



Europe in Action
GLASGOW 2024



Europe in Action 2024 conference in Glasgow

The 2024 Europe in Action conference took place from 7th to 9th May 2024 in Glasgow.

Europe in Action is an annual conference, bringing together people with intellectual disabilities, their families and professionals. These conferences discuss important issues and provide an opportunity to share experiences and ideas to advance inclusion. The conferences are organised by Inclusion Europe and a national partner organisation. This was the 20th Europe in Action conference. The first Europe in Action conference was organised in 2003.

The aim of Europe in Action is to showcase the work being done for the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities across Europe. It is also an opportunity to help people and organisations in the inclusion movement gain

and develop skills and experiences to ensure more effective advocacy. There were many opportunities to discuss and learn about the work being done in different countries.

There were three main streams of the conference programme:

1. Developing self-advocacy and activism.
2. Changing disability support services to be person-led, and aligned with disability rights.
3. Celebrating good work being done for inclusion across Europe, including learning from others (women's rights, anti-racism etc.).

Enable Scotland, one of the founding members of Inclusion Europe, were the hosts of the conference. In 2024, Enable Scotland celebrated their 70th anniversary, Europe in Action 2024 was a great way to celebrate the achievements of Enable over the last 70 years and to look into its future.

The program of the Europe in Action Conference had many interesting plenaries and workshops. The three days in Glasgow offered lots of interesting information and experiences from countries all over the world. Over 400 participants attended from 39 different countries, demonstrating the importance & relevance of the topics under discussion.

A week of joy, reflection, impact, influence and of international relationships. A week that was a call to action to be the change needed in the world and to look forward to the future work of Inclusion Europe and Enable, working to advance the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and their families across Europe.

Enable and Inclusion Europe

[Enable](#) celebrated 70 years of action on rights for people with intellectual disabilities by hosting the Europe in Action 2024 Conference.

Scotland's leading charity for people with intellectual disabilities celebrated its 70th anniversary of campaigning for their rights by hosting the 2024 Europe in Action conference. Like with so many of Inclusion Europe's member organisations, Enable Scotland's story started with a few mothers and fathers of people with intellectual disabilities. Seventy years ago, in 1954 these families got together and found immediate connection with each other.

Theresa Shearer, CEO of Enable, opened the conference, saying:

“We are privileged to welcome people with learning disabilities from across Europe who are championing change in their own countries as we celebrate 70 years of Enable members successfully fighting for their rights to be included in our society. We have the opportunity to share with our European partners our experience of developing human rights-based services and support for people with learning disabilities in Scotland. We look forward to learning from the experiences of colleagues abroad and from international experts so we can make even greater progress in our work to ensure Scotland is a place where rights are made real for the people we support.”

Jyrki Pinomaa, president of Inclusion Europe, said:

“We want to end segregation. We want people with intellectual disabilities to be able to live where everybody else lives, live in the community, be part of the community, as equal citizens, as equal human beings. To make this happen, we need legislation that makes it possible. But it is not enough. To

make this a reality, we need to first challenge and then change disability policies throughout Europe. We are pleased Enable hosted our conference in Glasgow as a valued member of Inclusion Europe as we work together to create an inclusive Europe for people with intellectual disabilities.”



Sessions highlights

Workshops

Many members of Inclusion Europe were present at the event, talking about stronger self-advocacy and deinstitutionalisation work happening in their countries.

Self-advocates and members of Inclusion Europe from Albania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia talked about the self- advocacy movement in their country; how it started and when deinstitutionalisation and self-advocacy became a topic of conversation in their country. They talked about what they have done so far and where their country is in the campaign for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities right now.

Deinstitutionalisation in Scotland was presented by **John Dalrymple** and **Frances Brown** of Radical Visions. Radical Visions works with people at risk of exclusion.

Fermin Núñez, from Plena Inclusion, Spain, talked about how to transform services for inclusion. He talked about how the Mi Casa project is working towards transitioning people with intellectual disabilities into life in the community and preventing institutionalisation. It was encouraging to hear

how this project has improved the quality of life for individuals with intellectual disabilities and created greater participation in communities.

A workshop on deinstitutionalisation guidance and practice was delivered by **Milan Šveřepa**, Director of Inclusion Europe, **Connie Laurin-Bowie**, Director of Inclusion International, **Rasha Adwan**, Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of Jordan and **Claudia Yanez Sangil**, from the European Commission. Connie Lauren- Bowie announced a new ‘Deinstitutionalisation Hub’.



Rasha Adwan spoke about Jordan’s progress. By 2026, they hope to transform six residential centres into inclusive day care centres- bringing 650 persons with disabilities into the community. Claudia Yanez Sangil discussed the importance of stakeholder involvement when working towards deinstitutionalisation. This guidance aims to help EU member states promote independent living and community inclusion.

Dr **Stephanie Boyce** hosted a workshop in ‘Embedding EDI in the workplace’. She spoke of how “Human Rights are pointless if you don’t know what they are and how to use them.” She also delivered a powerful speech and urged change in organisations through imagery, role models, culture and looking at yourself to question bias.



Jamie Cooke, head of policy and communication at Enable, addressed how 'human rights are often reported on but not delivered on a daily basis. We need real impact and foundation for progress in disability rights. We can celebrate laws but they are not the end, its how we follow up on them.'



Day 3 of Europe in Action 2024 involved **Lung Ha Theatre** company, Scotland's leading company for actors and theatre makers with learning disabilities and autism, who performed pieces from their acclaimed castle Lennox performance.

Lung Ha produces award-winning productions and works with a year-round, large ensemble to develop their practice and remove barriers to participation into the arts. The session included a presentation featuring recorded extracts from their acclaimed production Castle Lennox, plus insight and discussion around how they make their work.



The final question from Lung Ha Theatre was "Are we there yet?" No, we are not. We have so much to do to ensure the human rights of everyone are fully and consistently delivered."

Trainings

A training session on **Communications and Campaigns** was run by **Heather Gilchrist**, Enable, and **Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP**. Heather has been instrumental in Enable campaigns such as Enable the Vote, My Own Front Door and Rights Now for a number of years. She was joined by elected member, Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP. Pam Duncan-Glancy is a Scottish Labour

politician who has been a Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) for the Glasgow region since May 2021. She is the first permanent wheelchair user elected to the Scottish Parliament.

Charlie McMillan and **Cameron Smith** of the Scottish Commission of Learning Disabilities (SCLD) delivered a presentation on policy and influencing to promote and protect Human rights for people with intellectual disabilities, followed by an excellent discussion on how we can work together to create change.



Conference highlights

The flags of Inclusion Europe's founder members were held up by self-advocates and participants of the conference.

Inclusion Europe [was founded in Scotland](#) in 1988 by 9 national organisations representing families of people with intellectual disabilities; forming an organisation that now advocates for full rights and inclusion at European level.



President of Inclusion Europe and Member of the Inclusion international Council, Jyrki Pinomaa delivered a tribute to [Sir Robert Martin](#), who passed away in April 2024. Sir Robert Martin was a pioneer in the global self-advocacy, disability rights and deinstitutionalisation movements.

Inclusion Europe held its 2024 General Assembly with Inclusion Europe members.

Raisa Kravchenko from Inclusion Europe's Ukrainian member, VGO Coalition, also provided an update on the situation for people with intellectual disabilities in Ukraine during the General Assembly.



The conference was closed by Jyrki Pinomaa, president of Inclusion Europe, László Bercse, Vice President of Inclusion Europe and Theresa Shearer, CEO of Enable.

Speaker highlights

Katarina Ivanković Knežević from the European Commission, delivered a speech, outlining the nature of inclusion to the European Commission vision alongside Inclusion Europe's accessibility expert, Soufiane El Amrani.



Many MSPs and politicians were present; including Laree Todd MSP, the Scottish minister for social care, mental wellbeing and sport, Lord Shinkwin and The Lord Provost of Glasgow, Cllr Jacqueline Maclaren.



Minister for Social Care, Mental Wellbeing and Sport **Maree Todd** addressed the conference on how the Scottish Government is seeking to promote further progress for people with intellectual disabilities through policies including increasing access to social care in communities and employability support.

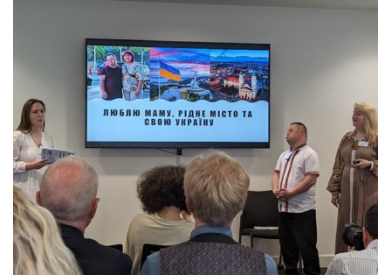


Lord Shinkwin delivered a plenary session of Europe in Action 2024 and spoke about how “in a time of turmoil... the work of Enable and Inclusion Europe has never been more important or relevant”.

Self- advocates from Inclusion Europe member, VGO Coalition, delivered a presentation focusing on the Ukrainian struggle for rights and inclusion.

Vasyl Myryavchyk and **Osanka Shtefanyuk**, self- advocates from Ukraine,

keep fighting for rights of people with intellectual disabilities. Despite the conflict, they push for progress in challenging times. “My friends and I helped to unload humanitarian aid”.



Testimonies from Participants

Soufiane El Amrani, Accessibility Expert at Inclusion Europe, shared his experience of the conference:

“I really liked Europe in Action in Glasgow that was co-organized by Enable and Inclusion Europe.

I learnt many different things while being there. I really liked how the sessions were put together and it was very accessible to get to the many different workshop that were being held.

Staff of Enable Scotland were helping to show people which rooms to go to for all the different workshops.

Easy-to-read and understand documents were made available which was great.

I really enjoyed the performance from the Lung Ha Theatre Company and the video they showed us.”

"As a self-advocate, I travelled to Glasgow to support people with intellectual disabilities." Vasyl Myryavchyk was one of the speakers at Europe in Action conference this May. He talked about the situation in Ukraine, and the self-advocates' work for rights and inclusion.

Enable Membership Ambassador Heather Gilchrist said: “I think it’s fantastic Europe in Action 2024 is in Glasgow. I think it’s important to share experiences, facts and ideas and work together to make life better for people with intellectual disabilities wherever they live in Europe.” As Heather Gilchrist welcomed Europe in Action 2024 delegates to Glasgow, she said “The voices of people with learning disabilities need to be where their voices are heard”.



Inclusion Indicators

[Inclusion Indicators](#) reflect experiences of people with intellectual disabilities and their families. In 2023, Inclusion Europe collected data from 29 countries, including 23 members of the EU.

Inge Vollegberg, coordinator and research at Inclusion Europe, presented the findings of the 2023 Inclusion Indicators report in Glasgow, alongside **Foteini Zafeiropoulou** from Inclusion Europe member POSGAMEA, Greece and **Jeanne Nicklaus-Faust** from Lebenshilfe, Germany.

“In Europe only 3 countries fully respect the right to decide. Only 5 countries fully respect the right to vote and make voting accessible.”

Inge spoke about how we can use the Inclusion Indicators to advocate for change at Europe in Action 2024.

The conference also highlighted areas where action on rights is still urgently required following research published recently by Inclusion Europe, showing that:

In 26 countries, people with intellectual disabilities can have their legal capacity stripped away, removing their right to make their own decision regarding finances, living arrangements, and marriage.

750,000 people with learning disabilities are confined in harmful segregated institutions, while an additional 39,000 ‘live’ in psychiatric hospitals.

While 1.1 million children with learning disabilities are included in mainstream schools, 700,000 are still segregated in specialist schools, and 20,000 receive no education at all.

Milan Šveřepa also presented the findings of the Inclusion Indicators report during a plenary session. “The purpose of the inclusion indicators is to fill the void of the data gap we came across. All of the findings are focused on things that are important to people with intellectual disabilities.”

Helen Portal delivered several ‘Inclusion exchange’ workshops focusing on each indicator, these sessions provided a valuable opportunity for participants to exchange their experience and opinions of these topics.



Conference photos







Enable's 70th anniversary

Enable organised several events alongside the conference to celebrate their 70th anniversary. A special evening in Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum brought together some 400 people.



Inclusion Europe's participation at the conference was co-funded by the European Union.



The European Union bears no responsibility for the contents of the report.