

Europe for us!

The Newsletter of the European Movement of Self-Advocates

Jan-Feb 2006



Editorial

Several laws protect the rights of all the persons. Some specific laws protect the rights of the disabled persons. However, our rights are often still not respected.



So the United Nations have decided to write a new text. It will better protect the rights of the disabled people. Some persons with intellectual disabilities are involved in the writing of this text.



This is really important and we will keep you informed when this text will be finished.



Ulla Topi
President of EPSA

What is the United Nations?

The United Nations is an international organisation. It was set up in 1945.



The United Nations was started by 51 countries. Today, 191 countries are members. This means that almost all countries of the world belong to the United Nations.



Often, people use the short "UN" when they speak about the United Nations. The UN has also a symbol. You see it wherever the UN is present. The colour of the UN is blue. It is also the colour of its flag.



The headquarters of the UN are in New York.



It is lead by a Secretary General.



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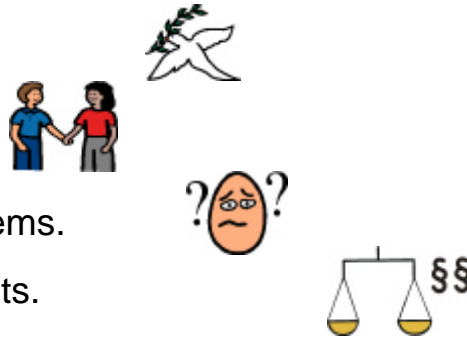
With support of the European Commission and Inclusion Europe

The aims of the United Nations

The UN is based on an agreement. An agreement is like a contract. It is called “the Charter of the United Nations”. All member countries agree to this Charter.

The Charter says that the UN has 5 purposes:

1. To work for peace and security.
2. To develop friendly relations among countries.
3. To help solving international problems.
4. To promote respect for human rights.
5. To coordinate the work of nations.



All countries are members of the General Assembly. This assembly meets 1 time per year, from September to December. All member countries have 1 vote in the UN. There is no difference between large or small, rich or poor countries.



How the United Nations work

The United Nations has 2 main ways of making agreements:

1. Member countries can write down their opinions on different matters. If the General Assembly agrees, it is called a **Resolution** or a **Declaration**. The most famous Declaration is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A declaration shows what the member countries think about a subject. But governments do not have to follow a Declaration.
2. Member countries can also write a kind of international law. This is called a **Treaty** or a **Convention**. All member countries can agree to a Convention. When a member country has agreed to a Convention, it has to follow it.

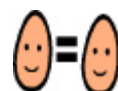


Conventions are much stronger than Declarations. The UN also checks if member countries follow the Conventions.



The most famous Declaration is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. But other texts are also important.

In 1971, the UN adopted a declaration on the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. And in 1993, they agreed on “Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities”.



A new convention for disabled people



The United Nations has decided to work on a new Convention.
It will better protect and promote the rights and dignity of the disabled persons.

Since 2002, a working group of the UN is writing the text.

The working group is called "Ad-Hoc Committee".

Many governments from all over the world take part.

Also disability organisations are helping to get the text right.



2 times per year, the governments meet with many disability organisations.

These meetings take place in New York.

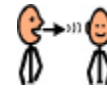
Inclusion International speaks there for people with intellectual disabilities.



During the meetings, the governments discuss the new text.

We do not know how long this will take.

But we know that this Convention will be very important for all disabled people.



Some examples of what may be in the new Convention:

Better attitudes to persons with disabilities

Governments should raise awareness on the abilities of disabled people.
All citizens should know more about disabled people.



Living independently and being included in the community

All people should have the right

to choose where and with whom they want to live.

Disabled people should not be forced to live in large institutions.

Support and services should be available in the community.



Education

All disabled people should have the right to education.

They should have equal access to all kinds of learning and education.

Learning and education should be inclusive.



On 23-24 October 2005, Inclusion International organised a workshop
about the new UN Convention on disabled people.

This workshop took place in Romania and was funded by the United Nations.

There were 10 persons with intellectual disabilities at this workshop.

They came from 10 different countries of the world.



In discussion with the other people of the workshop,




they agreed on 13 important points that should be written in this new text.

Key messages from people with intellectual disabilities



Community Living

As a person with an intellectual disability,

1. I should choose by myself where and with whom I want to live 
2. I may need some help from other people, but I should choose these people myself. 
3. I want to choose in all area of my life: work, support, free time, etc.
4. I think that all people should make these choices even people with severe disabilities.
5. I want to live with good support in terms of help, money, support persons. 
6. Because I know it can be hard, for example to deal with papers or money.
7. I think that all institutions should be closed, that some persons should show us how to live in the community, and that everyone deserves a chance to try things out.

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

Please contact us!


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Families

As children with an intellectual disability,

8. Many of us had a very sad childhood 
9. We all need love and we all need to grow up in a family
10. Families (including foster families) deserve support, in terms of money, of advise and respite.

As adults with an intellectual disability,

11. We need to control our lives 
12. But we also need good family relationships where we help each other
13. And the chance to make our own families.

Europe in Action 2006—Learning all our lives

Remember: Europe in Action 2006 is only in 2 months!

It will be a very important meeting for EPSA because we will welcome new members.



Your organisation could be one of them!



For more information, write to self-advocacy@inclusion-europe.org

