

# Europe for us!

The Newsletter of the European Self-Advocates Movement

September 2002



## Editorial

Inclusion Europe and the European Platform of Self-Advocates are European organisations. That is why we want to tell you about the European Union. We will explain in this newsletter something more about the European Union, the European Parliament and European disability organisations. Ulla Topi, President of EPSA



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## The European Union?

You have heard people speaking about the European Union. Some people use shortly "EU" for "European Union". But many people do not know what it is. They also do not know how it works.



But the European Union is very important for everybody in Europe. We will tell you about it and about what the European Union means for you.

The European Union was founded in 1957. It is a Union of European countries. These 15 countries are members of the EU:

Austria	Greece	Spain
Belgium	Ireland	Sweden
Denmark	Italy	United Kingdom
Finland	Luxembourg	Germany
France	Netherlands	Portugal

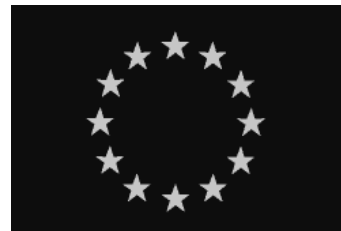


With support of the European Community Activities in Favour of Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities

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The European Union is very much like a large country.

The European Union has a **flag**.  
It is a circle of 12 yellow stars  
on a blue background.  
You see it where  
the European Union is active.



Like your country,  
the EU has a Parliament.  
Every 5 years  
all citizens of the European Union  
elect the Members of the  
**European Parliament**.

The European Union has also a government.  
It is called the **European Commission**.  
The European Commission manages the EU.

There is also a **Council of Ministers**.  
This is composed of Ministers from each member state.  
This Council of Ministers makes sure that the interests of the member states are  
taken into account.

Very important for you are  
the **European non-governmental organisations**.  
They are like disability organisations in your country.  
But they work at European level.  
They make your needs and wishes known  
to the European Union.

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## **The European Parliament**

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Every 5 years all European citizens elect  
the Members of the European Parliament.  
They are often called “MEPs” because that is easier.

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Most of the time,  
the European Parliament works  
in Brussels in Belgium.  
For one week every month  
the European Parliament meets

There are 626 MEPs from all countries  
of the European Union.  
Larger countries have more MEPs than smaller ones.  
The United Kingdom has 87 MEPs.  
Ireland has only 15 MEPs.

Most of the time,  
the European Parliament works  
in Brussels in Belgium.  
For one week every month  
the European Parliament meets  
in Strasbourg in France.  
All MEPs and their assistants then travel  
from Brussels to Strasbourg.

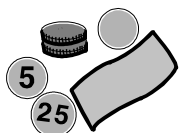


The MEPs speak for the citizens of Europe.  
They also speak for you.  
If you want to talk to the MEP who speaks for you,  
you can find the name and address  
at the website of the European Parliament.  
The address is:

**[www.europarl.eu.int](http://www.europarl.eu.int)**

You might need the help of a supporter, because that website is not easy to understand.

The European Parliament has many different tasks.  
Its main work is to control the government  
of the European Union, the European Commission.



The European Parliament also decides how  
the money is spent in the European Union.

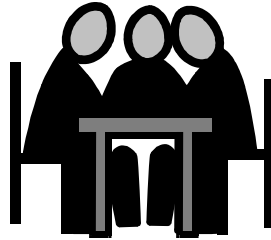
And sometimes it must agree  
to new European laws.



MEPs should know something about everything.  
For example: social affairs, agriculture,  
non-discrimination, trade, employment,  
and also about the needs of disabled people.

But MEPs cannot know everything.  
So there are many organisations who inform them.  
European disability organisations tell them about the  
needs and wishes of disabled people.

In the Parliament there is also  
a Disability Intergroup.  
This is a group of MEPs who are  
interested in disability.  
The Intergroup meets every month.  
It talks about things which are  
important for disabled people.



- To get information
- To tell us about news and meetings

Please contact us!

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## **European Disability Organisations**

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In your country there are many organisations  
of disabled people.  
There is a national organisation of people  
with each type of disability.  
For example of people with  
learning or intellectual disability and their parents.  
Or of people who are blind or have difficulties seeing.  
There is also a National Disability Council where  
all disabled people have their place.

All these national organisations  
are members of European disability organisations.  
Inclusion Europe is the European organisation  
of people with intellectual disability and their families.  
The European Blind Union is  
the European organisation of blind people.

All disability organisations are members  
of the European Disability Forum.  
It fights for all disabled people.

European disability organisations protect  
your rights and interests in the European Union.

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