

Use your vote

European elections 2024: For full rights and inclusion
of people with intellectual disabilities and families



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Why do European elections matter?

In June 2024, there are elections to select new Members of the European Parliament (MEPs, for short).

The European elections are very important for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Members of the European Parliament make decisions that influence the lives of all European Union (EU) citizens.

MEPs make decisions about laws.

These laws are about topics such as the accessibility of products and services, or the right to travel, live, and work within the European Union countries.

MEPs also make decisions about the money for many activities and projects in European Union countries.

Members of the European Parliament help to select the European Commission's President and Commissioners.

Commissioners are responsible for topics such as employment, social affairs, justice, education, and health.

MEPs look into how the European Union is fulfilling the CRPD (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities).

Some MEPs become part of a group that works specifically on disability issues.

This means that who is elected to the European Parliament
is very important to you.

It is important to all people with intellectual disabilities and family members.



***“Voting is a way to express my opinion,
to choose the candidate who should represent me.”
Maribel Cáceres, Spain***

Who is in the European Parliament matters to people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

The European Parliament has a big role in what the European Union does.

- ? **Does the European Union improve the lives of people with intellectual disabilities and their family members?**
- ? **What does the candidate for EU elections say about inclusion of people with disabilities?**
- ? **Does the candidate listen and talk to people with intellectual disabilities and families?**



"It is very important to vote.

***This is the only way to support a party
that represent my interests."***

Stephan Wolansky, Germany

EU and people with disabilities

There is a lot of talk about how the European Union works,
and whether it matters to vote in EU elections.

Some people are unhappy with the European Union
because they say it does many things they do not like.

Some people are unhappy with the European Union
because they say it does not do enough of things they do like.

In every democracy people have opinions about their society,
and about the things that should or should not happen.

When thinking about European elections,
it is important to think also about what matters to people
with intellectual disabilities and their families.

These are many things the EU does to improve rights of people
with intellectual disabilities and families.

Here are some of the things the EU has done recently
to improve rights of people with disabilities:

- [European Disability Card](#) will recognise access to many places
and services across Europe.

- [Strategy for the rights of persons with disabilities 2021-2030](#) includes measures such as promoting better job opportunities, deinstitutionalisations, and others.
- [EU Child Guarantee](#) tackles child poverty, and specifically targets children with disabilities and children in institutions.
- EU money goes to many things for people with intellectual disabilities, such as services, schools, trainings, jobs.

There are many more things the EU is doing.

You can see some of them [here](#), or [here](#), or [here](#).



[Easy to understand videos about the EU](#)

Of course, this does not mean that the EU is doing everything right, or that what the EU is doing is enough.

For example:

- Some EU money goes to places that segregate people with intellectual disabilities;
- Some EU policies leave out people with intellectual disabilities.

Inclusion Europe always asks for more to be done for full rights and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

Use your vote

Voting in EU elections matters.

MEPs decide what will or will not get done in the next 5 years.

It is important to vote.

When you decide which candidate to choose and vote for, we recommend looking also at what they are doing for people with intellectual disabilities and families:

- ? **What does the candidate and their party say about people with intellectual disabilities and families, and about inclusion?**
- ? **Does the candidate and the party have accessible, easy to understand information for you?**
- ? **Did the candidate reach out to you to talk to you and listen to what you want?**

Those are useful questions to think about when choosing who to vote for.

Below, there is a list of topics important to people with intellectual disabilities and families in Europe.

You could ask the candidate about some of these topics.

Asking about these topics can help decide which candidate you want to vote for.

Important topics

These topics are important to people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

What does the candidate and their party say about these topics?

Not being allowed to decide about ones' life

- In 26 countries in Europe a person's legal capacity can be removed, and they cannot decide about their own money, or where to live, or who to marry.
- In 7 countries people under guardianship cannot vote at all.
- In 15 countries people with intellectual disabilities cannot stand for elections.
- Only 5 countries fully respect the right to vote and make voting accessible.

Segregated in harmful places

- 750,000 people with intellectual disabilities must live in segregated "care" institutions with 30 persons or more in one place.
- 39,000 "live" in psychiatric hospitals.

***"Together we can change the world.
We are done waiting.
We demand politicians and decision-
makers to keep their promises."
Make it real! self-advocates' manifesto***



No place to live, families must provide all support

- In 21 countries few or no adults with intellectual disabilities live in their own place. That is a far from how adults in Europe typically live.
- Family members become disability support providers instead of being just parents or siblings.

Education

- 1,1 million children with intellectual disabilities are in mainstream schools. This allows them to grow up alongside their non-disabled schoolmates, develop important skills, and belong in the community where they live.
- Still, 700,000 are in special schools.
- 20,000 children with intellectual disabilities are getting no education at all.

Employment

- Less than 10% of people with intellectual disabilities have a paid job.
(Employment rate for people with disabilities in general is 50%, and 75% for people without disabilities.)
- In 17 countries people with intellectual disabilities risk losing disability benefits when they earn their salary.
- Similarly, lack of support means family members, mostly women, have to leave the labour market and stay at home with their disabled family member.

Healthcare

- Do people with intellectual disabilities have access to general healthcare?
- Is there easy-to-read information on healthcare available?

Representation

- Is there financial support for self-advocacy organisations?
- Are there people with intellectual disabilities represented in different organisations and places?



“Voting is very important to me.

I have a voice and I want to use it.”

Mine Owens, Ireland

The most important thing is to use your vote.

Let your voice be heard.

Vote in the European elections this June.

Right to vote

Voting in elections gives you the opportunity to decide about the future of cities, countries, and the future of the European Union.

Voting is one the most important rights people have.

You can ask the election candidates to provide clear and accessible information.

You can ask the candidates to improve rights and inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

You should vote in the elections yourself.

And you could tell others to vote, too.



The European Parliament in Brussels.

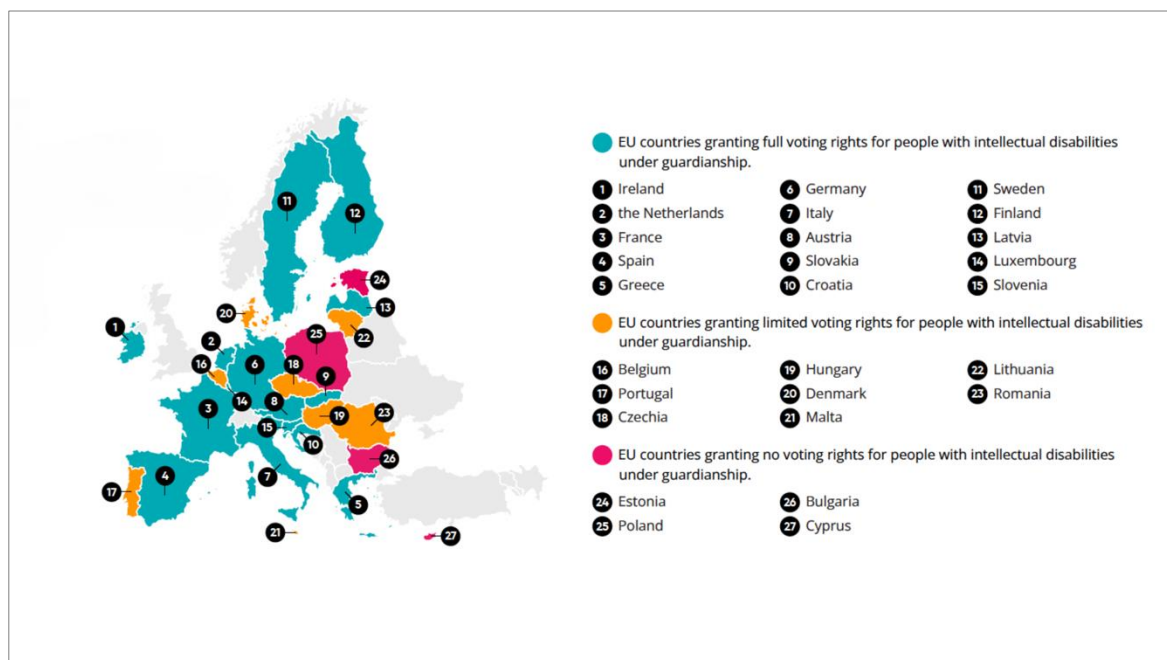
[Here is easy-to-read text about the European Parliament.](#)

But not everyone can vote.

But a lot of people with intellectual disabilities cannot vote because of legal capacity laws.

This is wrong, and it must be changed.

Everyone has the right to vote.



[More information about the right to vote situation in Europe.](#)

Some people find it hard to vote because there is not clear information about the elections.

Some people find it hard to vote because nobody helps them to make a decision or to communicate their decision.

Some people don't think it is important to vote because the candidates do not talk to them and listen to them.

Some people find it difficult to vote because they care for a family member with intellectual disability and they do not have the time to go to vote.

Access to voting is improving.

Right to vote, and accessibility of elections have been improving.

Some countries recently changed their laws that stopped people from voting:
For example: Luxembourg, and Slovenia.

Some countries are providing easy-to-read information about elections, and doing other things to improve accessibility.

Luxembourg has [easy-to-read information](#) about European elections, including a printed publication (pictured).



The European Parliament has a [page about the elections in easy-to-read](#).



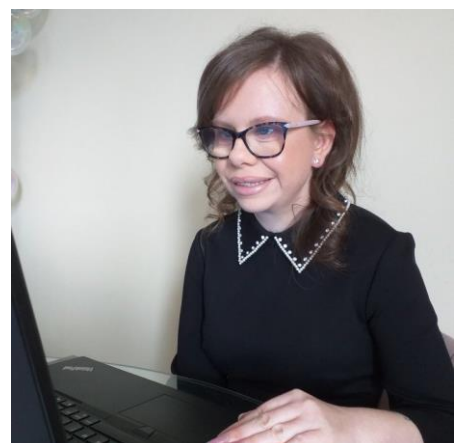
The European Commission published a guide about [how countries improve accessibility of elections](#).

“Europe needs to support people with disabilities to participate in politics.”

Tamara Byrne, Ireland

Tamara represents Inclusion Europe in Youth Committee of EDF.

[Read her article about elections.](#)



When and how to vote

The European elections take place between **6 and 9 June 2024**.

Each EU country has the elections on their own days during this time.

[Here is the information for every country in the EU.](#)



***"Voting is important for me,
because it helps influence the decisions
in Parliament."
Andreas Zehetner, Austria
(board member of Inclusion Europe)***

Other resources

Pictures and quotes from self-advocates come from [Elect 2019 campaign](#).

Building an inclusive future for persons with disabilities in the EU



European Disability Forum's manifesto for the 2024 elections.

1. Guarantee the participation of persons with disabilities in the political and public life of the EU.
2. Realise a Union of Equality for persons with disabilities with the CRPD as its compass.
3. Become a more social Europe.
4. Embrace accessibility – allowing free movement in Europe.
5. Protect persons with disabilities in Europe and beyond;

<https://www.edf-feph.org/publications/eppd-manifesto-2023/>

Voting for all

How to make elections accessible:

Tools, recommendations, practices.

<https://www.inclusion.eu/voting-rights>



**Recommendations
for Accessible
Elections in Europe**

Europe for us

Easy to read magazine,
issue 2/2023 about voting,
in 9 languages.

<https://www.inclusion-europe.eu/europe-for-us/>



Number 2 / 2023



Europe for us

Inclusive democracy

Inclusion indicators

Inclusion indicators reveal what Europe looks like for 20 million people with intellectual disabilities and their family members:



1. Right to decide and right to vote
2. Right to live independently and to be included in the community
3. Housing and support
4. Education
5. Employment
6. Healthcare
7. Representation

<https://www.inclusion.eu/indicators>

Use your vote.