**Europe for us**

Number 4 / 2018

The right to vote in Europe

Voting is very important for everyone.

It gives you the chance to have a say  
and to tell **politicians** what you would like to change.

Next year there will be the **election**s for the **European Parliament**.

People from all over Europe will decide  
who will be part of the new European Parliament.

But there is a problem:

Many people with **intellectual disabilities** in Europe  
are not allowed to vote.

In some countries, politicians want to change that.

For example, in France:

The French president has promised to let  
people with **intellectual disabilities**   
who are under full **guardianship** vote.

There are 360,000 adults under full guardianship in France.

At present, a judge can take away their right to vote.

After the changes, a judge will not be allowed  
to take away their right to vote anymore.

Or in Germany:

German politicians want to give the right to vote   
to people with intellectual disabilities.

They want to reach this goal  
before the elections for the **European Parliament**.

People with intellectual disabilities must get the right to vote!

But still in many European countries people with intellectual disabilities  
do not have the full right to vote.

At the moment, people under **guardianship**  
are not allowed to vote in 15 member states

of the **European Union**.

In 6 member states, a judge decides  
if someone under guardianship can vote.

There are some European politicians who want to change that.

One of these politicians is Cecilia Wikström.

Cecilia Wikström is   
a member of the **European Parliament**.

Cecilia Wikström has asked   
the **European Commission** what it wants to do  
to make elections **accessible** for all.

There was an event at the European Parliament  
to answer Cecilia Wikström’s question.

At the event, people who work  
at the European Parliament and the European Commission  
talked about making next year’s elections **accessible**.

Věra Jourová is a **Commissioner  
at the European Commission**.

She said that every person with a disability  
must have the right to vote.

She said that this is written  
in the **European Disability Strategy.**

Another important person who has spoken  
about the right to vote is Dunja Mijatović.

Dunja Mijatović is the **Commissioner for Human Rights**

**at the Council of Europe**.

She spoke to the **European Court of Human Rights**about the right to vote for people with disabilities.

She said:

“Everybody has the right to vote.   
That includes people with disabilities.”

Many important texts say that  
people with disabilities have the right to vote.

One of these texts is the **UN CRPD**.

Dunja Mijatović said that these texts are more important  
than the laws of a country.

She said that everybody must have the right to vote  
because this is good for the whole community.

She said that people with **intellectual disabilities**  
must have the chance to vote for people   
that care about their needs.

Dunja Mijatović said that  
every European country must make voting **accessible**  
to people with intellectual disabilities.

There are many ways to make voting accessible  
for people with intellectual disabilities.

* There should be **easy-to-read** information  
  about politics and elections.
* People with intellectual disabilities  
  should get support with documents  
  needed for voting.  
  For example, if they need to register to vote.
* People with intellectual disabilities   
  should get encouraged to go voting.

Everyone should be able to have a say in politics!

# Our Inclusion Heroes

* Maribel Cáceres, a Spanish self-advocate   
  who fought to regain her right to vote.
* Charles, a young man from France.
* Hendrik Jan Menninga, a Dutch “UN ambassador”.
* Sami Helle, a musician, **self-advocate** and **politician** from Finland.
* Gerhard Furtner from Austria, the managing director of a company that employs people with **intellectual disabilities.**
* Dana Migaliova, a mother of a son with intellectual disabilities and president of our Lithuanian member Viltis.
* Irish actress and musician Aimée Richardson.
* Self-advocate Elisabeta Moldovan from Romania.

Inclusion Europe turns 30

**Inclusion Europe** turns 30 years old in 2018.

We are celebrating this in a special way:  
we are looking at what has been done in Europe  
to make sure people are included.

Every month we talk about one person  
who has worked towards inclusion in Europe.

Here you can read two interviews with our Inclusion Heroes.  
You can find the other interviews here (in English):  
[inclusion-europe.eu/?tag=inclusion-heroes](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?tag=inclusion-heroes)

Interview with Sami Helle

Sami Helle is from Finland.

Sami has many talents:

He is a gifted musician.  
He sings and plays the bass guitar.  
He loves jazz and blues music.  
He is also part of a punk band.  
With the punk band, he represented his country in Eurovision.

Eurovision is a contest where  
people represent their countries with songs.  
A lot of different countries take part.

Sami was on a talk show!

He is also active in politics.

**Question 1:  
How did you become part of the punk band?**

The band leader asked me to join the band.  
I was happy to!

**Question 2:  
What was it like to take part in Eurovision?**

I was worried, but it was interesting and fun!  
We did not win, but I enjoyed it a lot!

**Question 3:**  
**How did it feel when you came back to Finland?**

It felt great to have people cheer for us when we got back to Finland.

**Question 4:  
You also play the trumpet and sing.  
You set up a jazz band with 4 other people.  
Why did you choose jazz?  
It is different from punk rock!**

Jazz was one of the first kinds of music I played.  
It felt good!

I also have a blues band called “Sam Heat & His Blue Kings”.

I am also doing a solo record under the name Sam Heat.

You see: I love music!

**Question 5:  
You are also active in politics.  
You ran for the town** [**elections**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844#Election) **in Helsinki in 2017.  
Helsinki is the capital city of Finland.  
What did you learn from this experience?**

I learnt how **elections** work.  
I met new people.  
I would like to stay active in politics!

**Question 6:  
In 2017, you were not elected.  
Will you run again?**

Yes, I am running for other local [elections!](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844#Election)

**Question 7:  
You recently had an interview with a Finnish TV show.  
What did you talk about?**

I talked about when public organisations buy things from companies.  
The Finnish organisation for people with **intellectual disabilities**,  
called Tukiliitto, has started a project with  
other disability organisations.

Often the services for people with disabilities  
that cost the least money get used.  
People’s needs get overlooked.  
This does not respect **human rights**.

Interview with Hendrik Jan Menninga

Hendrik Jan Menninga is a “**UN** ambassador”.

The “UN ambassadors” work for the rights  
of people with **intellectual disabilities** in the Netherlands.  
An ambassador is a person  
who speaks for an organisation.

The “UN ambassadors” talk about the **UN CRPD**  
to mayors and other **politicians**.  
They tell them how important the UN CRPD is.  
They help them make sure that people with disabilities  
get equal rights.

There are 100 people working at the “UN ambassadors”.  
Hendrik Jan Menninga is part of the group.

**Question 1:**

**How did you become a UN ambassador?**

In 2015 I was part of a group of people with disabilities.  
They told me about this project.  
Then I decided to join.

**Question 2:**

**What are you doing as a UN ambassador?**

We tell the **politicians** in our towns and cities  
about the things that are important to us.

For me, information in **easy-to-read** is important.  
But we also talk about other things.  
For example, easy **access** to buildings.

We give the politicians some time  
to fix the problems that we have found.

Then, we check back to see if they have changed anything.

**Question 3:**  
**What have you done so far?**

For example, the village of Vries  
is now more **accessible** to people with disabilities.

We also created rules on how to make websites  
more accessible.

We used these rules when we were working   
with some **politicians** in one town.

Now the town’s website is much easier to use  
for people with disabilities!

**Question 4:  
Do you use the easy-to-read version of the UN CRPD document?**

The original text is too hard for me.  
The **easy-to-read** text is good,  
but it does not have everything in it.

**Question 5:**  
**What will you do in the future?**

We will build an **accessible** gym in one village  
in the Netherlands.

I will also bring together the people in my region  
who work as **UN** ambassadors, so we can work together.

Our new president: Jyrki Pinomaa

Jyrki Pinomaa is the new president of **Inclusion Europe**.  
He has replaced Maureen Piggot.

He is from Finland.

He has been working for many years for the rights  
of people with **intellectual disabilities**.

Until May, Jyrki was a director of the Aspa Foundation.  
The Aspa Foundation rents out homes to people with intellectual disabilities  
and those who have mental health problems.

Mental health means how healthy your mind is.

From 2010, Jyrki has been the president of **Inclusion Finland KVTL.**

Inclusion Finland KVTL is a Finnish organisation  
for people with intellectual disabilities.  
It is a member of **Inclusion Europe**.

Jyrki has four children with his wife Marianne.  
Two of their children have intellectual disabilities:  
Markus, who is 31, and Robin, who is 27.

While he is president, Jyrki wants to make sure   
Inclusion Europe continues to be known for being trustworthy.  
  
He also wants to get the members of Inclusion Europe  
to use the **UN CRPD**.  
Jyrki said he is glad to be the president of Inclusion Europe.

He said that he cares a lot about   
the rights of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

He is looking forward to working with all kinds of people  
who are also fighting for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities.

He also said that there are no words big enough to say  
thank you to Maureen, for the work that she has done.

Jyrki is set to be the president for at least the next 4 years.

Inclusion Europe is happy to welcome someone  
with so much experience as our new president.  
We are looking forward to working towards inclusion with Jyrki!

Leadership training in October

In October Inclusion Europe is organizing a 3-day leadership training.

The leadership training is for **self-advocates** and their families.   
The training will happen in Brussels   
from Tuesday 2nd October to Thursday 4th October.   
  
The training will have self-advocates and their families.  
During the 3-day event self-advocates will learn about many things like:

* European **elections** and the right to take part in **politics**
* How to be a self-advocate on the European level

You can see more information at this link: <https://bit.ly/2Pw1elN>

Read our Annual Report!

Our [Annual Report](http://inclusion-europe.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/annual_report_2017_inclusion_europe_web.pdf) has been published!    
Find out more about

* our projects and events in the last year
* our achievements in 2017
* the new strategy for the next 5 years

and many other things in our publication.   
Read the report at this link: <https://bit.ly/2LfXUb0>

Video about our new strategy

Inclusion Europe has a new strategy!

A strategy is a plan with goals for the future.  
The strategy also says how these goals will be reached.

We have made a video to explain our strategy.

Over the next five years, we will talk about different topics.

All these topics are important for people with **intellectual disabilities**   
and their families.

Find out more about the strategy and the topics in our video.

You can watch it here: <https://bit.ly/2OQRXTS>

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**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844#EC)   
and manages a lot of people.

**Commissioner for Human Rights   
at the Council of Europe**

The Commissioner for Human Rights   
is part of the **Council of Europe**.  
The Commissioner makes sure   
people understand and respect **human rights**.

The Commissioner visits the countries who take part in   
the Council of Europe, to talk to people about human rights.

**Council of Europe**

The Council of Europe is an organisation   
made up of different European countries.

It has 47 members.

The Council of Europe works for **human rights** and equality  
for all in Europe.

The Council of Europe does not make laws.  
It can just make countries follow some international agreements.

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.

**Easy-to-read**

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

**You can read the European standards of easy-to-read information here:** [www.easy-to-read.eu](http://www.easy-to-read.eu)

**Election**

**An election is when people go to vote.   
Voting is when you choose someone   
to be a leader and make big decisions for you.**

**Elections happen in different areas.   
For example, when you elect a new mayor in your town,   
or when you elect a new president in your country.**

**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 Court of Human Rights**

A court is a place where a judge  
decides how to put the law into practice.

The European Court of **Human Rights**  
makes sure every European country respects human rights.

Human Rights are the rights that every person should have.  
For example, the right to live.  
Or the right to speak your mind.

**European Disability Strategy**

The European Disability Strategy is an important text.

It says what the **European Union** has to do  
to make sure people with disabilities in Europe   
get the same rights as everyone else.

**European Parliament**

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

For example, decisions about laws and budgets.

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

Every 5 years, the people who live in the European Union   
vote for their country’s MEPs.

The next **elections** are in 2019.

European Union

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

We call these countries “member states”.

They have joined together so that   
people in Europe can live in peace,   
have jobs and a good life.

**Guardianship**

**Guardianship allows some people to make life choices for others.**

**The person who makes choices for you is your guardian.**

**Your guardian has legal capacity.**

**They 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.**

**Human Rights**

Human Rights are the rights that every person should have.  
For example, the right to live.  
Or the right to speak your 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 policies in Europe.

We started in 1988.

We have 75 members in 39 European countries.

We are based in Brussels in Belgium.

Intellectual disabilities

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.

Legal capacity

Capacity means being able to make a decision or choice  
at one point in time.

There are laws about how to decide if someone has capacity.   
Then it is called legal capacity.

Having legal capacity means that people with intellectual disabilities   
can do things on their own.   
For example, they can:

* Make choices about their lives.
* Get married, start a family and raise children.
* Sign contracts (including work contracts).
* Take part in politics and have the right to vote.

When there is a **guardianship**, the guardian has legal capacity.

Politician

Someone whose job is to help run the country or part of the country.

Self-advocacy

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

UN CRPD

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.

Read the UN CRPD in easy-to-read here: <http://bit.ly/EtRUNCRPD>

UN / United Nations

The United Nations is an international organisation.

It works for peace and security everywhere in the world.

In short, we call it UN.

Summary

You have read a lot of important things today.

Maybe you would like to let others know about them.

Tell your friends what you read:

1) What did Dunja Mijatović say about the right to vote?

2) Where is Inclusion Europe’s new president from?

3) What kind of music does Sami Helle play?

Contact us and share your self-advocacy stories!

Email: **secretariat@inclusion-europe.org**

Telephone: +32 2 502 28 15

Address: Rue d’Arlon 55, 1040 Brussels, Belgium

Facebook: [**facebook.com/inclusioneurope**](facebook.com/inclusioneurope)

Twitter: [**twitter.com/InclusionEurope**](twitter.com/InclusionEurope)

Website: [**inclusion-europe.eu**](inclusion-europe.eu)

Sign up to get Europe for Us when it comes out: [**bit.ly/EuropeForUs**](bit.ly/EuropeForUs)