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## Immediate action required to prevent abuse of people with autism in Greece

**Following media exposure of inhumane living conditions in the Lechaina care centre in Greece, Autism-Europe urges the Greek government to safeguard the human rights of people with autism and other disabilities.**

A recent [BBC report](#) revealed serious human rights violations taking place in a Greek centre for children with disabilities, including the confinement of residents in cells and cages.

These abuses are in clear breach of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, ratified by both Greece and the European Union.

Concerns over the appalling living conditions in the centre were first raised in 2009 by volunteers working in the centre, whose complaints were followed by a condemning report from the Greek Ombudsman for the Rights of the Child in 2010.

The findings of the Ombudsman's report described degrading living conditions including the use of physical restraint, medical sedation and wooden cages, as well as a significant shortage of staff and a serious deprivation of care and support.

The past five years have seen little to no progress in improving living conditions in the centre.

Greek authorities have stated that they are unable to improve the situation due to ongoing problems resulting from the economic crisis, such as lack of funds and a moratorium on hiring new staff imposed by the International Monetary Fund.

Autism-Europe's Director, Aurélie Baranger, says: "Respect of human rights must be an absolute priority, including in times of financial difficulty".

"It is paramount that Greek authorities act immediately to prevent further abuse of people with autism and other disabilities in the Lechaina care centre, and promote transition from institutional care to community living."

Autism-Europe calls on the Greek government to release a detailed action plan, describing the measures they will take in the immediate future in order to remedy the situation.

Greek authorities must also implement a monitoring mechanism to supervise and report on the de-institutionalisation process in Greece, as they are required to do under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The European Union must also respect its commitment to stop allocating European structural funds for the modernisation and reconstruction of institutions, and instead invest in community living solutions. The European Union must also ensure that human rights standards are being respected by all recipients of European funding.

Autism-Europe calls on the Greek government to abide by the [Council of Europe's call](#) to safeguard human rights in times of crises and austerity, launched in November 2013, calling on Member States to prioritise "the social and economic rights of the most vulnerable, the need to ensure access to justice, and the right to equal treatment."

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