Beat: Politics

75 OUT OF 82 CIIVISE's RECOMMENDATIONS ARE IN THE BILL PROTECTING DISABLED KIDS

FRANCE'S NEW CHILD PROTECTION BILL

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USPA NEWS - DISABLED CHILDREN AND ABUSE: DOUBLE VULNERABILITY IN A GENERIC LAW
In a technical press briefing on France's new Child Protection Bill, officials from the justice ministry and the health and disability ministries stressed that the draft law "takes into account" around 75 of the 82 recommendations made by the Independent Commission on Incest and Sexual Violence against Children (Ciivise). They presented this figure as evidence that the future law is aligned with three years of expert work on child abuse. In a room where most questions from journalists focused on the overall architecture of the bill, our wheelchair political correspondent, one of the very few disabled reporters regularly accredited to follow French justice and social policy briefings, raised a different issue: what does this generic promise mean for disabled children, who are statistically between 2.9 and 5 times more likely to be victims of sexual violence, and even more exposed when they have cognitive disabilities.

Our inclusive handicap focused press agency pays particular attention to the blind spots of public policy, and this question drew directly on official sources. A written question to the National Assembly, published in the Journal Officiel on 2 April 2024, recalls that thanks to more than three years of work by the Ciivise, France now estimates that 160,000 children are victims of sexual violence every year, including at least 7,680 disabled children; disabled minors are 2.9 times more often victims of sexual violence than other children, and 4.6 times more when they have a cognitive impairment. A year later, on 11 June 2025, a CNAPE colloquium documented the same order of magnitude, drawing on a Lancet meta analysis showing that disabled children are between three and five times more exposed to sexual violence than their non disabled peers.

Against this background, our correspondent asked two questions: first, what has become of the 82 Ciivise recommendations in light of this specific over exposure; second, whether the new bill will create stronger, specific protection for disabled children, whose baseline vulnerability as minors is compounded by disability, particularly intellectual or psychosocial disability.
Justice officials replied that around 75 of the Ciivise's 82 recommendations have been taken into account in government policy and legislative work, but that the bill deliberately remains generic: there will be no separate chapter on disabled children, because what is done "for all children" is deemed to be done "also for these children".

From the health and disability side, the answer pointed to operational measures: extended criminal?record checks and training for drivers, carers and health staff who work around disabled children; new coordinated PEGASE care pathways for those with complex needs; and a push for parental substitute care and respite solutions, while explicitly recognising disabled minors as children with "double vulnerability" who need more protective environments. But none of these elements changes the core legal choice: a child?protection law designed for all children, in which those who are 2.9 to 5 times more exposed to sexual violence still do not benefit from tailored, binding safeguards. SOURCE: Ministry of Justice press briefing and Ministry of Justice memorandum

WHAT THE DATA SAY: 2.9 TO 5 TIMES MORE RISK FOR DISABLED CHILDREN
The figures now in the public domain leave little room for doubt. Based on the Ciivise's three year work and international research, parliamentary questions at the National Assembly have established that roughly 160,000 children in France suffer sexual violence annually, including at least 7,680 disabled children. Within that group, disabled minors are 2.9 times more likely to be victims of sexual violence than other children, and 4.6 times more when they live with a cognitive impairment. Internationally, a meta analysis published in The Lancet has shown that disabled children are between three and five times more exposed to sexual violence than their non disabled peers.

A 2024 written question by MP David Amiel focused on children placed in medico educational institutes (IME), asking what concrete measures the government planned to deploy to prevent sexual violence in these structures. It cited the Ciivise's 82 recommendations, including preventive inspections, training for professionals on respect for bodily integrity and accessible listening spaces such as the

Handigyneco scheme. The question also relayed parents' concerns about recruitment criteria, oversight of carers and educators and the way daily activities are organised in IME, where children often depend entirely on adults for basic care.

FROM INVISIBILISATION TO SLOW RECOGNITION

Civil society and academic work has long warned that disabled children sit at the intersection of several layers of vulnerability: age, disability, dependency and, often, communication barriers. At a CNAPE conference in June 2025 on sexual violence against disabled children, speakers described an "overwhelming" situation that is not new but has remained largely invisible. Sociologist Pierre Brasseur argued that this is not a matter of a few individual monsters but a "social fact" sustained by denial, structural power imbalances and stereotypes that present disabled people as asexual or eternal children.

Because of these prejudices, comprehensive sex education is rare in specialised institutions and inclusive schools, and when sessions exist they are not always adapted to children's age or cognitive abilities. Disabled children, especially those with intellectual or communication disabilities, often have fewer words to name what is happening to them, fewer trusted adults to disclose to and more difficulty being believed. In this context, generic prevention messages are not enough: safeguards must be designed and tested with disabled children and their organisations, not on their behalf in the abstract.

THE GOVERNMENT'S ANSWER: 75 RECOMMENDATIONS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT, NO SPECIFIC CHAPTER

Faced with the question on disabled children's double vulnerability, justice officials replied that the government had taken into account "around 75" of the Ciivise's 82 recommendations. They presented this as evidence of strong political will, while acknowledging that not all measures require a law. However, they also made clear that the forthcoming Child Protection Bill does not contain a dedicated chapter on disabled children. The philosophy, they argued, is that what is done for all children is done "also for those children" – meaning that disabled minors will benefit from the same generic mechanisms as others: more stable placements, reinforced checks on adults, simplified health decisions and better coordination between actors.

On the health and disability side, an adviser from the Ministry of Health, Families, Autonomy and Persons with Disabilities stressed that several tools are aimed at the environments where disabled children actually live: extended criminal?record checks and training for drivers, transport staff, carers and health workers who interact with them; new coordinated care pathways such as the PEGASE scheme for children with complex needs; and efforts to develop parental substitute care and respite solutions so families are not left alone with highly complex situations. The adviser also spoke explicitly of "double vulnerability", acknowledging that these children need more protective environments and better?prepared professionals.

GENERIC ARCHITECTURE, SPECIFIC RISKS

Taken together, the bill and the government's answers outline a child protection architecture that is more coherent on paper, but still largely generic. Extending background checks to anyone working or volunteering around children; clarifying who can sign for medical treatment when parents are absent; strengthening controls on foster homes and residential units all of this will, in principle, benefit disabled children along with others. But none of these tools addresses, head on, the reasons why disabled children are 2.9 to 5 times more exposed to sexual violence than their peers: lack of adapted sex education, chronic under staffing and under training in IME and inclusive settings, barriers to complaint and disclosure, and the fear of families and institutions of "creating scandal".

When a group faces such a disproportionate risk, treating it as simply part of "all children" amounts to politically acknowledging the numbers while juridically avoiding their consequences. To really reduce the gap, lawmakers would have to hard wire into the bill: mandatory, disability adapted sex education; specific inspection and accreditation standards for IME and inclusive schools; independent, accessible listening and reporting channels that do not rely solely on internal hierarchies; and reinforced sanctions when institutions fail to protect disabled children in their care.

WHAT 75 RECOMMENDATIONS CANNOT DO ALONE

By stating that 75 of the Ciivise's 82 recommendations have been taken into account, the government signals that it has listened to three years of testimonies and expertise on sexual violence against children. But in the absence of a specific legal framework for disabled minors, the children who are 2.9 to 5 times more exposed to sexual abuse remain folded into a generic category whose protection is improving without being tailored to their risks. Our Correspondent's question (wh9o is actually disabled herself) at the briefing made this contradiction visible: if the State recognises that disabled children, especially those with cognitive impairments, are statistically the most exposed, how can it justify not giving them specific, legally binding safeguards?

This article is based on the official Child Protection Bill briefing held by Ministry of Justice, parliamentary questions at the National Assembly, the Ciivise's work and the CNAPE conference on sexual violence against disabled children, as well as the author's own question and the answers provided by justice and health officials. It is written by Rahma Sophia Rachdi, our in house handyjournalist and wheelchair using correspondent, who has been covering French justice, education, disability and child protection policies for more than two decades from within an inclusive newsroom that treats accessibility, critical independence and fact checking as non negotiable standards.../

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