**Europe for us**

Number 1 / 2018

Hear our Voices!

Self-advocates meet in Brussels

“We don’t need help, we need support.”

This is what self-advocates said

during Inclusion Europe’s Hear our Voices conference.

The Hear our Voices conference was in early December 2017

and took place in Brussels in Belgium.

There were more than 70 self-advocates and their supporters

at the conference.

They came from nearly 20 countries.

During the conference there were workshops led by self-advocates.

Elisabeta Moldovan did a workshop called “Building my net”.

Elisabeta works at Inclusion Europe’s Romanian member Ceva de Spus.

Elisabeta said that many people with disabilities

find it hard to make friends.

She said that until a few years ago she was one of those people.

Elisabeta then shared tips on how you can get to know

people you can trust with similar interests.

László Bercse did a workshop called

“My home, my city, my country: being included”.

László is a self-advocate at Inclusion Europe’s Hungarian member,

ÉFOÉSZ.

László talked about how his work as an activist helps him be included.

László also talked about how people with intellectual disabilities

can be supported so they do not have to

live in [**institutions**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844)**(definition page 15)**.

Andreas Zehetner did a workshop called

“Leading from the top: self-advocates on the board”.

Andreas is on the board of Inclusion Europe’s member

Lebenshilfe Austria.

Andreas’ talked about how self-advocates

can be involved in the board of an organization.

Senada Halilčević did a workshop called: “Find your voice”.

Senada is a self-advocate at Inclusion Europe’s Croatian member, ASA.

Senada is also Vice-President of Inclusion Europe.

Senada said that meeting with other self-advocates

is the only way to talk about common problems.

It also helps to find out how

other people have dealt with these problems.

Senada also told participants to stand up for their rights.

Harry Roche did a workshop called: “I have a say in politics”.

Harry works at Inclusion Europe’s member

in the United Kingdom, Mencap.

He is also an Inclusion Europe board member.

Harry’s workshop was about voting rights.

Harry also talked about voting rights at the

4th European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities.

You can read about his speech in the next article.

All the Hear our Voices participants also attended the Parliament.

Sara Pickard led the session on the last day.

Sara Pickard is a self-advocate from the United Kingdom.

She works with **Inclusion International (definition page 15)**

as a self-advocate representing Europe.

During the last session the self-advocates

made some important statements.

One of the statements was that

we need to fight to make sure

everyone can enjoy the same rights everywhere.

For example, the right to vote.

Another statement made was that

people with intellectual disabilities do not need help,

they need support.

At the end of the conference Sara Pickard said:

We must make sure that our voices are being heard

stronger, louder, and clearer!

Harry Roche speaks at the

European Parliament of Persons with Disabilities

Harry Roche spoke at the 4th

[European Parliament](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844)of Persons with Disabilities.

Harry Roche is a board member of Inclusion Europe.

The [European Parliament](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844)of Persons with Disabilities

took place in December 2017.

It was organised by the European Disability Forum and the

European Parliament.

800 people came to the event.

There were 200 people with intellectual disabilities.

This is a record number.

There were also some important people

from the [**European Union**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844)**(definition page 14)**.   
Harry spoke about voting rights for people with intellectual disabilities.

He said:

Imagine everyone

would need to take a test to see if they can vote.

How many people would pass that test?

A Spanish woman with an intellectual disability was asked to take   
such a test.

In the end, she was not allowed to vote.

The law will now change in Spain.

(You can read about this on page 11.)

Harry said that there are still 10 countries    
in the [**European Union**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844) **(definition page 14)**

where some people with intellectual disability

are not allowed to vote.

This is [**discrimination**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844) **(definition page 13)**.

Harry explained what the **European Union** **(definition page 14)**

can do to help stop this **discrimination (definition page 13)**.

For example, set standards for how **elections (definition page 13)**

should include people with intellectual disabilities.

Harry also said:

I am confident that the [**European Parliament**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844)**(definition page 14)**

will make sure people with intellectual disabilities

can fully exercise their rights.

Self-advocate Oswald Föllerer from our member Austrian member

Selbstvertretungszentrum Wien also spoke.

Self-advocate Victorio Latasa from our Spanish member Plena Inclusión also spoke.

The topic of **elections (definition page 13)**

and the right to vote is very important in Europe.

There will be elections for the

**European Parliament (definition page 14)** in 2019.   
In 2019, Inclusion Europe will talk a lot about how to make elections accessible for people with intellectual disabilities.

Interview with Mathilde Cotman

Mathilde is a self-advocate from Belgium.

She is a part of the self-advocacy group of Inclusion ASBL.

Inclusion ASBL is Inclusion Europe’s Belgian member.

Mathilde came to Inclusion Europe’s leadership training

in September 2017.

You can read about the training

in the September October issue of Europe for Us.

We interviewed Mathilde about her experiences.

Question 1: Why did you decide to come to the event?

The topic of violence against women is important to me.

I also wanted to meet other self-advocates.

Question 2: What did you learn during the event?

I learned that lots of women have been the victims of violence in Europe.

Question 3: How was it meeting a

[**member of the European Parliament**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844) **(definition page 15)**?

It was stressful.

I was not looking forward to it but actually the member of the European Parliament was very nice.

Question 4: What was the best part of the event?

The best part was visiting the

**European Parliament (definition page 14)**. 

I did not know there were so many things in the building.

There were shops, a hairdresser and more.

It was funny to see the main room where the

Members of the European Parliament vote.

Europe in Action at World Congress 2018

This year, the World Congress

of **Inclusion International (definition page 15)**

will take place in Europe.

The title of the event is Learn, Inspire, Lead.

It will happen in Birmingham in England,

from Wednesday 30 May to Friday 1 June.

Inclusion Europe is a partner of the event.

This is why you should come to the World Congress:

* The World Congress is a big event for people from all over the world.
* At the conference, Inclusion Europe will also celebrate    
  its 30th anniversary!
* There will be presentations on how people with intellectual disabilities and their families have been empowered in Europe.

Register here: http://www.worldcongress2018.com

The right to love and friendship

Senada Halilčević is the Chair of the

**European Platform of Self-Advocates (definition page 14)**.

She is also Vice-President of Inclusion Europe.

Senada has written a text for a newsletter of the

[European Disability Forum](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844).

Here is what she wrote:

Imagine that you fall in love with another person.

And the other person falls in love with you.

You become a couple.

And then you want to get married.

But it is not that easy.

You need to come before a judge.

The judge can decide if you can get married.

And he asks you: “What is love?”

This is a very difficult question.

Many people have written about it.

But they have not found the answer.

Why do you need to find an answer only because you want to get married?

I did not invent this story.

It is happening in some countries.

Many people with intellectual disabilities in Europe do not have

**legal capacity (definition page 15)**.

This means that they cannot vote,

they cannot sign contracts,

and they cannot get married.

It is often very difficult for people with intellectual disabilities in Europe

to find love.

And when they do, it is difficult for them to be with their partner.

Parents and siblings are afraid that something might happen to them.

Many people think that people with intellectual disabilities   
should not have a partner.

I think that this needs to change.

Love is for everyone.

We need to make sure that people with intellectual disabilities everywhere in Europe can get married.

We need to make sure that people change their opinions about   
people with intellectual disabilities who have a partner.

I say it again: Love is for everyone.

I wish to all of you

lots of love and good friends in your life!

Inclusion Europe sends contribution

to the UN CRPD Committee

There is a document called the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (definition page 16)**.

It has different parts.

These are called articles.

One of them is about what states need to do   
so people with disabilities are not discriminated against.

The **UN CRPD Committee** **(definition page 16)**is currently preparing   
a General Comment on this article.

The General Comment says what the article means in practice.

Inclusion Europe has told the [UN CRPD Committee](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844)

what we think still needs to change in the General Comment.

Learn more here: http://bit.ly/UNCRPDcontribution

Spain: Right to vote for all

In many European countries,

people with intellectual disabilities cannot vote.

That is also the case in Spain.

Plena inclusión helped organise a campaign last year.

Plena inclusión is the Spanish member of Inclusion Europe.

The campaign aimed to change the law so that

people with intellectual disabilities are allowed to vote in Spain.

Inclusion Europe supported this campaign.

The Spanish Parliament has now

started the process to change the law.

Learn more here: http://bit.ly/Spainvoting

Definitions

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.

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 Disability Forum

The European Disability Forum is an organisation of people with disabilities in Europe.

In short, we call it EDF.

EDF was created by people with disabilities in 1996.

EDF works to protect the rights of people with disabilities in Europe.

European Parliament

The European Parliament is a place where important decisions

of the [**European Union**](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844) **(definition page 14)** are made.

For example: 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 five years, the people who live in the European Union vote

for their country’s MEPs.

European Platform of Self-Advocates

The European Platform of Self-Advocates is made up

of organisations of self-advocates from different countries in Europe.

We call it EPSA.

It is part of Inclusion Europe.

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.

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.

[Inclusion International](http://inclusion-europe.eu/?page_id=2844)

Inclusion International an international organisation

for people with an intellectual disability.

It was founded more than 50 years ago.

Inclusion International works to protect the rights

of people with intellectual disabilities worldwide.

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.

The people who live in institutions

have to follow the rules of the institution

and cannot decide for themselves.

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.

For example:

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

Member of the European Parliament

See **European Parliament (definition page 14)**.

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.

UN CRPD Committee

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (in short, the CRPD Committee)   
is a group of people that check what countries do   
to make sure the rights of persons with disabilities are respected.

United Nations

The United Nations is an international organisation.

They work for peace and security everywhere in the world.

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 Andreas talk about at the Hear our Voices conference?
2. What did Harry speak about at the European Parliament for Persons with Disabilities?
3. Why should people come to the World Congress 2018?

Contact us, and share your self-advocacy stories!

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