



Europe for us

Europe in Action in Lithuania



Find explanations for words in **bold** at the end of Europe For Us on pages 31 to 45.

“Europe for us” is available in:

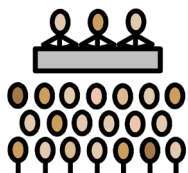
- English
- French
- German
- Hungarian
- Italian
- Romanian
- Spanish

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

Topics

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Introduction



This issue of Europe for Us has 2 main topics:

- The Europe in Action conference in Lithuania.

At the conference, we talked about **independent living** for people with **intellectual disabilities**.

You can read more on page 6.



- The **European elections**.

This time, the **elections** were different from before:

Many people with intellectual disabilities **voted** for the first time!

You can read more on page 14.



At Europe in Action, László Bercse became the new **chair** of the **EPSA** steering group.

Read an interview with László on page 24.



Thank you to Senada Halilčević!
She was the chair of EPSA for a very long time.

Don't forget to sign up for Hear our Voices!
Hear our voices is a conference for **self-advocates**.

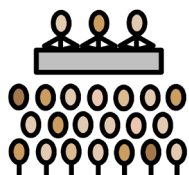
Read more on page 28.



We hope you like this issue of Europe for Us!



Europe in Action in Lithuania



The Europe in Action conference happened from 5-7 June.

For the conference, we went to Vilnius.

Vilnius is the capital of Lithuania.

We organised the conference together with one of our members.

They are called Viltis.



The conference was about inclusion.

We talked about how we can make inclusion happen everywhere.

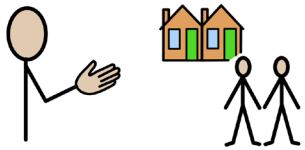
We also talked about **independent living**.

At the conference, we asked **self-advocates** what independent living means to them.

This is what they said:

- “To go wherever I want and to do whatever I want, without anyone telling me what to do”
- “To decide where I can live, who I want to live with, how I spend my free time”
- “To be able to meet new people”





There are two things that are important to support people with living independently:

- How can we support them when they move from an institution to the community?
- How can we support them when they live in the community?

For example, with

- **Accessibility**
- **Employment**
- **Supported decision-making**

Elisabeta Moldovan and other speakers

For example:



- Linas Kukuraitis from the Lithuanian **government**



- Self-advocate Elisabeta Moldovan

Elisabeta managed to leave the institution she was living in.

She had lived in institutions for a very long time.

She also wrote a book about her experiences.



- Jonas Ruškus

He is a member of the **UN CRPD committee**.

- Marco Miglioni from the **European Commission**



They talked about different topics.

For example:

- what the **UN CRPD** says about independent living
- how families can support people with **intellectual disabilities** to live independently
- what the situation is like in countries like Austria, Lithuania or Japan



We also went to meet people who live in Vilnius.

We went to two different places in Vilnius.

At one place, there were people with intellectual disabilities who served coffee to the people who came by.

In this way, they could talk to each other.





At the end of the conference, José Smits from Inclusion Europe gave a summary.

She said:

“What we must do is
to change society.
We cannot change
everything now.



But we can do some things now,
and other things later.
Can you think of one thing you
would like to do right now?”



Robert Martin is a member of the UN CRPD committee.

He left a video message for the conference.

You can watch it here: bit.ly/RobertMartinVideo



Thank you to Senada Halilčević, and welcome to László Bercse!

At the conference,
we also had the General meeting of EPSA.

At the meeting, Senada Halilčević left EPSA.

Senada had been the chair of EPSA for many years.

The new chair of EPSA is László Bercse from Hungary.

Thank you Senada for your great work,
and welcome to László!

László is now also the vice-president of **Inclusion Europe**.

[Read an interview with László on page 24.](#)





Oswald Föllerer from Austria became a new member of the EPSA steering group.



There were also changes at the board of Inclusion Europe.

There is a new board member:

Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir from Iceland.



Helene Holand from Norway left the board.

You can only be a board member for 12 years.

Helene Holand had been a board member for 12 years.

Inclusion Europe also got new members:

- the GADIR self-advocacy group of our Spanish member Plena Inclusión
- the French “Association les jeunes handicapés”
This means “Association of young people with a disability”.





"These elections were different from any other elections"

In May, the **European elections** happened.

Our director Milan Šveřepa talks about why these elections were special:

On 26th May, in the evening, each European country was counting its **votes**.

While this was happening, in front of the **European Parliament** in Brussels people could see a video of people with **intellectual disabilities** talking about voting.



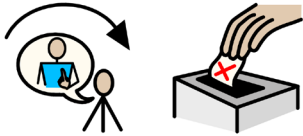
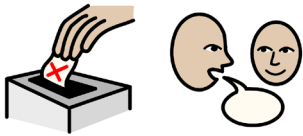
Then I understood
that these **elections** were different
from any other election I had ever seen.



These European elections
have been a great moment
for the inclusion movement.

Many people with intellectual disabilities
voted in their country for the first time.

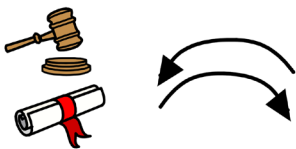
And everyone talked a lot about it.



For the first time people under **guardianship**
were able to vote in:

- Denmark
- France
- Germany
- Spain

And if we look at **social media**,
it looks like a lot of people with intellectual disabilities
went to vote.



Thanks to the law changes in many countries,
everyone could learn about
people with intellectual disabilities
and what they want.

On social media, there were a lot of stories
about people with intellectual disabilities.



There were candidates who said that they will support people with intellectual disabilities if they get elected.



There were parties who put their programme into **easy-to-read**.



This happened because a lot of people in the European inclusion movement worked hard to make our voices heard.

Thank you!

The European elections were a great moment thanks to all of you!"

In 2019, many people with intellectual disabilities voted for the first time.

The next European elections will be in five years.

We want even more people with intellectual disabilities to be able to vote then.

Also in the countries where they cannot vote right now.

We will tell this to politicians and to other people who make decisions in Europe.

Our Voting champions



The European elections happened in May.

For the elections, we talked every month with one of our “**Voting** champions”.

Voting champions are people who talk about the right to vote.

They also want **governments** to make voting **accessible** for people with intellectual disabilities.

Read here interviews with three voting champions:



Lucette and Dani Blanquart

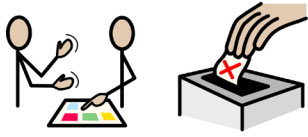
“Many people are surprised when they find out that they can vote”

Lucette and Dani Blanquart are part of “Nous aussi” Dunkerque.

Nous aussi Dunkerque is a French local group fighting for the rights of people with **intellectual disabilities**.

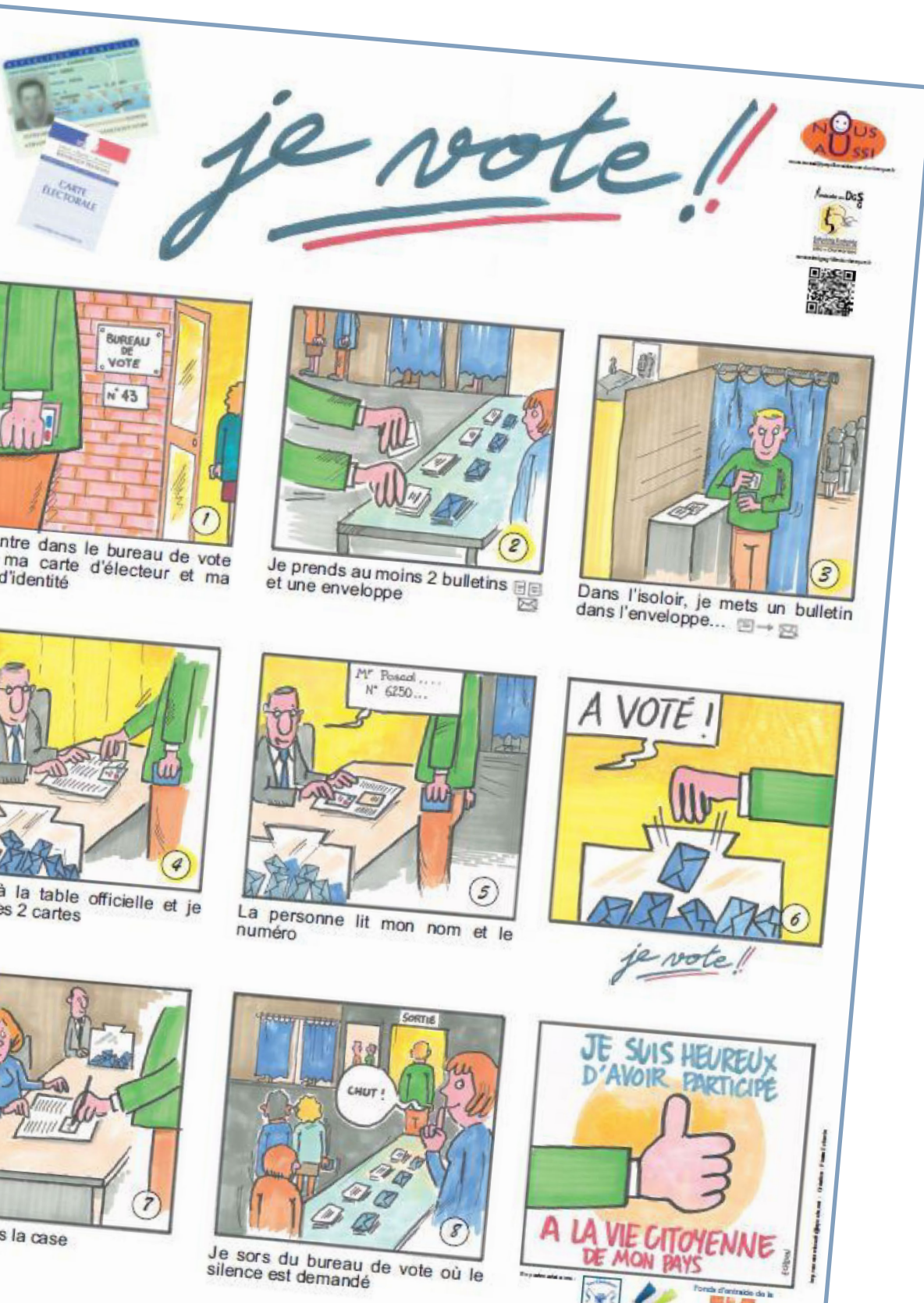


They do a lot of things
to help people with intellectual disabilities
to understand how **voting** works.



Nous Aussi have created some posters
to show to people with intellectual disabilities
how to vote.

You can see a part of the poster below.



**You worked on posters that show how to vote.
Who had the idea to make these posters?**

Christine Heusele was our support person.

Christine had the idea to make the posters.

She had seen a Tunisian **election** poster that had drawings on it.

She thought it was a good idea.

She said we could make a poster like that for the French elections.

How did you make the posters?

We had been invited to a meeting of people working for their cities and towns.



We said that voting can be hard for people with intellectual disabilities.

We told them about the poster idea. They offered to give us some money to make the posters.

They also supported us in telling many people about the posters.

Lucette, you went to a meeting in Paris.

At the meeting, you talked about how we can let more people know that they should be voting in elections.

At this meeting there were 2 other self-advocates.

How was it like for you to work with this group?

People listened to us **self-advocates**
and they were very interested
in our “I vote” posters.

You also needed to defend the posters.

Why?

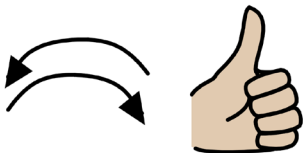
During the meeting some people
wanted to add some information to the posters.

But that would have made everything more complicated.

I said that we had worked a lot on the posters
and that we don't want to change them.

Now people under guardianship in France will be able to vote.

This is because the law has been changed. What do you think about that?



This is a good change.



But we need to make sure
that people know
that they can go to **vote** now.

Many people still don't know
about that.



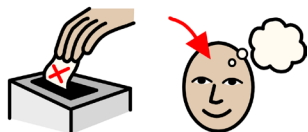
Members of “Nous aussi” have made a research to find out how many people are registered to vote.

What will you do with the result of this research?

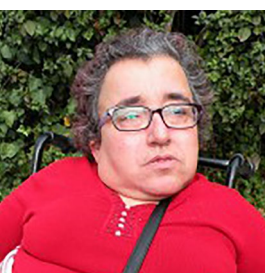
Many people are surprised when they find out that they can vote.

They don't know if they are registered on the **elections** list or not.

When we asked them if they would like some support in registering for the elections, most of them say yes.



We are planning on training people to show them how to vote!



Carmen Piquer

“Then I decided to fight!”

Carmen Piquer of “Som Fundació” got her right to **vote** back in 2015.

This was not easy for Carmen.

Now she tells other people about how to go to vote.

She also asks other people to go and vote.

Did you ever have the right to vote?

I've never had the right to vote before.



When I was 18 years old, I was put under **guardianship**.

This means that I wasn't allowed to vote.



When did you decide that you wanted your right to vote back?

I did not feel that I was like everyone else because I wasn't allowed to vote.



Then I decided to fight!

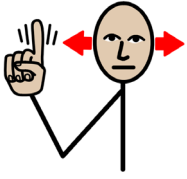
Som – Fundació helped me to get my right to vote back.

What did you do to get your right to vote back?



I had to go to a judge and answer questions about **politics** and other things.

I think it is important
to know these things.



But I still felt **discriminated against**.

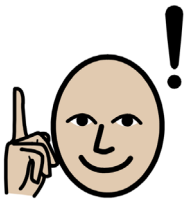
Only people with **intellectual disabilities**
have to answer these questions
to get their right to vote back.

**You passed the test
and you got your right to vote back
in 2015.**

Have you voted ever since?

Yes, I voted in national **elections**
and in regional elections!

How was it like?



It was easy!

I didn't have any problem.

Now I talk about my experience
with voting in workshops.

These workshops are organised
by Som – Fundació.

I tell everyone that they should **vote**.

Don't be scared!

When you have a question
there are people at the **polling station**
who can help you.

"It feels good to work together with a group of fantastic people"



László Bercse is from Hungary.

He is the new **chair** of the **EPSA** steering group.

He was **elected** at the General Meeting of EPSA in June.

We asked László about how he got to know EPSA and about his plans for the future.

When did you join the EPSA steering group?

My organisation, ÉFOÉSZ, has been a member of EPSA for a long time.

I knew some other **self-advocates** from EPSA.

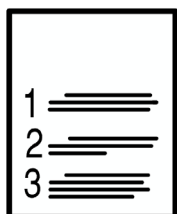
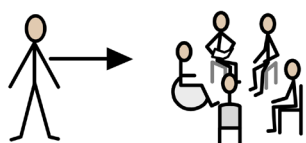
I got to know them from other events of Inclusion Europe.

But I only met the whole EPSA Steering Group in 2017, in Brussels.

I took part in one of their meetings.

At that meeting, we talked about the goals of EPSA for the next years.

I got elected to the Steering Group at the Europe in Action conference in 2017, in Prague.



What have you learned at EPSA so far?



I have learned how to work in a team.

It feels good to work together with a group of fantastic people for our goals.

I can also learn a lot from other self-advocates working with **EPSA**.

I learned a lot of new things at the Europe in Action conference this June in Vilnius.

For example, I heard about self-advocates from Inclusion Ireland.

They help their country find out how far they have come with **deinstitutionalisation**.

They do research to find out if people get the right support to **live independently**.

That is something we should do in Hungary as well.

Why did you want to become EPSA chair?



I like challenges a lot!

I wanted to see how I can lead such a good team.

I have always enjoyed the work with EPSA.

I want to continue learning from others and sharing my own experience.



As chair I have even more possibilities. For example, to

- tell **politicians** and other people who make important decisions in Europe how they can do more for people with intellectual disabilities

- strengthen the international self-advocacy movement
- speak up for Hungarian people with **intellectual disabilities** at European level

What are the things you want to work on as an EPSA chair?

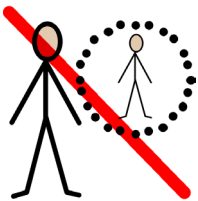


I have many goals as an EPSA chair.

I would like us to get closer to reaching EPSA's goals.

This would mean that all people with intellectual disabilities can

- **live independently**
- learn and work together with other people
- **vote.**



We also want **guardianship** to end.

Most countries in Europe have signed the **UN CRPD**.

It is very important to tell countries to follow the UN CRPD.

The UN CRPD talks about the rights of people with disabilities.

Countries need to make sure that people with disabilities get these rights.

They should better support people with intellectual disabilities so they can be members of their community like everyone else.



Anything else you would like to add?

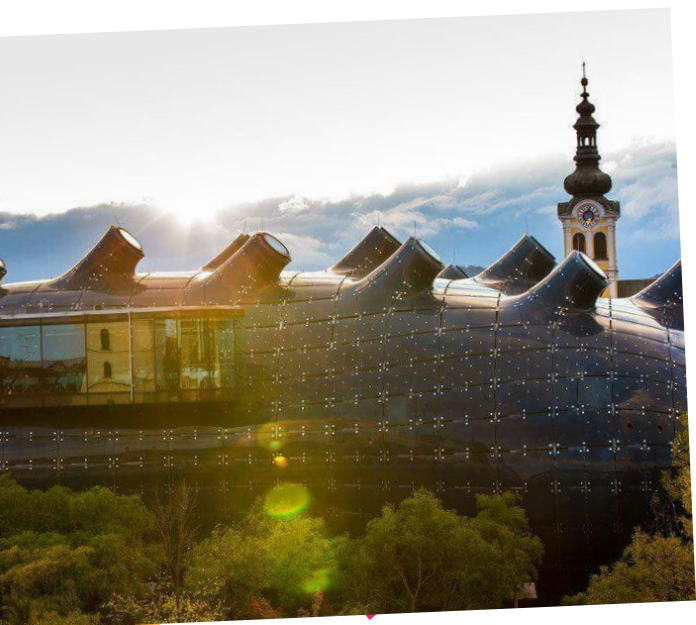
It is a great honour for me to be the new EPSA chair.

I have found new colleagues in EPSA.

And I have also found new friends.

I will try my best to achieve our goals.





**Join us for
Hear our Voices
in *Austria!***



Join us for the next Hear our Voices conference!

Hear our Voices is a conference organised by **EPSA**.

It takes place every 2 years.

At this conference,
people with an **intellectual disability**
come together to talk about intellectual disability.

And to share ideas and experiences
about intellectual disability.

This time, Hear our Voices will be
in Graz in Austria.

It will happen from 18 - 20 September 2019.

The topic of the conference this year is
"My voice counts!".

We will talk about
how to be active in **politics**.

You can read more in the programme:
<http://bit.ly/HoV19>



**We look forward to
meeting you in Graz!**

The **hashtag** for Hear our Voices is #HoV19.

Read our Annual Report!

Our annual report has been published!

Our report talks about what happened in 2018.



In 2018, we celebrated our 30th birthday.

You can read about it in the report.

You can read it here:
bit.ly/IE_AnnualReport2018



The report also talks about

- what we did in the last 30 years
- our projects in 2018
- how we spent our money
- and all the things we did in 2018.

We hope you will like the report!

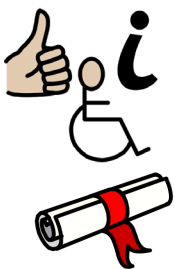
Explanations



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



Accessibility Act

The Accessibility Act is a law
made by the **European Union**.

Every country in the European Union
must respect the Accessibility Act.

The Accessibility Act says what companies need to do
to make their products and services more **accessible**.

For example:

- smartphones,
- computers,
- e-books,
- ticketing machines
- travels by bus or train.



Chair

The person in charge of a meeting or of an organisation.



Council of the European Union

The Council of the European Union is where the national ministers from the countries of the **European Union** meet.

They meet to adopt laws and talk about politics in the European Union.

The Council of the European Union is also called Council of Ministers.



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.



Discrimination

Discrimination means that you are treated unfairly or that you do not get the chances you deserve.

It is discrimination when it happens because of your disability.

It can also happen to other people.

For example, people who have a different skin colour.

Or older people.

Easy-to-read

Easy to read is information that is written in a simple way so that people with **intellectual disabilities** can understand.

It is important to use simple words and sentences. If there are words that are difficult to understand, an explanation is provided.

The text needs to be clear to see. For example, black writing on a white background is good. It needs to be well-spaced.

Easy-to-read often uses pictures to explain what the text talks about.

Someone with an intellectual disability needs to check the information is easy to understand.

Easy-to-read documents often have this logo, so it is easier to find them.

There are rules on how easy-to-read should be done.





Elections

Elections decide who should speak for us and make choices for us.

Elections happen in different areas. For example in your town or city when you can elect a new mayor.

Or in your country when you can elect a new president.



Employ

Employ means to hire someone to do a job.

EPSA

The European Platform of Self-Advocates is made up of organisations of self-advocates from different countries in Europe.

We call it EPSA for short.

It is a part of **Inclusion Europe**.



European Commission

The European Commission works with the **European Parliament**.

The European Commission suggests laws for the European Parliament and the **Council of the European Union** to discuss.

It also makes sure that the laws that have been decided upon are being followed by the member states.



European elections

The European elections are the elections to the **European Parliament**.

When you vote at the European elections, you can have a say on who the new **MEPs** will be.

The MEPs speak for all the people who live in the **European Union**.

The European elections take place every 5 years.

The next European elections will be from 23-26 May 2019.



European Parliament

The European Parliament is a place where important decisions of the **European Union** are made. For example: laws.

The Members of the European Parliament (in short, MEPs) make these decisions and speak for all the people who live in the European Union.

Every five years,
the people who live in the European Union
vote for their country's MEPs.



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.

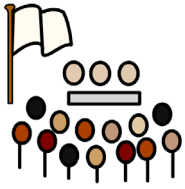
The EU also makes laws that are important
for people with disabilities.

For example, the **Accessibility Act**.

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.



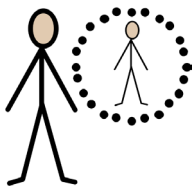
Government

A government is a group of people that make decisions on how to run a country.

For example,

- about where the money is spent,
- about public transport,
- about schools,
- about hospitals.

Every few years there are **elections** to vote for a new government.



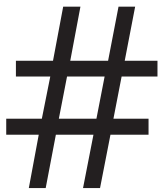
Guardianship

Guardianship allows some people to make life choices for others.

The person who makes choices for you is your guardian.

Your guardian can decide things for you, like where you live.

Sometimes, people under guardianship are not allowed to vote, get married, or take care of their kids.



Hashtag

On **social media** you can use the symbol #.
This symbol is called hashtag.

You can write a word after the hashtag symbol.

If you click on that word,
you will be taken to all the messages
that have to do with that word.

For example:

- If you write #inclusion and you click on it,
you will be taken to all the messages
that have to do with inclusion.
- If you write #EuropeanUnion and you click on it,
you will be taken to all the messages
that have to do with the **European Union**.
- If you write #HearOurVoices and you click on it,
you will be taken to all the messages
that have to do with **Hear Our Voices**.



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 75 members in 39 European countries.

We are based in Brussels in Belgium.

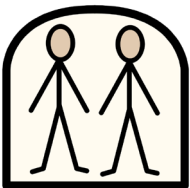


Independent Living

Independent living means that people with **intellectual disabilities** live in the community and have support to do what they want.

They also can:

- choose with whom and where to live
- decide how they want to spend their time
- have the same experiences as all other people.



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.

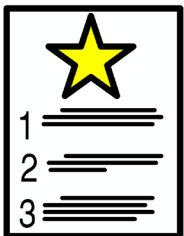
For example, information in **easy-to-read** language.

Some people say learning disabilities instead of intellectual disabilities.



Living independently

See Independent living



Manifesto

A manifesto is a text that explains the goals of a person or an organisation. It is often made before an election by a person or organisation that wants to be **elected**.

Some manifestos are also done by organisations to tell the candidates for the elections about what they think is important.

Everyone can read a manifesto.



Members of the European Parliament

See **MEPs**



MEPs

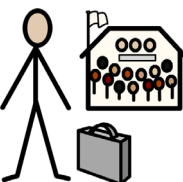
The members of the **European Parliament** are the **politicians** who sit in the European Parliament.

We call them MEPs for short.



Political party

A political party is a group of people who think the country should be run in a certain way.



Politician

Someone helps run the country or part of the country. Or someone who would like to do this.

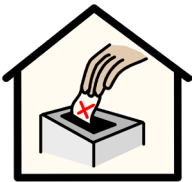
Politicians, for example, are

- mayors
- ministers
- candidates in the **elections**



Politics

Running the country or running a part of the country.



Polling station

A polling station is a building that is used for voting during the **elections**.

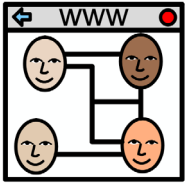
Often, it is a school.



Self-advocacy

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

These people are called self-advocates.



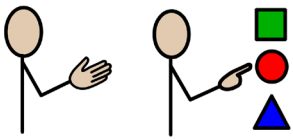
Social Media

Social media is made up of websites and apps that let you create and share content.

For example, photos, videos and information.

Apps is short for applications.

These are tools that let you use social media on a mobile phone or tablet.



Supported decision making

Supported decision making means that people with **intellectual disabilities** can make life decisions with the support of another person without disabilities.

This is what they can get support with:

- make choices about their lives
- start a family and raise children
- sign contracts – also working contracts
- have a bank account
- control their money and property
- make decisions about their health
- take part in **politics** and have the right to **vote**



UN CRPD

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an important document.

We call it UN CRPD for short.

It tries to make sure that the rights of people with disabilities are respected.



UN CRPD Committee

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a group of people.

This group of people checks what countries do to make sure the rights of persons with disabilities are respected.

We call it CRPD Committee for short.



United Nations

The United Nations is an international organisation.

It works for peace and security everywhere in the world.

We call it the UN for short.

The UN is based in different places. For example, it is in New York, in the United States of America, and in Geneva, in Switzerland.



Vote

Voting means choosing the **politicians** who represent us and make decisions for us.

You can vote in different areas.
For example:

- in your town or city
when you elect a new mayor
- in your country
when you elect a new president
- or at the **European elections**,
when you choose the new
Members of the European Parliament (**MEPs**).



Ambitions. Rights. Belonging.

Contact us and share your self-advocacy stories!



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