

Right to decide and political life – ETR

Find explanations for words in **bold** at the end of this document.

Introduction

Inclusion Europe has created a new document focused on the theme of the year.

The theme of 2019 was **Elect**.

The goal of this paper is to see how the right to make decisions is important to take part to **political** life.

The **UN CRPD** says that countries must make sure that everybody has the right to make decisions, including people with disabilities.

From the right to make decisions come also other rights, for example:

- the right to vote and be elected
- the right to choose where and who you live with

- the right to make decisions regarding health
- the right to marry and have a family
- the right to have a bank account and manage your own money

The right to vote and to stand for elections

The right to vote is the right to elect people who represent us.

The right to stand for elections is also important. Persons that stand for elections can represent other people.

In some countries of the **European Union**, people with disabilities cannot vote or stand for **elections**.

The situation is getting better.

More people can vote and stand for elections

compared to before.

If people with disabilities cannot **vote**
or stand for elections
they are not treated equal with the rest of the people.
In some countries,
people who are under **guardianship**
can't serve in a jury at a court.

Political participation

People living in **institutions** or under guardianship
are often excluded from studies
and discussions about **politics**.

Many people with disabilities are involved in politics.
They can join **political parties** like everyone else.
But very often the parties don't have information
and activities that are **accessible** for them.

Workers with **intellectual disabilities**
also have problems
if they want to join trade unions.
Trade unions are organisations

that represent workers.

If people with disabilities don't have **legal capacity** they cannot sign working contracts.

Many people with intellectual disabilities work in **segregated** places called sheltered workshops.

In the sheltered workshops,
It is rare to see trade unions.

People with disabilities also have problems when they want to create a new organisation.

If a person with disability wants to create a **self-advocacy** organisation, they cannot do it by themselves because they don't have legal capacity. They need support by families or other people.

Only with **legal capacity** people can do things that are fine with the law of a country.

People without legal capacity are not free to use their own money.

This means that people with disabilities
very often can't open a bank account.

It also means that if they create an organisation,
this organisation cannot get any money from the state.

This is because they don't have legal capacity.

Good examples

Some countries are making the right to vote
more easy for people living under **guardianship**
and more people can now vote.

These countries are:

- Denmark
- France
- Germany
- Spain

In Austria, the law about **guardianship**
was changed and made better.

Self-advocates were also involved
in making the law about guardianship more fair.

In Scotland, the organisation Enable Scotland

had an idea to make the vote more accessible for people with intellectual disabilities and people with **complex support needs**.

People with disabilities can vote in Scotland but voting is not very accessible for them. Enable Scotland created information about the elections in **easy-to-read** and other formats for people with complex support needs. Thanks to that, many people with disabilities voted in Scotland.

Good examples can also come from people with intellectual disabilities themselves. These are some of them:

- Some **self-advocates** in Spain made their voices heard. They spoke with **politicians** about their right to vote. They also had meetings with **political parties** and created documents with the ideas and experiences of people with intellectual disabilities.
- Sami Helle, from Finland. He is a famous musician in Finland

and he also run for elections.

He founded a self-advocacy organisation with many members all across Finland.

- Sara Pickard, from England.

She works for Inclusion Europe's member Mencap.

She has been involved with

the European Platform of Self-advocates

for a long time.

She was elected as a city councillor

and became the first councillor in her area

with down syndrome.

- Angela Covadonga Bachiller, from Spain.

She became the first city councillor in Spain

with down syndrome.

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.

Complex support needs

Complex support needs are when a person with disabilities needs help in different and complicated ways.

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.

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.

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.

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

Legal capacity

Capacity is when you can make a decision or choice at one moment.

There are laws about how to decide if someone has capacity.

Then it is called legal capacity.

Legal capacity means that people with **intellectual disabilities**
can do things on their own.

This is what they can do:

- Make choices about their lives.

- Get married, start a family and raise children.
- Sign contracts (also work 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.

Political party

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

Politician

Someone who 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**

Self-advocacy

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

These people are called self-advocates.

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.

United Nations

The United Nations is an international organisation.

It work 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).