



Europe for us

Hear our voices.
Make it real.



Find explanations for words in **bold** at the end of Europe For Us on pages 46 to 54.

“Europe for us” is available in:

- English
- French
- German
- Hungarian
- Italian
- Netherlands
- Romanian
- Spanish

Go to www.inclusion-europe.eu/europe-for-us to find the other language versions.

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Make it real!

Self-advocates' manifesto





We believe everyone has the right to enjoy life.
We believe everyone must have their rights respected.
This is what we want to say.
Listen to us.



For 3 days, we, the self-advocates,
shared our experiences, dreams, and hopes.
We learned from one another.

We talked about:

- What we want and need.
- How do we make those things happen.
- What support we need.



Each of us is an individual.

Unique, not “special”.

Value every one of us.



We want to understand the world we live in.

Information should be easy to understand,
and available to all.



We want real jobs, and real pay.

We want equal and fair access to employment.

If we need support for work, we should get it.



We want all children and students to go to school together.

All children should go to school together,
not to be segregated by disability.

Children and students who need support
to learn should get it.

We want this at all levels of education.



We want to live in the community, with the people we choose.

We don't want to be placed in institutions.

We want to decide about where and how we live.

We want to have proper support if we need it.



We want public spaces accessible to all.

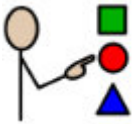
Public transport must be available and accessible.



We want equal access to healthcare.

All people must access hospitals, doctors, and other health services.

Healthcare professionals need to learn how to communicate with us.



We want our decisions to be respected.

We have the right to make decisions.

We have the right to support in decision-making, if we need and want it.

We have the right to say “no”.



We are the experts in our life.

We will have a say on decisions that affect our lives.



We want the right to vote in elections.

We all have the right to take part in society.



We want to be able to connect with others, and to work together for our goals.

We work together to build an inclusive society.

We must share and learn from each other.

We all have knowledge to share.

Together we can change the world.



We are done waiting.

We demand politicians and decision-makers keep
their promises.

We are not asking.

We are claiming our rights.

Hear our voices!



1. Easy-To-Read information about the elections and about the process (how to vote)

2. To realize that there are people with visible but also invisible disabilities

3. Self-advocacy allows me to express my mind, heart, dreams

4. Politicians invite self-advocates to meetings

5. Free social services personal assistant for people in need

6. Right for education for all (in normal schools)

7. As a self-advocate I know my rights! To participate, to be included, to have voice

8. Supported decision-making instead of guardianship

Hear Our Voices conference

Tallinn, Estonia.
20-22 September 2023





Hear Our Voices conference
had 150 participants from 11 countries.
The subject of the conference was
**How to make self-advocacy stronger
in countries where it is not yet strong enough?**

The conference was organized
by Evpit and Inclusion Europe.



Vjatseslav Zagorski had a speech about
how his life changed by becoming independent,
Vjatseslav said it's important for self-advocates
to make decisions for themselves.

**"Our lives must be up to us, we need
to make decisions for ourselves.
Everyone has the right to make
decisions for themselves. We need
other people to trust us. We must
learn, make mistakes, and be
responsible for our decisions. We
need to be listened to."**

Vjatseslav Zagorski, EVPIT board member



Fedele Collu and Francesco Juarez

explained the guidelines they adopted in their organization.

The guidelines help people with intellectual disabilities to participate in everyday life.



“It’s important that our voice is always heard. The support from self-advocate groups and family is very important, that there is someone who cares on the other side.”

Francesco Juarez and Fedele





Ivar Merila spoke about people with intellectual disabilities having ambitions, Ivar studied to become a chef.

"I always wanted something more. I wanted more education. I am not someone who gives up, I have dreams,"

Ivar Merila from Estonia said.



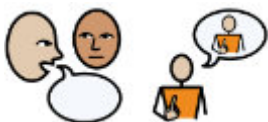
Janek Muru talked about how easy to read documents are very important for people with intellectual disabilities.



Ana Martinez talked about her experience with self-empowerment and her desire to fight for the rights of people with disabilities.



Andreas Zehetner talked about real wages for people with intellectual disabilities.



Oswald Föllerer talked about difference between a self-advocate and a lobbyist.



Ana Martinez, Giulio Tulumello and Antonio Costanza

talked about the role of the families of self-advocates, and about the difficulties they face.



Signe Riisalo, minister of social protection of Estonia, talked about the importance of accessibility and easy-to-read for people with intellectual disabilities.

"I learned a lot about the European Union, and I made friends. I learned about independent living, my rights, how to support each other and easy to read documents."

David from Hungary shared what he learned while being a member of self-advocacy group.

László Bercse's opening speech



Dear self-advocates!

Dear friends and colleagues from all over Europe!



Welcome to the Hear Our Voices conference,
in the beautiful city of Tallinn.

We are grateful to our Estonian member organisation
EVPIT for hosting this conference!

We want to thank the other organisations and supporters
who support us to be here and to work together.

EPSA, the European Platform of Social Advocates
organises the Hear Our Voices conference every two years.



Every two years we gather somewhere in Europe,
to share our ideas, our experiences and to plan our work
for the future.



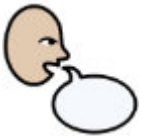
This year's conference theme is
How to make self-advocacy stronger
in countries where it is not yet strong enough?



I am excited to see how many experienced and strong
self-advocates came to this event.

We know that every country is different,
so there is no recipe,
that works the same way everywhere.

But there are ingredients,
which we all need for self-advocacy:



- We need opportunities to speak up. Like this conference.



- We need good support. From organisations, families and other self-advocates.



- We need to learn a lot and we need to work hard for ourselves.



- We need to make our voices heard.

Over the next 3 days you will hear more about these topics from great speakers.

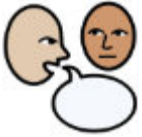


This is a good opportunity to learn from each other.

And we certainly need a strong self-advocacy movement across Europe.



Because the European elections are coming next year.



We must take advantage of the elections and make our voices heard.

We must speak about the topics that are important to us.

We need to talk to each other and to other people, who can support us.

We need to talk to politicians.



And we must and go and vote.



But unfortunately, there are still many people with intellectual disabilities who cannot vote.



Many do not get accessible information.



This way it is much harder to make our voices heard and to influence the decisions that affect us.



So, this must change!

We need a Europe, where we can all vote.

Where we can be equal citizens
where our voices are heard
where we get the right support to be included.



I know you are all working very hard for change.

So, it is an honour for me to spend the next three days
with you and to learn from you.

Unfortunately, I also have to tell you about a sad event.

A strong self-advocate recently left us forever.



Lahcen Er Rajaoui, president of the French self-advocacy
organisation Nous Aussi, passed away in July.

Lachen worked with several organisations and
government institutions,
such as the National Disability Council.

He worked closely with Inclusion Europe and EPSA.



He always worked hard to improve the lives of people
with disabilities in France and all over Europe.



He himself was deprived of his right to vote.



He fought to ensure that
all people with disabilities could vote.



He wanted to make sure elections were accessible.

And what is his legacy to us?



I think that his legacy is to keep fighting for our rights.

I know he wanted to be here with us at this conference.

He is greatly missed here today
and he will be missed in our movement.



I am proud to have known him.

I look back gladly on those occasions,
when we met at conferences or trainings.

The last time we met was in May, in Brussels,
at a training of Inclusion Europe.

We were talking about the European elections next year.



At the end of the meeting we came up
with a common message:

"Let's stand up for our rights".



This is also my message to you now,
as a conclusion to my speech:

"Let's stand up for our rights!"

I wish you all a useful conference and
a great time here in Tallinn.

László Bercse's closing speech



Dear Participants!



I am glad that I could take part
in this conference with you.

I would like to thank our Estonian member EVPIT
for hosting us in this beautiful city.

It is always a great pleasure for me
to attend such conferences,
where we discuss useful and exciting topics.



Over the past few days,
we could learn a lot from each other:

For example,
we heard about how to become a self-advocate.



We heard about how to advocate for ourselves.

We have heard about different ways of self-advocacy:



Self-advocates who work in parent-led organisations
and those who work in independent organisations.

We also learned about good examples,
for example, on preparing for independent living.



We heard good examples about how to plan our future.



We learned about how self-advocates work in Ukraine during the dark times of war.

I believe that self-advocates are always needed.

Especially in difficult times.

As I said in my opening speech, there is no recipe, that works the same way everywhere.



But I hope that you could gather as many ingredients as possible.

I hope that when you return home to your own countries, you will use what you learned here.



I hope that you will be able to promote self-advocacy and convince more people to work with you.

I believe that self-advocates can build a link between decision-makers and people with intellectual disabilities.



For example,
we can express that we have the right to vote.

As the principle "Nothing about us, without us" clearly states.



I believe that the CRPD is a very important tool in our hands, when we fight for our rights.



I hope that what you learned here will help to really make self-advocacy stronger.

As we are about to close the conference soon I have only one important task left.



On behalf of the Steering Group and members of EPSA I would like to thank Elisabeta Moldovan for her work.

Eli has been one of the leaders of EPSA for many years, but her mandate has now expired.



She herself has been through very difficult times, but she has not given up.

She has become a good leader and a strong advocate.



She is fighting for people with disabilities to leave institutions.

As she did after spending most of her life in institutions.



I think she is a real role model.

We have all learned a lot from her.



And we will continue to learn from her.

I am not saying goodbye to her now.

I am sure that we will continue to meet at events
and we will continue to work together whenever we can.

Many thanks for the work you do for all of us!

It was great to have you on the EPSA Steering Group!

We wish you all the best!

Self-advocacy in Ukraine

“I came here to learn from you. I want to become a successful self-advocate and stand for my rights. My friends want this too. We want our voices to be heard.”

Anton Onyshchuk





Anton is a 15-year-old boy from Ukraine who just started to work as a self-advocate.

Anton could attend the conference thanks to the project “Inclusive response and recovery from the war”.



Anton and his organization work on advocacy, community-based services instead of institutions, easy to read and self-advocates movements.



Anton said that to work as a self-advocate in Ukraine right now is very difficult because of the Russian war.



The self-advocates in Ukraine can't attend any meeting and they have no electricity or internet.



For this reason, they wrote a letter about the rights of people with disabilities in Ukraine.



Anton said that he came to the conference to learn from older self-advocates how to make his voice heard.



He said he will share his experience
at this conference with the other Ukranian self-advocates.

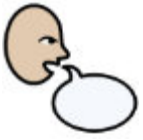


Inclusion Europe has been a great help for Ukraine.

Inclusion Europe has raised 630.000 Euros
to help Ukrainians after the war started.



Thinking together about the future



The “Thinking together about the future” session was about how the voices of people with disabilities can be heard in new places.



Elisabeta Moldovan is a self-advocate from Romania. Elisabetha wrote a book to make her voice heard because she grew up in institutions where it was never respected.



Elisabeta said that receiving support from other people were a good help for her to write her book.



Eli is also part of an organization. She is part of a monitoring group that goes to the institutions, makes reports and sends it to the ministry of labor.



The organization has three objectives: accessibility, raising awareness and deinstitutionalization.



Elisabeta and her organization ask for more services for the community in the future and to collaborate with other cities in Romania.



They are the first self-advocate organization in Romania and they would like to collaborate with others.



Many people with disabilities in Romania are still under guardianship and many lawyers still don't know how to work with people with disabilities.



Her association organized a successful training for lawyers which will be done again.



They also teach some tram drivers to use the platform for the wheelchair so that now people with disabilities can use the tram.



For the future, she hopes that the problems about discrimination get solved in Romania.



As Elisabeta said, they need patience as things are slowly starting to move thanks to their work.



"I grew up in different institutions where my voice was never heard. And then I received support. A good friend of mind suggested I write a book. At first it was very hard. I said I did not want to tell my story. But I wanted to change the world, so I had to."

Elisabeta Moldovan, Romania

The role of families





Ana Martinez talked about the role of families for people with intellectual disabilities.

At the beginning my family wanted me to be like my cousin with no disability and go to university.



But now they realize that I also have a future, I am on a course and I will be able to work so they are proud of me.

That is now because before they would not accept it and before they would always compare me to my cousin.



Plena Inclusion works with families, so they know how to accompany them and know the rights of their children.

Families rights are also impacted.
It is also difficult for them.
They also need to be accompanied.



It is important to teach families how important it is for people with disabilities to fight for their rights.



This can cause fear in the families,
they can be overprotective.

We need to empower families
and people with disabilities at the same time.



Siblings are very important.

They know how to relate and empathize
because they are closer to us in age.

“It was very difficult for me to be
empowered, but once I did, I was
clear of what I wanted to do – fight
for the rights of people with
intellectual disabilities.”

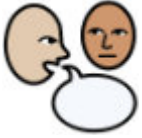
Ana Martínez, Plena Inclusión, Spain.

Young people with intellectual disabilities in Sweden





Anna Ringstrom talked about the young people with intellectual disabilities.



Young in FUB are extremely important to make young adults feel inspired.

It is important that young people with intellectual disabilities are listened to.



Young in FUB want to create groups for young people with intellectual disability.

Where they could meet and talk about things that are important to them.

We also do advocacy work.



We have experiences that adults don't have and how it is to be young today.

How we use social media, internet and YouTube.

It is important that people respect and accept our opinion.



The most important issues for me are racism, discrimination, LGBTQ and democracy.



No one should be treated badly.

No one should be afraid.

All people must have freedom.

I have talked about these subjects with other members.



We talked about discrimination at our democracy camp in 2022.



This was election year in Sweden.

We talked about what democracy means.



I want to start a podcast.

I also want to start a magazine in different languages.

I want to work with youth organisations in other countries.

I want to get to know young adults from other countries.



I want to start youth groups in other countries.



Being independent and speaking out



Paul Alford from Inclusion Ireland talked about how he became independent.

Q: What is important for you on your journey to becoming a self-advocate and helping others to learn about their rights?



Paul: My organization asks me and one of the other clients to go to meetings and speak out for our rights. And then, to know our rights.

Q: And do you want to say what happened after you started going to those meetings?



Paul: When I first started, I wasn't able to speak out for myself. I usually got upset at speaking out.

And then later, I learned how to speak out for myself and for others.



Not just myself, I am part of meetings in Inclusion Ireland, and I'm a staff member.

Q: And, the first time you spoke out at a meeting, what happened?



Paul: I told them about my rights,
and what I wanted in life.
So, they helped me,
as well as the anti- bullying group
helped me to get my own place.

Q: So, getting your own house was what you wanted in life?



Paul: Yeah, I wanted to move out of the institutions
because I was too long in it.
I was 32 and a half years in them.
And I said at the anti-bullying group meeting.
I wanted to leave.

Q: And what happened after you spoke up for yourself
then at that meeting about what you wanted?



Paul: After that, the anti-bullying group had a few
meetings with me.
And then they went looking for a place.
And then I went to a meeting
from Inclusion Ireland in Dublin.
And then I went with the boss.

And then I spoke out and said that I wouldn't be allowed to move out.



My family wouldn't let me move out,

and the staff wouldn't let me move out.

So, I just said at the meeting that I wasn't allowed.

Q: And from what you have learned,
how do you help others to learn about their rights now?



Paul: I go around speaking about the UNCRPD

and then I speak about making your own choices

and then how I got my own place.

I tell people, and the other thing I do,

was wrote a book as well in my life story.



Q: And what advice would you give other people
who are only starting out as self-advocates?

Paul: Not to be afraid to speak out

and then get their voices heard.

That's why it's our voices,

our choices at the end of the day.

Inclusion Ireland are out here to get the voices heard.

And help them out with whatever problems they have

and whatever they want.





And then we have to lobby the media,
we have to lobby the government.



Because they don't listen to the disabled people
and take them on board what they want.



That's why the government said, about 12 years ago,
that they were going to move clients out of the
institutions and then they haven't done it yet.

Explanations



Accessible

Something that is easy to use for people with disabilities.
Such as:

- Ramps to get into a building.
- Information in easy-to-read.
- Information in sign language.



Charter of Fundamental Rights

A paper that says what basic rights every person has.
For example, the right to freedom, the right to education.



Commissioner at the European Commission

A Commissioner is a person who is responsible
for a field of work at the European Commission
and manages a lot of people.



Community

People that belong to something.

For example, neighbourhood community.

People who live in the same neighbourhood.

Or religious community.

People who have the same religion.



Community-based services

Support given by people from the community.



Convention

An agreement between countries or

organisations which talks about many topics.



Deinstitutionalisation

Deinstitutionalisation is helping people
to move out of institutions.

It is when the people who lived in institutions get help
so they can live independently in the community.



Educate

Educate means to teach.

It means to make sure people have access to training so they can learn new skills.



European Union

The European Union (in short, EU) is a group of 28 countries.

We call these countries “member states”.

They have joined together to be stronger politically and economically.

The EU makes laws on many important things for the people who live in those countries.

The EU makes laws in different areas.

Some examples are:

- Laws to protect the environment.
- Laws for farmers.
- Laws to protect consumers.

A consumer is someone who buys things.

The EU also makes laws that are important for people with disabilities.

It also made a law that gives people with disabilities more rights when they are travelling.

The EU also gives money to its member states.

Some of this money is used for people with disabilities.



Fund

To give money to someone or to an organisation which helps people or organisations.



Inclusion Europe

Inclusion Europe is an organisation for people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

We fight for their equal rights and inclusion in Europe.
We also want to make a difference to the laws in Europe.
We started in 1988.

We have 79 members in 39 European countries.
We are based in Brussels in Belgium.



Institutions

Institutions are places where people with intellectual disabilities live with other people with intellectual disabilities.

They live apart from other people.

This is what we call “segregated”.

Sometimes this happens against their will.

People who live in institutions have to follow the rules of the institution and cannot decide for themselves.



Intellectual disability

If you have an intellectual disability, that means it is more difficult for you to understand information and learn new skills than it is for other people.

This makes some parts of life harder.

People with intellectual disabilities often need support in learning or at work.

Intellectual disability often starts before you are an adult.

It affects you for your whole life.

There are things that can make life easier
for people with intellectual disabilities.

For example, information in easy-to-read language.

Some people say learning disabilities
instead of intellectual disabilities.



NGO **Non-governmental organizations**

Non-governmental organizations, or NGOs are
generally defined as nonprofit and independent of
governmental influence.



Online Schooling

Online schooling is a way for students to attend
their classes using a computer or another device
to connect to the internet.

These classes happen with the help of online
applications for meetings or online classrooms.



Organisation

A group of people who work for the same thing.



Segregation

Segregation is when someone is set apart from others for an unfair reason.

For example, because of their disability.



Self-Advocacy

Self-advocacy is when people with intellectual disabilities speak up for themselves.

These people are called self-advocates.



Services

Support for people with disabilities.



Training

A class often given at work where people learn new things.



Ambitions. Rights. Belonging.

Contact us and share your self-advocacy stories!



Website:

inclusion-europe.eu



Email:

secretariat@inclusion-europe.org



Telephone:

+32 2 502 28 15



Address:

Avenue des Arts 3, 1210 Brussels, Belgium



Facebook:

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