

Europe for us!

The Newsletter of the European Platform of Self-Advocates

Jul-Sep2009



Editorial

In June, there was a big conference in Finland. It was called 'Europe in Action'. At the conference, people spoke about why it is important to be able to live independently.



At the conference EPSA had a meeting. They made recommendations about legal capacity. They tell people why it is important that people with intellectual disabilities can make their own decisions.



Andrew Doyle,
President of EPSA.



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Europe in Action 2009

Everyone has the right to be included in society.



Everyone has the right to have a home that suits one's basic needs.



From 24-27 June, there was a big conference for self-advocates called Europe in Action. The conference was in Finland.



At the conference, lots of people came from different countries in Europe.



The conference was a good opportunity to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the self-advocacy movement in Finland.

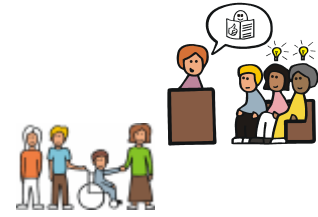


With support of the
European Commission
and Inclusion Europe

Europe in Action 2009

At the conference,
The participants talked about important topics.
For example:

- Full participation and equality
- Access to information
- Participation in cultural life, leisure and sport
- Minority language issues
- Respect for home and the family
- Supported decision-making
- Self-advocacy in Europe



At the conference,
Andrew Doyle, the president of EPSA,
spoke about
the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
He said that:



«Laws like the Convention
are important to help self-advocates get full participation and equality.

But all countries must do what the convention says.



Governments and communities must understand that we have equal rights.

We must be seen as valued citizens.

Self advocacy.



We decide about our lives.

We do not wait for others to change things for us.

We have more power to take control. »



He also said that:

«Governments do not understand self advocacy.

They do not understand that we need good, well trained supporters.

They should pay for this.

People do not take time to listen to us.

Some people still think that we cannot have a voice.

They think that we are not worth listening to.”



Europe in Action 2009

He said that self-advocates are responsible citizens.
He said that people with intellectual disabilities
have rights and also responsibilities.



He thinks that self-advocates
should be taken seriously.



He said: "The future is ours".

At the conference,
people talked about independent living.

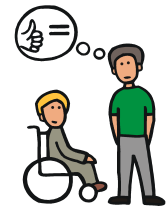


they said that everyone has the right to decide
where they want to live.



Everyone should have the right to decide
who they want to live with.

People with intellectual disabilities
should have privacy.



For example,
they should not have to tell their parents everything.
they should have their own bathroom.

They should be able to decide
who can visit them.



They should also have the right to have a job
and earn money.



They should be able to decide
how they spend their money.



They should have information
about leisure activities.



And they should be able
to choose their own support person.



EPSA meeting

At the Europe in Action conference,
EPSA had a meeting.

At the meeting,

they talked about legal capacity.

Paul Alford talked about legal capacity.

Paul Alford is a self-advocate.

Paul said that:

« Full legal capacity is when you

- have the same rights as everyone else
- make decisions for yourself

For example, you should be able to

- vote
- sign a contract
- get married
- open a bank account

And you should decide by yourself
if you want to do these things.

Full legal capacity means
you make decisions and act by yourself.

Full legal capacity means
nobody should decide for you.

In many countries,

people with disabilities cannot make decisions for themselves.

In many countries,

people with disabilities do not have full legal capacity.

Because of this situation,

disabled people lose many of their rights.

For example,



EPSA meeting

they cannot sign work contracts themselves,
nor vote,
nor marry, nor open a bank account.



And often,
their views and opinions are not listened to.



EPSA said they want to change this.
They said that people with intellectual disabilities
should get all the support they need
to make a decision.



We call this
“supported decision-making”.
Supported decision-making means
disabled people make
their own decisions
and gets the right support .



Supported decision-making means
that disabled people keep all their rights.
Supported decision-making means
disabled people say what they want
and are listened to.
It means they can make their own decisions.



At the meeting,
EPSA adopted some recommendations
about legal capacity.
A recommendation is when
you suggest things that people should do
to make things work better.



EPSA Recommendations

Here are EPSA's recommendations:

1. People with intellectual disabilities have the same rights as other citizens

This should be acknowledged by each country in their national law



2. People with intellectual disabilities must have full legal capacity

This is written in the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.



3. People with intellectual disabilities must decide themselves about their lives

Every human has their own point of view. Every human has the ability to communicate, one way or another.



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

Please contact us!

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EPSA Recommendations

4. Plenary guardianship systems must be abolished

5. Alternative solutions must be developed

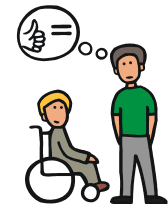
Supported decision-making systems must be available for all persons with intellectual disabilities.



6. The respect of our choices must be ensured through good support

7. Our protection must be ensured

We want supporters who do their best to make us understand the good or bad consequences a decision can have.



8. Inform and train people about their rights

9. Provide accessible information on everything that is of our concern

We want to know what is written in the law about us. We want easy-to-read versions of laws which affect us.



10. More support for self-advocacy

