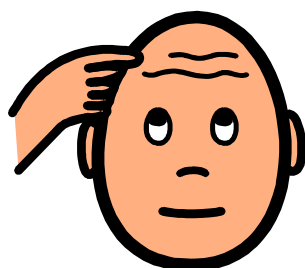


- make sure people get the support they need to live in the way they want

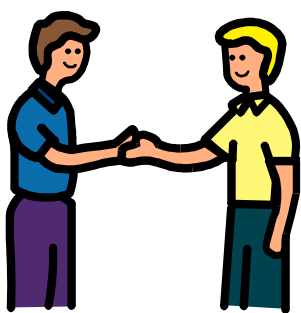


- give enough money to make this happen

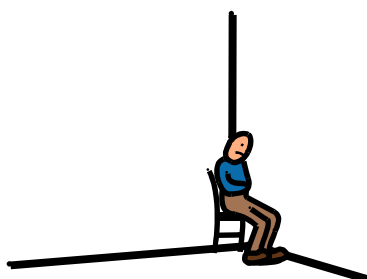
## More about what is happening in Croatia



In 2010 and 2014 we looked at what was happening for people who live in these homes and hospitals.



We talked to people to find out what was going on.



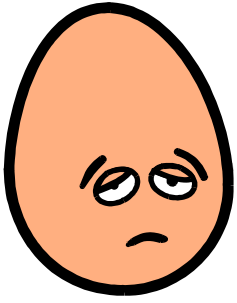
We found that people in the homes and hospitals are often treated badly.

Many people cannot:

- choose what to do or when to do it
- go out and meet new people
- get good healthcare
- be private when they want to

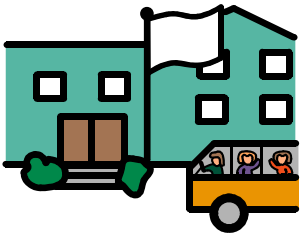


Some people are forced to work.



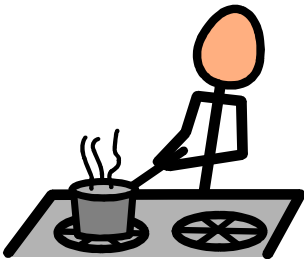
One man called Ivan said:  
“I am sad being here. I would like to leave as soon as possible.”

Another man called Josip has lived in a home all his life.



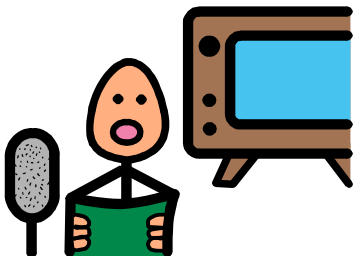
He said:

- he does not know his family
- he never went to school
- he has never had a job
- he has never cooked his own food



Some people said the homes and hospitals were like a prison.

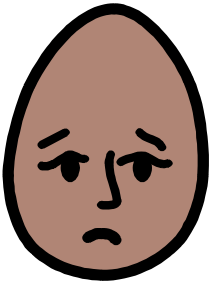
We made a video about people who moved out of these homes and hospitals.



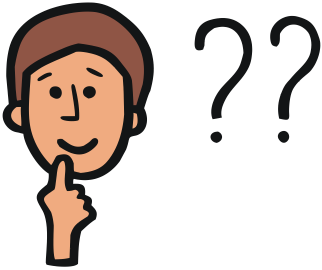
In the video people say how their lives are better now.



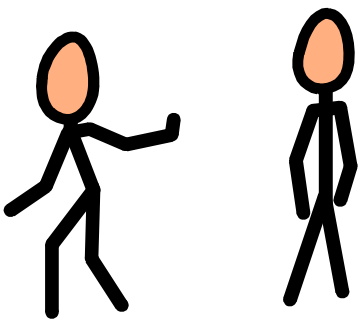
## Problems with the law in Croatia



At the moment many people with an intellectual disability or a mental health need are not allowed to make their own choices.

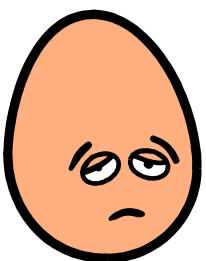


The law says other people can choose for them.



This means people may have to live in a home or hospital even if they do not want to.

They cannot leave unless someone else says it is OK.



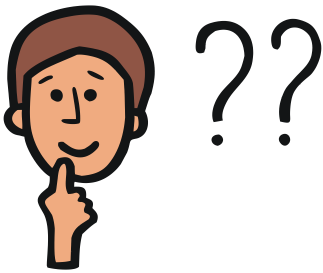
A lady called Vildana lives in a home.

She said:  
“I don’t want to live here. I want to live in a house on my own or with my mother. My mother does not allow me to live on my own.”



In 2014 the law changed.

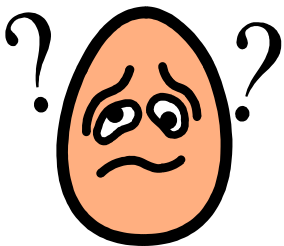
The new law says other people cannot decide everything for people with disabilities.



But other people can still decide some things if a court says it is OK.

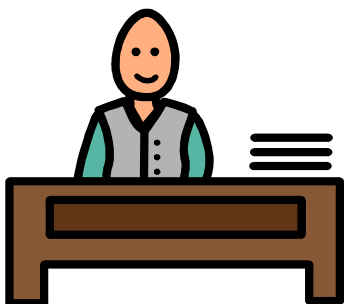
We think this could still be bad for people with disabilities.

## **Problems when people move out of the homes or hospitals**



People with disabilities can still find it hard to live in the way they want.

They cannot always choose where they want to live or get the support they need.



It is also much harder for people to get a job or good healthcare.



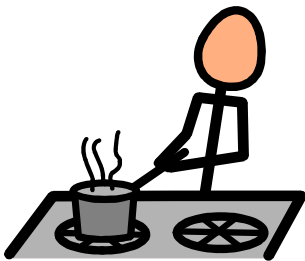
## Some good work that is happening

We found some good things happening too.



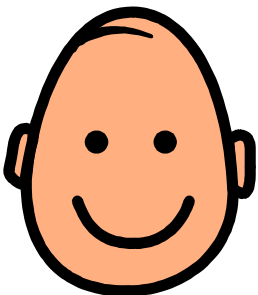
In one home people get lots of support to move into their own place.

Assistants in the special homes or hospitals work with people to find out what they want and where they want to live.



People learn good skills before they leave, like how to cook and look after themselves.

Assistants support people after they leave as well.



We talked to some people who had left the home.

They told us they are getting on well in their new lives.