

Europe for us!

The Newsletter of the European Platform of Self-Advocates

Jan-Mar 2009



Editorial

In December, there was the European day for people with disabilities. This is good because it makes sure that more people know about the needs of people with disabilities and try to change things so they have more rights.



Also, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force last year. This is very important because it makes sure that more people will respect our rights.



Andrew Doyle,
President of EPSA.

European day of people with disabilities

In 1992, the United Nations decided that the 3 December of each year would be the International Day of Disabled People.



The European Union decided to do this as well. So the 3 December is also the European Day of Disabled People.



Every year, the European Commission organises a conference to celebrate this important day. They do this with European disability organisations like the European Disability Forum. These conferences mostly talk about disability policies. They are meant for



- policy makers,
- people with disabilities,
- decision makers
- and experts in the field of disability.



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With support of the European Commission and Inclusion Europe

European day for people with disabilities

The aims of these conferences are:

- to give an opportunity to exchange information and good practice,
- to allow networking



among people from the disability policy field.

Every 2 years, the European Commission writes an important report. This is a report on the situation of all people with disabilities in every country of the European Union.



This time the report was about taking action at local level to include people with disabilities.



The report said that disabled people must be included in the society.

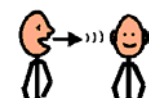
They have the right

- to have a job,
- to do their own shopping,
- to take public transport,
- to get support from the government.



If we want inclusion to become a reality, we have to work on it also at local level.

Disabled people should not face discrimination anymore. They should be listened to when new laws are written. It is up to the local and national decision-makers to make sure that this happens.



But the European Union can help them.

For example, the European Union gives money for local projects. The European Union does this through a programme called “the European Structural Funds”.



Moreover, the European Union makes sure that all projects financed by this programme are accessible for all disabled people.



European day for people with disabilities

At the conference, the participants made some recommendations about how to improve the lives of people with disabilities.



Here are the recommendations:

1. Mainstreaming

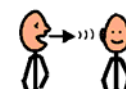
Mainstreaming is very important. Disability issues must not be forgotten. People must think about disabled people when they write new policies. This is important in all areas of life. And it is even more important in the areas like

- Accessibility
- Education
- Training
- Social services



Important activities around mainstreaming should be promoted. For example

- Sharing information and best practices
- Making sure disabled people can talk with politicians
- Making disability organisations stronger
- Making sure other people know about the needs and wishes of disabled people
- Discussions between disability organisations and decision-makers should not happen just once.



These discussions should be seen as something important which will from now on always exist in the future.

2. Inclusive policies

Disabled people and politicians should understand each other. Therefore, they should discuss a lot with each other. Discussion is the key thing to develop inclusive policies at local level.



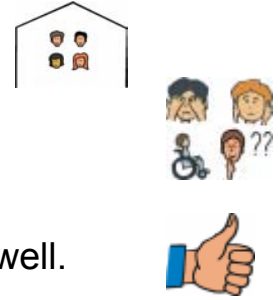
3. Consultation

All people should take part in the discussions. People with disabilities themselves, of course,



European day for people with disabilities

but also organisations and parents associations working with people with disabilities.



There are many good things happening around Europe. It is important that people know about these things and try to make these good things happen in their country as well.

So sharing information and good practices is important. This can be done for example at conferences and events.

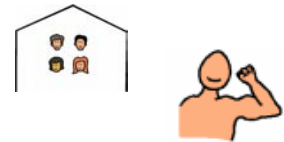


4. Funding

Money of the European Union should only go to projects which fully respect the UN Convention.



Some money should be given to disability organisations so they can get stronger and be involved in the discussions with politicians.



The friends project

In Finland, there is a project called 'the friends project'. The project started last year.



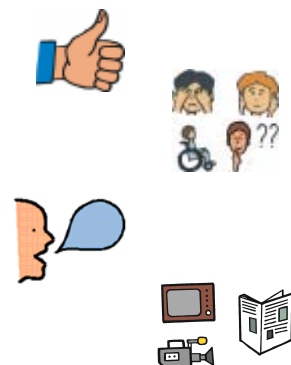
The aim of the project is to make sure that people with intellectual disabilities are included in society. The project is aimed at young people with intellectual disabilities.



The friends project has organised lots of events in Finland. For example, festivals, and other events in high schools.



They want to show people the many good things that people with intellectual disabilities can do. They do this through campaigns. In their campaigns, famous actors, singers, sportsmen and women tell the media about the positive things that people with intellectual disabilities can do.



The friends project

In 2007,
the friends project started
an international friendship programme.
The project was called
'Best Buddies'.



The aim of this programme was
to bring together people with disabilities
and people without disabilities.
It also aims to make sure
that people with disabilities
are more included in society.



In the 'Best Buddies' programme,
one person with a disability
is matched with another person who does not have a disability.
The two people are the same age
and they have similar interests.
The programme lasts for one year.



At the moment,
the 'Best Buddies' programme exists in 31 countries.
The people in the programme are aged
between 16 - 37 years old.



People in Finland
want to try to make sure more people
can get involved in the friends project
in the future.

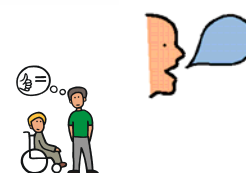


The UN Convention

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
entered into force in May 2008.
This means that from May 2008,
all the countries who signed it
have to do what the Convention says.



The UN Convention is very important.
It shows that people with disabilities have rights.
It shows that people with disabilities must have a voice
and they must be respected.



The UN Convention

It tells people that people with disabilities should have the same rights as all other people.

The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities covers lots of different things which affect us in life.

For example:

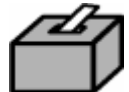
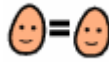
- The right to independent living and the right to live in the community.
- The right to accessible information. This means all information should be easy to read and understand.

- The right to taking part in political life.. This means everyone should be allowed to vote and to be a politician. Everyone should have a say in the laws which affect them.
- The right to education This means people with disabilities should have the right to a good education and they should be able to go to the same school as everyone else.

- The right to work and employment.
- The right to health care.
- The right to leisure and sport.

The Convention is very important because it will make sure that all countries who sign it should change their laws.

This will mean that in the future, people with disabilities will have more rights.



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

Please contact us!

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