

Europe for us!

The Newsletter of the European Self-Advocates Movement

May-Jun 2005



Editorial

Inclusion Europe held the congress "Europe in Action 2005". It was in Prague from 19 to 21 May 2005.

There was more than 300 participants.

The theme was about living in the community.

People clearly explained that there should no longer be big institutions in Europe.

In the same time, EPSA had its third General Meeting.

The steering group presented their activities in 2004.

They explained their work plan for 2005.

We really hope you can join us next year in Brussels for the 2006 Congress.

Ulla Topi, President of EPSA.



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Summary of the Congress

It is a fundamental right
to be able to choose where you live.
But in Europe, more than 160 thousand people cannot !



All European citizens should be able
to live freely in the community.
This is why the theme of the congress is so important!



All the governments have to recognise this right.
There should be no more big institutions.
There should be more community-based services.



And all the community-based services should be
of high quality.
They should help people with intellectual disability
to be part of the community.



Each person with intellectual disability should have
the opportunity and support
to live an ordinary life.



With support of the
European
Community

A word from Mr Vladimir Spidla

Mr Spidla is the European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.



He is someone very important.

He makes decision on policies of the European Union.

Mr Spidla told us that people have:

- The right to be integrated in society,
- The right to be independent,
- The right to work
- And the right to take part in social life.



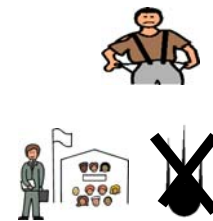
These fundamental rights should be used to fight discrimination!

These rights are written in an important text called "Charter of Fundamental Rights".



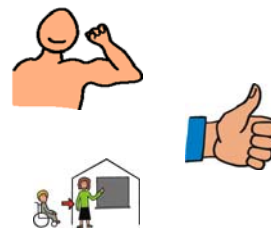
However, there are still lots of obstacles:

- Many people with disabilities live in poverty,
 - Many families still have little control over their own lives,
 - Lots of disabled people still suffer from discrimination,
 - Citizens do not know about the true situation of people with intellectual disability,
 - Politicians do not make lots of changes and they do not move fast enough,
- The result of these barriers is that disabled people are left behind and feel weak.



Thanks to positive stories and example of good practices related in the congress, six key factors can be listed to make positive change happen :

- To increase the power of people with intellectual disability and their families,
- To get the law on their side,
- To see every person as unique,
- To build relations that make things go faster,
- To keep the focus on quality of life
- To see how disabled people can be integrated rather than developing specialist services.



People talked at the conference about what need to be done

1. Actions to take at local level

Wendy Perez, a self-advocate from UK, spoke at the conference.

She said: "Take control over your life!

You can change your mind and do something different!"

Self-advocates want to take their life into their own hands.

"You have to use the power you have as consumers!"

People must discuss disability at local level.

People must act and make campaigns at local level.



2. Actions to take at national level

People with intellectual disability must be able to make decisions on issues that concern their life.



There is a need to „educate“ service providers.

Service Providers should accept new ideas like self-advocacy.



Families should also interact with their children with intellectual disability as capable adults.

Families should support their child to acquire skills.



National associations should be stronger.

They should be partners of the governments.



3. Actions to take at European level

There are 3 things missing in the European policies:

- People with intellectual disability are consumers. They should have control and protection.
- Europe should give money to organise good services.
- Programs on poverty and social exclusion should take into account people with intellectual disability.



Conclusions

We should fight for community-based services.

We should fight against poverty and social exclusion.

All people should be able to exercise their rights on the basis of their wishes and choices.



Evaluation and handouts

A lot of things were done during this seminar to make it accessible for people with intellectual disability.

Although there are still things that could be better, self-advocates told us that they appreciated the accessibility.

Handout papers in easy-to-read for all speeches are available. You can find them on the website: www.inclusion-europe.org

EPSA General Meeting

During this important meeting, Ulla, Donald, Lars and Alain explained what EPSA did last year.

During the year 2004, the steering group met 4 times.

In November 2004, a new self-advocacy officer arrived at Inclusion Europe.



With his help, EPSA developed important documents:

- The new leaflet about EPSA;
- Rules for accessible meetings and conferences in several languages;
- Rules for good support.

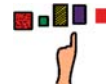


EPSA was also involved in projects of Inclusion Europe and its members.

The steering group also explained what the work plan for next year is. It is patient work to implement this work plan.

The steering group wants:

1. To help people to decide more by themselves.
2. To tell people about the abilities of people with intellectual disability.
3. To help groups of self-advocates at local level.
4. To make meetings more accessible.
5. To get more accessible information and websites.



During the meeting, some self-advocates asked for more information in easy-to-read.

Some also asked to organise another conference for self-advocates, like the “empowerment conference” held in 2003 in Brussels.



Two or three self-advocate organisations wanted information about how they could become a member of EPSA.

If you want your association to be a member of EPSA, you should write to Gengoux Gomez, Inclusion Europe’s self-advocacy officer at self-advocacy@inclusion-europe.org



At the end of the meeting, we discussed about the new brochure on support.



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

Please contact us!

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