



Europe for us

*Hear
our
voices!*

**STRONG,
LOUD AND
CLEAR!**

Find explanations for words in **bold** at the end of Europe For Us on pages 34 to 47.

“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.

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Poem from Sebastian Foreman



Sebastian is a member
of an organization called
Campaign4Change.



Campaign4Change is a
self-advocacy Group.

This is Sebastian's poem.

*Since lockdown started everyone has a lot to say,
About the pain of not being able to come and go,
But life for some was like lockdown anyway.*

The 'new normal' for us was their normal every day.

They were stuck in their houses, did anyone know?

Since lockdown started everyone has a lot to say.

Messages about loneliness they want to convey.

*The whole country is feeling depressed and low,
But life for some was like lockdown anyway.*

All these new vows to help one another come what may.

It's important we all make the support effort grow.

Since lockdown started everyone has a lot to say.

*Got the time now to phone the vulnerable and check they're ok,
We notice other's hard lives while our own life is slow.*

But life for some was like lockdown anyway.

Only till now there was no space for them in our day.

Perhaps these times are the happiest they've known.

When this is over will we all still have a lot to say?

About the people whose lives were like lockdown anyway?

When we all head back out to the bright light of day.

How many desperate voices will we hear pleading "stay"?



Soufiane El Amrani: About self-advocacy and living independently

Hello.

My name is Soufiane El Armani.

I am self-advocacy and easy-to-read
officer at Inclusion Europe.



Self-Advocacy means standing
up for your own rights
and making sure your
voice is heard.



As a person with intellectual disabilities
you have the right to start
a self-advocacy group.



It is important that people
with intellectual disabilities
get proper support so they
can join self-advocacy groups
and talk about what matters to them.

Inclusion Europe has a group called
The European Platform of Self-Advocates.

The group is run by self-advocates
from different countries.

They organize conferences
called Hear our Voices.



They organize trainings
for people with intellectual disabilities.



And there is an easy-to-read magazine
with news for self-advocates.



It is called Europe for us
and it is available in 7 languages.



All people with intellectual disabilities
have the right to make
decisions about their lives.



Inclusion Europe wants people
with intellectual disabilities
to live in the community
like everyone else.



Living in the community
means having friends and family,
being a colleague at work,
being good at something.
Belonging.



There should not be any people with intellectual disabilities segregated in institutions anymore.

All people with intellectual disabilities want is to have a normal life like others.



All segregated institutions should be closed and all people with intellectual disabilities should live in the community.



It is important to give people living in institutions good information and support about transition to community.



Good information is important so they can make a decision about their life.



Easy to read information is a good way of helping with that.



It is also important to support self-advocacy and peer-to-peer activities.



This can be done by having a person who moved from institution to community to come and talk to those living in an institution.



Or to support people who live in institutions in joining self-advocacy groups and organizations.



Supporting people to move out of institutions means helping them to find friends and colleagues.

Here is a quote from the chair of the European Platform of Self-Advocates which sums it up:

"We should not just build new houses.

We need to build an inclusive society."



*Hear
our
voices!*

***STRONG,
LOUD AND
CLEAR!***

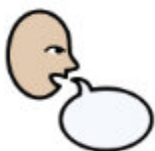
2021

Hear our Voices! 2021



Soufiane El Amrani: Hear our Voices!

Soufiane El Amrani is a
Easy-to-read editor and
self-advocacy officer
of Inclusion Europe.



Soufiane had a speech during
The Hear our Voices conference.



The speech was a report about
the work of self-advocacy groups
and their work all around Europe.

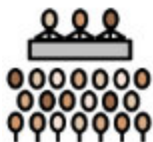
This year the Hear our Voices Conference was different.



Self-advocates from all over Europe
got together in their own countries
and organised several events.



They talked about how was it for them
to go through the COVID-19 situation.

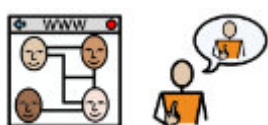


Self-advocates from our members were invited to talk at Conferences or other events.

We also have organised Conferences in our own countries.



We have talked about employment, about inclusion, empowerment, accessibility and also about Covid-19.



Inclusion Europe used social media to give visibility to us and to what we are doing in our countries and in Europe.



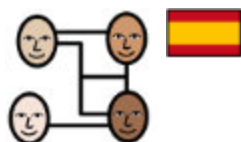
In Ireland a self-advocate is now a communication and information manager.



In Spain a self-advocate was elected as Vice-President in one of our members.



Also in Ireland self-advocates challenged the government on the way they decide to spend their money.



In Spain a National Platform of Self-Advocates was launched with more than 500 people attending.



EPSA chair Laszlo challenged the way people with disabilities are discriminated against when it comes to exercise the right to vote.

We had several events in 9 countries, with more than 300 participants.

We had events in Portugal, Romania, Ireland, Hungary, Czechia, Austria, Croatia, Moldova, and Spain.

We also had our Spanish member talking at our Directors meeting.



They talked about how is this important to give voice to self-advocates.



All over Europe self-advocates got together to talk about what is important to them.



They have talked about how COVID affected their lives.

They have things to say!

They have things they want you to hear!

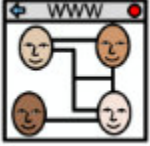
Strong! Loud! And Clear!



During the pandemic,
support was really important.



The good things is that we learned
digital skills and now we are able
to do that with less support.



A lot of activities were online.

This means that people
were not face to face.



But we still had support.

But other things were not so good...



We could not do all the things
that we were used to do.

All the activities,
all the trainings,
all the therapies...

All of this stopped.



And this was bad...

People that were living in the
community had less support to do it.

This was hard...



Because of that, self-advocates felt sad, abandoned, mad, lonely, confused, depressed and angry!



During the lockdown,
some people could not talk to friends,
families and supporters.

They did not have internet
access or smartphones...



The information was really hard to understand.

And it was always changing.



People that were working lost their jobs.

And we could not go to work.

In some countries, we were left alone in institutions to die.



And we were left all day by ourselves.

We didn't go to the hospitals
or to the doctor.

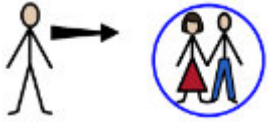
And this was really bad.



A lot of us lost our personal assistants.



But in some countries,
service providers continue to support people.



Some of us had to return to our parents homes.

The ones that were living independently,
had to return because
there were no support to us.



So what do we want?

We want information
that we can understand.



We want to maintain our jobs
or get some money when we are not working.



We want personal budgets.

And we want vaccines to all people.



We want formal and informal
support to our everyday activities,
and access to good health care.



And we want to continue to be busy,
to have full lives and to feel comfortable
to go to shops and so on.



We want better and more training
in the different things that we need.



We want to have more access to technology.



We want public websites in easy to read and understand.

But especially we don't want more total lockdowns!



We also want psychological support.

We want rules that do not change everyday.



And we want good internet connections and free internet services.

To sum it up, what do we want?



We want respect.

We want equality.

We want access.



And we want full citizenship!

And we want it now!!

Thank you, and keep supporting self-advocates all over Europe.



László Bercse: Hear Our Voices! Interview



Soufiane El Amrani interviewed László Bercse about “What kind of Europe do we want and how can we achieve it?”

The interview was during the Hear our Voices conference.



In Hungary we organized a workshop for self-advocates.

We had participants, mostly self-advocates, but also some supporters and family members.



We talked about what we want from Europe for the future and how we can achieve it.



We also talked about what European politicians can do for us and what we can do for ourselves.



We also talked about how we can speak up and how we can support each other to speak up.

There were many good ideas that came up during the discussion.



Self-advocates told us that they need an inclusive labor market and the same salary as others.

We want to work together with others and have real connections.



This is the best way for practicing inclusion.



We need to raise awareness to decisionmakers about accessible information.



We need accessible information to be able to make decisions and to speak up.



We need events where people with and without disabilities can meet each other.



It is important to raise awareness from the early childhood on.

The best way for this is inclusive education, on which Hungary still has a lot to work.



We need more trainings and opportunities to learn about our rights and to learn to stand up for each other.

We do that in self-advocacy groups, but not all of us have the chance to join groups.



We want to decide about our lives even if we need support sometimes.



We need more supported decision making instead of guardianship.



We need to introduce personal assistance to be in control in our lives.

Personal assistance must be financed through personal budgets.



Participation is important

Participation is important not just in our lives but also on a political level.



We want politicians to include us in matters concerning us.

They must not make decision without asking our opinion.



We need working groups where people with intellectual disabilities can work together with politicians.



For example, in national parliaments.

Learning from the COVID situation

The pandemic did not bring up new issues.



It has just made the existing barriers more visible.



It was difficult to get accessible information about the dangers of the virus and ways of protection.



We need accessible and good quality healthcare even after the pandemic.



We need cheap and accessible technology.

For example smartphones,
tablets or laptops.



We want to take part in online
meetings and trainings
but many of us struggled
with online education.



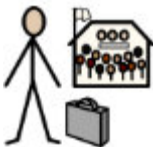
People who live in poverty
do not access internet
and other tools.



And people with intellectual disabilities
and their families are at a
very high risk of poverty.



That is why inclusive jobs
are very important.
We need work and not pity!



Final message to the European decisionmakers



They need to take us into account
and include us in decision
regarding protection and recovery.

If there will be more lockdowns,
pay attention to our needs.



Persons with disabilities must be a priority group in vaccination plans.




Help us get our jobs back!

They must consider us as persons, not just subjects of political decisions.



**We are people,
we are European citizens too!**



In 2021, our members made their voices heard!

Employment

Inclusion

Empowerment

Accessibility

Covid 19

EUROPEAN DAY OF **PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

ACCESS CITY AWARD 2022

2 - 3 DECEMBER 2021



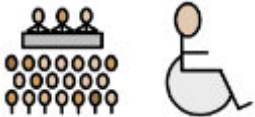
European
Commission

#EDPD2021
#EUDisabilityRights

#UnionOfEquality
#EUAccessCity



European Day of Persons with Disabilities



The European Day of Persons with Disabilities is a conference organised by the European Commission and the European Disability Forum.

The conference is sometimes called EDPD for short.

The EDPD takes place every year at the beginning of December to mark the European Day of Persons with Disabilities.



In 2021 the conference took place online.

The conference was about healthcare, digital services, and education.

You can find the program including in easy-to-read and the recording of [the conference here](#).



Speech of Helena Dalli

Helena Dalli is Commissioner for Equality at the European Commission.



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



Helena Dalli talks about the EU Disability Rights Strategy.

The strategy describes what problems people with disabilities face in the European Union.



The strategy says what the European Union will do to help with these problems.

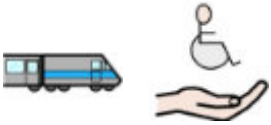


AccessibleEU will bring together ideas and tools to improve access to places, services, information.



The European Disability Card is a small document, like an ID (identity card).

The card says that the person has a disability.



The Disability Card makes it easier for people to travel across the EU and use services for people with disabilities.



The European Commission wants the card to be used in all EU countries.



The Disability Platform is organized by the European Commission.



The Platform is a new place for countries in the EU, disability organizations, and the European Commission to work together.



A campaign will promote the EU Disability Rights strategy in 2022.



The campaign will show how the EU helps people with disabilities to have the same opportunities as everyone else.



Speech of Yannis Vardakastanis

Yannis Vardakastanis is the president of the 'European Disability Forum'.



This is an organisation of people with disabilities in Europe.



COVID-19 had a huge impact on people with disabilities and even more on:



Those who were already poor or left out.



Those who live in institutions away from the community.



Those who do not have a job.



Those who cannot go around because things in society are not accessible.



Children with disabilities who are not allowed to go to school with all other children.



The European Union gave money to its countries to be able to protect people from COVID-19.



They should help people with disabilities too.



Sadly, most countries in Europe did not consider the needs of people with disabilities in their plans against COVID-19.

This must change.



Countries should:
Talk with people with disabilities and their organizations.

Understand their needs.



Take them into account in their work against COVID-19.

With COVID-19,
it is even more necessary than before that:



People with disabilities
have access to good health care.



People with disabilities have
access to technology and the internet
as many things are now happening online.



Children with disabilities go
to school with other children.

About 2021 and hopeful new year wishes



Senada Halicevic

My favorite thing that happened to me this summer was that I was involved in writing a book in Spanish.



The book is about the story of my life.



I enrolled in two courses, one for an administrator and one for a taekwondo coach.



In 2021 it was very demanding for me to hold self-advocacy meetings on the Zoom platform.

It was difficult to arrange the time of the meetings and we could not talk to them properly due to misunderstandings and internet connection.



It was hard for me to coordinate work and courses and I would often come home tired.

Online meetings have been
the hardest for me because
I prefer to work live with people.



In 2022, I look forward to
and hope for the normalization
of a life that is not yet in sight.



I would tell the self-advocates:
stick together as much as possible
and have hope that these difficult
times will pass.

I hope that we will be able to
see and share both good and
bad moments together again.



I would like to share that
I am proud to have enrolled
in inclusive education.

The courses I attend are not only
for people with disabilities but for all.



The participants and professors
have accepted me and
adapted my learning
in the best possible way.



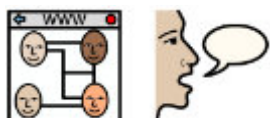
Soufiane El Amrani

Everyone, once again
had a hard time due to Covid-19.

I really enjoyed the Hear Our Voices
conference on-line this year.



I also really enjoyed hear from
other self-advocates about
the kind of things they were
doing in their own countries.



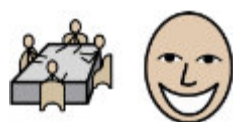
I really like that I was asked to talk during the
Hear Our Voice conference which was online.



What I found hard was not being able to see
my work colleagues at the office.



I found having meetings on-line
hard because it has
been a long time since
I have seen people face to face.



I am looking forward to seeing my
work colleagues at the office in 2022.



I found this year's
European Day of Persons with Disabilities
not very easy to understand and follow.

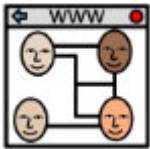


My message for all self-advocates is that we should have our voice listened to and always remember don't give up in fighting for all your rights.



László Bercse

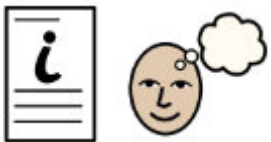
I had more favourite events this year.



One of them was the online conference of Harvard Law School.



I talked about my experience working on a shadow report of the CRPD.



Shadow report is when we share point of view to governmental reports.

Shadow report is also called alternative report.



Me and other self-advocates wrote an easy-to-read report about the implementation of the CRPD in Hungary in 2018.

There are not many self-advocates across the world who take part in shadow reporting.



My Hungarian organisation (ÉFOÉSZ) started a series of trainings for guardians all over Hungary.

We had 8 training events in different regions.



We talked about the CRPD, easy-to-read and other important topics.

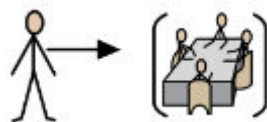


We want to help guardians better support people with intellectual disabilities.

We are going to have 17 more training events next year.



It is plenty of work, but we are looking forward to it.



I have become a member of the National Disability Council.



It is a forum of government officials and NGOs working on disability policies.

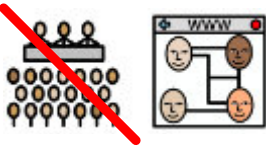


The goal of the Council is to make sure that Hungary implements the CRPD.

We also want to shape new laws and policies so people with disabilities really benefit from them.



The main challenge for me was the coronavirus pandemic.



Many meetings and conferences were cancelled or held online.

It was sometimes difficult to organize online conferences.



Especially for persons with intellectual disabilities who do not always have the tools to join online events.

It was also a new challenge to organize the Hear Our Voices self-advocate conference online.



I want to advocate affectively for people with intellectual disabilities in the National Disability Council.



I want to continue working
for an inclusive world
together with other self-advocates.



I also plan to work together
closely with the CRPD Committee
to fully implement the Convention in Hungary.



We have come a long way
fighting for our rights
but we still have a lot to
do until we achieve full inclusion.



We have to work together to
overcome all the barriers we face.



I would like to wish
all readers merry Christmas
and a very happy new year!

Explanations



Accessible

Something that is easy to use for people with disabilities.

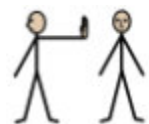
Such as:

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



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.



Discrimination

Discrimination means that you are treated worse than others 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.



Educate

Educate means to teach.

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



ÉFOÉSZ

ÉFOÉSZ is an association of organisations that care and support the rehabilitation of people with intellectual disability in Hungary.



Employment

Employment is when a person works and gets paid for their work.

It is usually based on a contract between the worker and the person who provides the job.

This person is the employer.



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 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.

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.



European Pillar of Social Rights:

The European Pillar of Social Rights makes sure people in the European Union have new and more effective rights.



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.



Healthcare

Healthcare is the services given to someone who is ill or who needs to take care of their health.

Healthcare involves going to the doctor, getting medicine and getting support for health problems of the body or the mind.



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.



Inclusive education, training, employment

Inclusive education, training or employment means that people with **intellectual disabilities** can learn and work together with other people without disabilities.



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.



Lockdown

A lockdown happens when there is a need to control a situation that can be harmful.

During a pandemic like the one of COVID-19, the countries have lockdowns to stop the spread of the virus.



MEPs

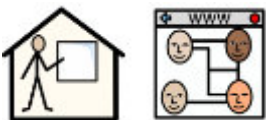
The members of the **European Parliament** are the **politicians** who sit in the European Parliament.

We call them MEPs for short.



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.



Petition

A request made for something desired, especially a respectful or humble request, as to a superior or to one of those in authority.



Podcast

Podcast is an audio file that anyone can listen to at any time either with a podcast app, website or youtube channel.



Policies

Actions or practices of governments and institutions.

Policies are trying to make the situation better.

Policies can be a set of rules or guidelines to follow in or to achieve a specific goal.



Rights of people with disabilities

A right is a rule that makes sure people are protected and they can have and do what they need to live a life with respect and safety.

Rights of people with disabilities are rules that are about the lives of people with disabilities.

For example, the right to get an education, or the right to live.



Self-Advocacy

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

These people are called self-advocates.



Segregation

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

For example, because of their disability.



United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (in short, UN CRPD) is an important document.

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



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**).



Working conditions

Working conditions is the working environment and the circumstances of the job.

This includes the working hours, legal rights and responsibilities.

Working conditions also include the work that a person does with their body or their mind.



Ambitions. Rights. Belonging.

Contact us and share your self-advocacy stories!



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