



Europe for us

Inclusive democracy



Find explanations for words in **bold** at the end of Europe For Us on pages 40 to 48.

“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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Editors note

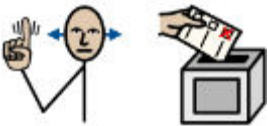
Josipa Friščić



It should be a normal thing to be able to participate in the elections as a citizen.



The UNCRPD reaffirms the right to vote and be elected for people with disabilities.



There are still restrictions in several EU States, especially for persons with intellectual disabilities.



14 EU countries grant full voting rights for people with intellectual disabilities under guardianship.



7 EU countries grant limited voting rights for people with intellectual disabilities under guardianship.



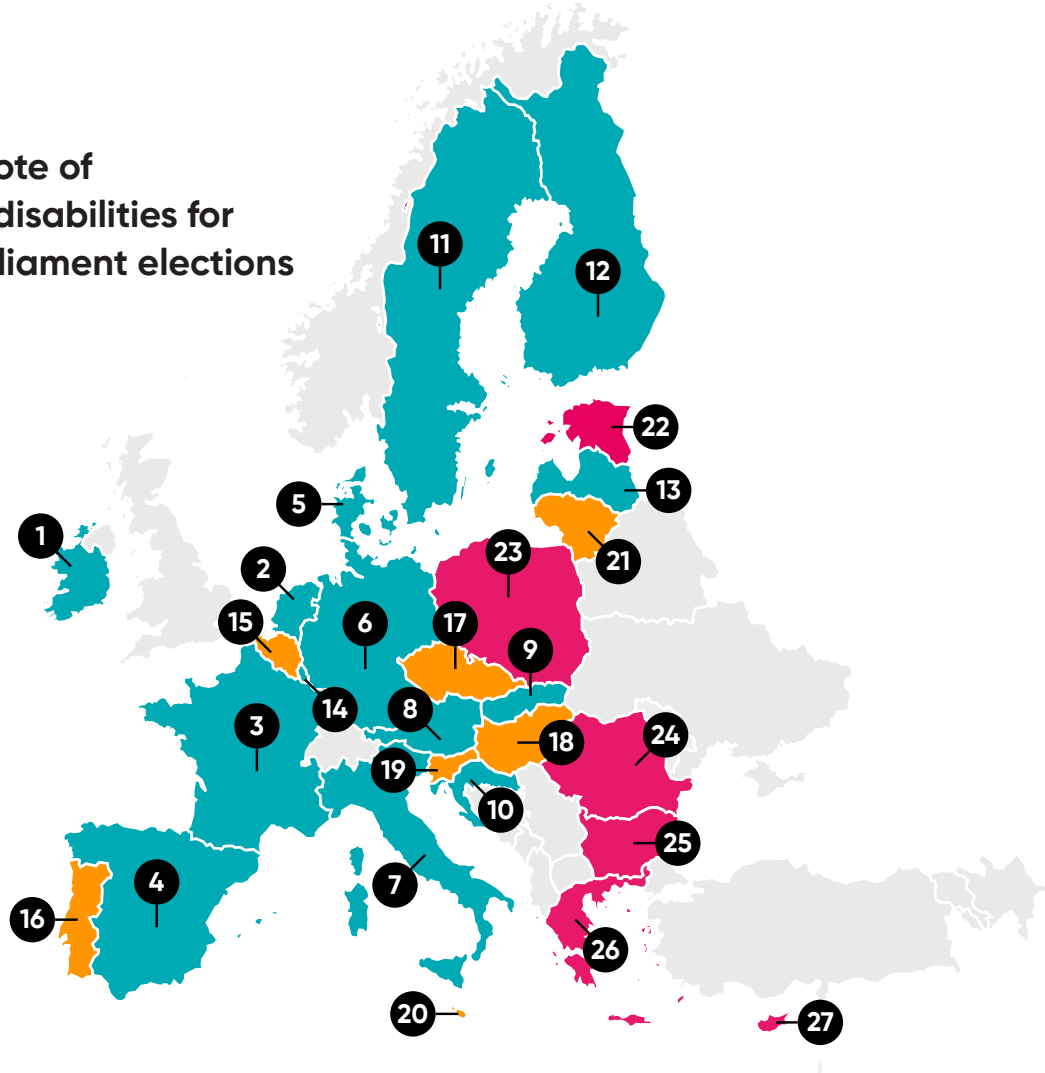
6 EU countries grant no voting rights for people with intellectual disabilities under guardianship.

People with disabilities who are under guardianship might not be allowed to vote because of certain laws. Some people have to make a hard decision between keeping their rights and getting a disability allowance.



This choice isn't fair.

The right to vote of persons with disabilities for European Parliament elections



● EU countries granting full voting rights for people with intellectual disabilities under guardianship.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Ireland | 6 Germany | 11 Sweden |
| 2 the Netherlands | 7 Italy | 12 Finland |
| 3 France | 8 Austria | 13 Latvia |
| 4 Spain | 9 Slovakia | 14 Luxembourg |
| 5 Denmark | 10 Croatia | |

● EU countries granting limited voting rights for people with intellectual disabilities under guardianship.

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 15 Belgium | 18 Hungary | 20 Malta |
| 16 Portugal | 19 Slovenia | 21 Lithuania |
| 17 Czechia | | |

● EU countries granting no voting rights for people with intellectual disabilities under guardianship.

- | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 22 Estonia | 24 Romania | 26 Greece |
| 23 Poland | 25 Bulgaria | 27 Cyprus |

What is the main concern, besides the voting laws?



A big problem that stops people with disabilities from voting is that many things aren't easy for them to use.

The places where you vote, the papers you vote on, the machines you use to vote, and the information you get.



All of these can be hard for people with disabilities. Even online the politicians post about their campaigns don't always think about people with disabilities.

Why does it matter?



The big problem is that not many people with disabilities are involved in politics. This means that the people who should be speaking up for them and fighting for their rights don't get chosen to do that job.

European Parliament of persons with disabilities 2023



Members of Inclusion Europe participating in the 5th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities.



On 23 May the European Parliament organised the 5th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities.

The event welcomed 600 disability advocates.



The theme of the event was about inclusive future for persons with disabilities.



Members of Inclusion Europe at the office in Brussels, participating in a discussion about the right to vote.



László Bercse

"In Hungary,
people under guardianship
need to prove their knowledge
about politics and public life
to keep the right to vote.

That's not fair at all!"



Florence Jablonski

"My country fails to respect the fundamental rights of people with disabilities.

In access to support services, health, family protection and lack of accessibility.

Faced with all these challenges, we need a European push."



Gayle Mugliette

"I have support of personal assistant and this has changed my life.

I want others to have a life too without any problems.

I want to be able to exercise my right to vote in secrecy.

This is not the case in Malta.

I hope it will happen soon."



Tamara Byrne

“In Ireland I have the right to vote. I know I am lucky.

In lots of countries people with intellectual disabilities cannot vote.

People with intellectual disabilities are not different.

People with intellectual disabilities should have equal rights in law.

People with intellectual disability should have the right to vote.”

Voting for the first time in 2019

European elections




About 250 000 people with intellectual disabilities voted for the first time at European elections in 2019.

In early 2019 Inclusion Europe published a magazine about the elections.

The magazine was about importance of voting for people with intellectual disabilities.

You can read the magazine here:

[Europe-for-us-edition-1-2019-EN.pdf \(inclusion-europe.eu\)](#)



“In many cases it is people with intellectual disabilities themselves who lead the way to change.

People with intellectual disabilities value their right to vote, maybe more than anyone else.

So we should make sure they can exercise it.”

Jyrki Pinomaa



Justine Lambole

Justine had no right to vote until the change of law in France.

In 2019 Justine has registered on the electoral lists and she voted for the first time in the European elections.



**You have not been able to vote for many years.
How did you experience this?**



It did something to me.
I was disappointed,
and I was angry at the judge
who had taken the right to vote away.

How was your right to vote taken away?



At the time I was in a home for young people.
The judge asked me questions about
day-to-day politics which I did not know how to answer.
I was not so up to date in politics at that time.
So the judge withdrew my right to vote.

**What was your reaction when
you learned that you would be able
to vote at the next election?**



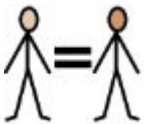
I was really happy.
I am a citizen,
I consider myself able to vote,
so I always wanted to vote.
Finally, I will be able to do it.

The 2019 European elections were your first elections. How did you prepare?



I have already informed myself on the internet and I am discussing the elections with the supervisors. All of this helps me decide but in the end, it's going to be my own choice.

How did you feel after having voting for the first time?



I felt liberated, finally equal to others.

Why are the European elections important to you?



The election results will influence our quality of life and our future.

There are still countries in Europe that prohibit people with intellectual disabilities from voting. What is your opinion on this?

It should be a normal thing to be able to vote as a citizen.



Nobody has the right to take this right
away from someone else,
and I do not think it's wise
to ban someone from voting
just because they have a disability.



Cristóbal Otero

Cristóbal Otero already voted in an election before his legal capacity status was changed.



In 2019 he is glad to have regained his right to vote thanks to the reform of the Spanish electoral law.

How old were you when your legal capacity was revoked?



I was 23 years old.

I was not allowed to vote.

I was angry.

There are many problems in our country such as corruption, and I could not contribute to changing the situation.

I also talked with my family and other people about my situation and everyone said it was not fair.

How do you inform yourself about politics?



I watch television,

I read the online newspapers, and I also use my cell phone.

You voted for the Spanish Senate and the Congress. How did you experience this?



It was a good experience.

The voting station was close to my house.

I felt proud to be able to vote.

I always was determined to vote.

How did you know that the law had changed and that you would be able to vote?



I was very happy!
Now there is one more person
who votes in our country.

Why are the European elections important to you?



The European Union decides
about the general lines in important
areas such as our rights.



The European Union also has
a large amount of funds at its hands.



European Parliament has a voice
in how this money is redistributed.

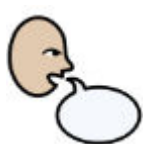


This is why it is important
to choose who will be our
members of Parliament.

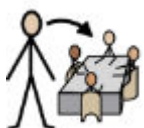
I want people to treat me as an equal member of society

Tamara Byrne





Tamara Byrne spoke at the European Disability Parliament in Brussels on 23 May 2023.



Tamara has joined the Youth Committee of the European Disability forum as a representative of Inclusion Europe.

This is what Tamara said at the parliament:



My name is Tamara and
I am a self-advocate from Ireland.



I am really happy
the European Disability Forum
asked me to speak.

And thanks to Inclusion Ireland
and Inclusion Europe for supporting me.



I have faced lots of barriers
as a person with an intellectual disability
and my rights are often ignored.



I say I am really lucky in my life
but it should not be about luck,
it is my right to be treated like anyone
one else in my country.



Like Ireland,
lots of governments have agreed
to sign up to the UN CRPD,
but signing up to do something
and doing it are two very different things.



I don't understand why governments do not have representatives with real life experience, who can discuss our challenges and needs and make meaningful changes so we can live our best lives the same as everybody.



I should be allowed to be myself and not be made to feel judged or put down when I try to live a life of my choosing.

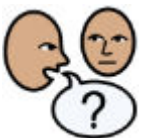
I went to a mainstream Montessori school, primary school, and secondary school.



My family fought hard to make sure I could go to school in my local area with other children in my community.



All I needed to go to these schools was good support from a Special Needs Assistants and my teachers.



Because these people did not make me feel judged, I always felt comfortable to ask for support when I needed it.



I often thought I was lucky for achievements in life like being allowed to graduate from a school and college but I have a right to education and worked hard for these things.



I don't think people realise that how our society is set up can take away my choice on so many things, like where I want to work, what kind of a job I want, where I want to live and who I want to live with.



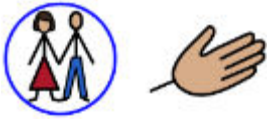
It is really important to me to have my opinion heard because I deserve enough respect to have people listen to me.



I dream of travelling around Ireland and Europe independently for education, work or social activities and having a support person to help me when I need one to do this.



I want to have an independent life, not always relying on parents or family members to accompany me or give me a home.



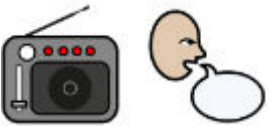
I have to get my family to help with everything because I can't get a job to earn my own money.



I deserve to be treated as an adult not as a child forever, my parents can't provide for me for the rest of my life.



I worry about how I can afford to live independently and join in my community if I am always fighting to be seen.



I have produced and presented radio shows. I lead by example giving time and making it accessible by using plain language and smaller words.



I did not get paid for this work as I volunteered my time so I could build my experience and show that young people with an intellectual disability can work in media.



If government and local authorities employed more people with disabilities, then policies and community planning would be written by people with lived experiences and we would not be ignored by society.



As figure heads and spokes people, politicians need to be leaders of meaningful change.



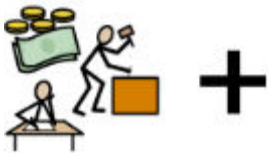
We all need support in life and a person with a disability is no different so people's attitudes need to change.



People see me and think I can only do certain things so they don't even give me a chance, it doesn't occur to people that I might be well able to do more and be good at it.



I want people to treat me as an equal member of society and give me a chance to pay my way as one too.



Governments also need to let us work and not take away money that we need to cover the extra cost of disability.



And most importantly young people with a disability need to be seen as a valuable part of the workforce, their communities and society.

European Parliament elections in 2024



The European Parliament will organise a campaign about the European elections in 2024.

The elections will take place from 6 to 9 June in 2024.



The goal of the campaign is to promote democracy.



The campaign will promote the importance of voting.



European Parliament wants to include more citizens to vote.



The campaign will inform people about the purpose and benefits of the European Parliament.

Focus of the campaign – who is it for



The campaign plans to be diverse and inclusive. But it might leave out some people completely.



People with disabilities had difficulties voting in the last elections:

“Once again, there are technical obstacles in my nation that prevent me from casting my ballot.”

“Once more I am not permitted to cast a ballot because of my country's laws about legal capacity.”



There are over 100 million people with disabilities in the European Union and not all of them have the right to vote.

There are around 800,000 people with disabilities who are unable to vote in European elections.



Persons with disabilities are unable to vote at the elections because of lack of accessibility.



Persons with disabilities
are unable to vote at the elections
because of legal capacity laws.

“There are more than 7 million people
with intellectual disabilities and their
families in the European Union.

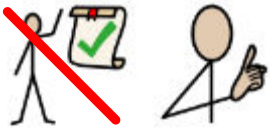
Our votes matter.

Election campaigns must also reach
people with intellectual disabilities
and their families.

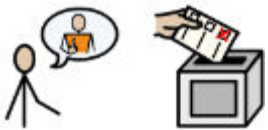
Both elections and campaigns
must be fully accessible.”

— Jyrki Pinomaa, President of Inclusion Europe

In which countries people with intellectual disabilities cannot vote?



If a person with intellectual disabilities cannot vote it is a violation of their rights.



There are 27 countries of the European Union (EU).

In 14 countries of the EU people with intellectual disabilities can vote under guardianship.

In 7 countries of the EU people with intellectual disabilities have limited rights for voting under guardianship.



In 6 countries of the EU people with intellectual disabilities cannot vote under guardianship.

“Voting is very important for all people with intellectual disabilities.

It is our right to take part in the European elections.

All people with intellectual disabilities should have their voices heard and listened to"

— Soufiane El Amrani, easy-to-read and self-advocacy officer at Inclusion Europe.

Why is it important for people with disabilities to vote?



The right to vote is important to empower and include people.



When people with disabilities are not able to vote there are many issues that follow.

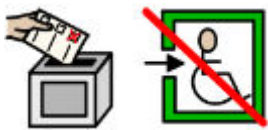
Lack of participation from people with disabilities.

Lack of representation of the disability community in politics.

Representatives that advocate for rights of people with disabilities, needs and interests are not elected.

Prevents people with disabilities from deciding on policies and measures affecting their lives.

How to make elections more accessible for people with intellectual disabilities?



In many countries of the European Union voting is not fully accessible.



There are six ways to make elections more accessible:

1. Raising awareness at the local level.
2. Training staff and people with intellectual disabilities.
3. Support for decision making by assisted voting.





4. Easy-to-read information.
5. Voting through mobile phones
6. Accessible transportation.

Current situation of the rights to vote for people with intellectual disabilities



The European Union and all the European Union countries accepted and approved the UN CRPD.



UN CRPD says that people with disabilities should have rights to vote.

People with intellectual disabilities of the European Union should have the right to vote.



Everyone has the right to be a candidate in European Parliament elections in their own country.



The European Union countries must protect voting rights of people with disabilities.

The European Union countries must ensure that the voting process is accessible.



On 3 May 2022, the European Parliament made a decision to ensure the right to vote of all European Union citizens.

The decision calls for the European Union countries to improve accessibility of the European Elections.

“The electoral laws do not allow people with disabilities to vote.

This is discrimination.

This is unacceptable for our European democracy”.

Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament

Political participation report



European Disability Forum made
A booklet to talk about
the right of people with disabilities
to vote and stand for elections.

Reading this booklet will help you
to know more about:

1. What does it mean to vote
and stand for elections?
2. How is the situation in Europe?
3. What problems
do people with disabilities face
to vote and stand for elections?
4. How do countries try to help
people with disabilities to vote?
5. What can be done better?

Read the booklet here in easy to read:

[Human Rights Report 2022: political participation of
persons with disabilities - European Disability Forum
\(\[edf-feph.org\]\(https://www.edf-feph.org\)\)](https://www.edf-feph.org/en/human-rights-report-2022-political-participation-of-persons-with-disabilities-european-disability-forum)

European elections manifesto



European Disability Forum prepared a list with the things they want people who make laws and decisions in Europe to do for people with disabilities.

The list is called
Manifesto on the European elections.

Read the booklet here in easy to read:

[EDF Manifesto on the European Elections 2024 - European Disability Forum \(edf-feph.org\)](#)

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!



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